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Message for Annual Bahá'í Conventions Year 119, Bahá'í Era from the Hands of the Faith in the Holy Land

Beloved Friends,

As we stand on the threshold of that year which must culminate in the celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of Bahá'u'lláh, the termination of the mightiest Spiritual Crusade in the history of mankind, the election of the Supreme Legislative Body of the Bahá'í Administrative Order, and the convocation of the first World Congress to be held by the followers of the Most Great Name, it behoves us, while there is yet time, to not only take stock of our precious and numerous victories but also to correctly assess the work still to be accomplished if we are to prove faithful to the priceless trust left in our hands by our beloved Guardian. The sands of time are swiftly running out ; days and weeks will soon have slipped from our grasp forever ; days in which we might have added one more victory to those already adorning the pages of the nine most momentous years in the Formative Age of our glorious Faith. Before the last lap of our race against time is run we may well pause for a moment of prayerful consideration, each one questioning himself as to where his duty lies, communing in his heart with the spirit of Shoghi Effendi, asking " is there some special thing I can do ? " before it is too late and the opportunity of a lifetime passes by for ever.

The initial stage of that great victory, characterized by Shoghi Effendi as the " Spiritual Conquest of the Old World under a divinely conceived Plan," is taking place through the election this Riqdán of National Bodies in the ten original goal countries of the Second Seven Year Plan, as well as in Finland, which was added to their number, at the opening of the World Crusade, by the Guardian himself. The little short of miraculous achievement last year, on the part of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh throughout Latin America, which enabled them to erect no less than twenty-one independent pillars of the Universal House of Justice on the firm foundation of the number of Local Assemblies Shoghi Effendi specified as necessary prerequisites for the accomplishment of that historic act, has been duplicated one year later by their brethren in Europe, where the steadfast and unremitting labours of the European Bahá'ís, coupled with the self-sacrificing and consecrated activity of a host of pioneers from both the Cradle of the Administrative Order and the land of Bahá'u'lláh's birth, have yielded an infinitely rich and promising harvest. The lamps of these great administrative institutions, which are destined in the course

of time to become secondary Houses of Justice, are being lighted by the power released through the operation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan, in land after land. In the Indian Ocean the latest of these mighty beacons is now being kindled through the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Ceylon, swelling the ranks of those Regional and National Bodies girdling the entire world to no less than fifty-six, twenty-four in the Western Hemisphere and thirty-two in the Eastern Hemisphere. When we remember that in Riqdán 1953 the tally of National Assemblies was twelve, and contemplate the fact that in exactly nine years forty-four of these autonomous institutions have been added, we are staggered by the magnitude of the task accomplished by the little band of Bahá'u'lláh's followers. How well we know who led us and who inspired us to such deeds ! How well we know whose promises and whose praises rallied our often failing strength, kept our feet in the path of service, strengthened our hearts and fanned our faith until we lay in homage at his beloved feet such a victory as this !

Upon the foundations laid by Shoghi Effendi, the Sign of God on earth " that shadoweth all mankind," the divine Animus that poured its force into the embryonic institutions existing at the time of the ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá,—He Who was the architect of Bahá'u'lláh's world-encircling Order—have now been reared those initial pillars which must sustain the weight of an institution which has been promised, for the first time in the history of this planet, unerring guidance in the discharge of its specially ordained tasks. From Chile to Alaska, from Britain to Japan, in the heart of the Pacific and the Indian Oceans, rising like a forest from the mainland of Asia, the Americas, Europe and Africa, the pillars of the Universal House of Justice now stand, waiting to receive, next Riqdán, on the occasion of the first Jubilee Celebration of the Declaration of Bahá'u'lláh's prophetic mission, their mighty Crown.

In view of the supreme importance of consolidating the foundations of the National and Regional Assemblies at so momentous a juncture in Bahá'í history, the Hands of the Faith have decided to permit the formation of local Spiritual Assemblies any time between Riqdán 1962 and Riqdán 1963, following the example of the beloved Guardian who introduced this measure during the crucial year preceding the celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the inception of the Bahá'í Cycle in 1944. We feel sure this will greatly

assist and encourage those hard-pressed National Communities which, in such countries as Germany, England, the United States, Canada and Australia, have not yet won the all-important Homefront goal of forming the number of local assemblies he specified as an essential part of the tasks entrusted to their care under the provisions of his Crusade. It will also be eagerly seized upon by other communities throughout the world as an opportunity to add to the trophies they themselves have already piled so high in the course of this Crusade and to vie with each other in an effort to achieve added distinction when the roll call of local victories is held at that joyous time when the entire Bahá'í world celebrates the Jubilee Declaration of Bahá'u'lláh.

Special consideration should be given at this time, by the believers everywhere, as well as their elected National representatives, to the World Bahá'í Congress, called by the beloved Guardian himself, which will be held in London, during the Riqdán period of 1963, from April 28 to May 2, the first of its kind in the history of the Cause, and constituting one of the objectives of the Ten Year Plan at the World Centre of the Faith. It is hoped that on this unique occasion when, in every continent of the globe, in every hamlet and city where Bahá'ís reside, the friends will be celebrating the holiest festival of the Bahá'í calendar, commemorating the anniversary "of the formal assumption by Bahá'u'lláh of His prophetic Office," which ushered in the "King of Days," the "Day of God Himself," believers from all parts of the world will gather together and voice their thanksgiving and praise for the guidance given this age by the Supreme Manifestation of God, for the Divine Mandate the Centre of His Covenant devised for the spiritual conquest of this planet, for the Mighty Crusade fashioned by the Guardian to implement the terms of that Mandate, and for the innumerable, glorious and immortal victories won during the last decade. On that momentous occasion, to which all are invited and which it is hoped as many as possible will attend, particularly representatives of the diversified ethnic groups now included in the pale of the Faith, the friends will have the solemn privilege of visiting the resting-place of their dearly-loved Guardian, there to place in the homage of their hearts the offering of ten years of unsurpassed service in the annals of religious history, there to rededicate themselves to the work that lies ahead as the Divine Plan of 'Abdu'l-Bahá enters a new phase in its unfoldment.

Already the extraordinary progress the Faith has made during the past twelve months in fulfilling the goals of the Plan conceived by Shoghi Effendi and entrusted to our care cannot but fill our hearts with astonishment at the magnitude of the victories won in so many fields in so short a time. These triumphs bear eloquent tribute to the spiritual power released by him who, speaking with the Voice of Divine Authority, conferred upon the faithful followers of Bahá'u'lláh a capacity for accomplishment far beyond the understanding of those unaware of the Almighty Power of the Manifestation which flowed through him, and which has safely brought us to this glorious hour.

The standard of Bahá'u'lláh has now been raised in no less than two hundred and fifty-seven countries, islands and dependencies, including all of the virgin territories specified by Shoghi Effendi at the beginning of the Crusade with the exception of the ten lying within the Soviet orbit which up to the present time have proven inaccessible.

On the eve of the inauguration of the final year of this Crusade, the number of localities throughout the world

where Bahá'ís reside is well over seven thousand five hundred, an increase of five thousand centres since the inception of the Plan in 1953. More than one thousand of these have been added during the past year, bringing the total in Australasia to one hundred and sixty-two, in the British Isles to one hundred and sixty-three, in Germany and Austria to one hundred and seventy, in the Goal Countries of Europe to nearly one hundred and eighty, in the Dominion of Canada to one hundred and eighty-four, in Latin America to five hundred and thirty-nine, in the Indian sub-continent to six hundred and seventy-one, in the entire Pacific area to nearly seven hundred, in Persia to more than one thousand one hundred, in the United States of America to nearly sixteen hundred, and in Africa to more than eighteen hundred and fifty. In the period since last Riqdán, Africa has overtaken both the "Cradle of the Faith" and the "Cradle of the Administrative Order," and now stands out as the area where "the warming and healing light of an all-conquering Revelation" radiates from more centres than any other continent of the globe.

The ninth year of the world-encircling Plan of the beloved Guardian has witnessed further striking progress in such widely dispersed regions as India, Latin America, the Pacific area, and Africa. The significant victories, achieved by the intrepid followers of Bahá'u'lláh in these lands, undoubtedly reflect the operation of those spiritual forces which both the Master and Shoghi Effendi promised would in the not distant future bring about a wave of new enrollments such as has not occurred since the early days of the Faith.

India, one of the first countries in the world to receive the light of the newly-born Revelation has, during the past year, witnessed a tide of mass conversions not only wholly unprecedented in that country but without parallel anywhere in the entire world during the last one hundred years of Bahá'í history. Since Riqdán 1961 well over thirteen thousand new believers have come into the Faith as a result of the mass teaching campaign carried out in the villages of India by the members of what was previously a relatively small national community.

In Latin America, the area where such an outstanding victory was achieved last year by the formation of no less than twenty-one new pillars of the Universal House of Justice, the work of the Faith is progressing in all fields, under the aegis of these new national bodies, and rapid progress is being made in consolidating the communities within its borders and in carrying the Faith to the Indians, "the indigenous population of America" mentioned by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Tablets of the Divine Plan, who are entering the Cause in great numbers. No less than sixty-two different Indian tribes are now represented in the Bahá'í Communities of North, Central and South America, nearly four times the number mentioned by Shoghi Effendi five years ago in his Riqdán Message of 1957.

The Bolivian Community which a year ago had already fired the imagination of the Bahá'í world by the extraordinary progress made in attracting new adherents from the ranks of the Indian population, now has nearly four thousand believers, a gain of more than twenty-five hundred since last Riqdán. Latest reports indicate that as many as sixty local assemblies may be formed this year. Already these original inhabitants of Bolivia are arising to carry the flame of the Faith to neighbouring republics; recently, as a result of the devoted efforts of these pioneers, the rising tide of new enrollments amongst the descendants of an ancient American civilisation has been extended to Peru and also to Chile where, during the last two months nearly

two hundred Indians have entered the Faith, representing the first conversions on such a scale in that country.

In Panama, where nearly three hundred Indian believers have been enrolled in recent months, the number of assemblies will be doubled this year. In Mexico and Costa Rica, the past year has witnessed in the former a doubling of the number of believers comprising the national community, while the latter, as a result of a new wave of teaching activity on the part of its native believers anticipates tripling this Riqdán the number of local assemblies existing a year ago.

Throughout the Pacific region the Cause continues to gain adherents at an ever accelerating pace. In South East Asia the number of believers has more than doubled in the past two years and now stands at the impressive total of fifteen thousand five hundred, nearly seven thousand of whom have been enrolled during the last six months. In the entire Pacific area the diverse races and peoples comprising the Bahá'í communities in that part of the globe have established the Faith in over one hundred new localities during the past twelve months, including, for the first time, the northern islands of the Mentawai group, one of the most important links in that chain of islands which was the first territory in the Pacific to witness a mass movement into the Faith, a development which brought such great joy to the beloved Guardian in the closing years of his life.

The steady consolidation and rapid expansion taking place in Africa has brought the number of followers of Bahá'u'lláh in that continent to nearly thirty thousand, a gain of almost ten thousand believers since Riqdán a year ago. The most spectacular increases have occurred in the region of Central and East Africa, but substantial gains have also been recorded in the areas under the jurisdiction of the three other Regional National Assemblies; more than six hundred local spiritual assemblies are now established throughout the length and breadth of that continent and its neighbouring islands, a total far exceeding that of any other major area in the Bahá'í world; three hundred and twenty-seven African tribes are now represented in the Bahá'í Community, more than forty having been added during the past year. Africa has indeed fulfilled the high hopes and confident expectations of the Guardian when, in his Message to the first Intercontinental Conference in Kampala, he alluded to the expansion even then beginning to take place there as "a multiplication designed ultimately to bring to a proper equipoise the divers ethnic elements comprised within the highly diversified world-embracing Bahá'í fellowship."

The steady gain which has taken place in recent years in the number of local spiritual assemblies, comprising what Shoghi Effendi termed "the broad and indestructible foundation of a rising Order," has brought the total of these divinely-ordained institutions to well over two thousand, double the number which he so proudly announced in his last Message to the Bahá'í world. The total of incorporated assemblies, both local and National, now exceeds three hundred. Twenty-one of the fifty-six National and Regional Assemblies which will be established and functioning at the end of the Crusade have secured their incorporation; attainment of the remaining thirty-five registrations constitutes one of the major unfinished tasks of the Ten Year Plan, and must, during the final year of the Crusade engage the earnest efforts of those national bodies, both old and new, which have not yet achieved this important objective.

As the Cause steadily expands, recognition of its independent character by governmental authorities becomes increasingly important. This objective has been furthered

during the past year by official acceptance of the Bahá'í Marriage Certificate throughout the Commonwealth of New Zealand, in the Province of Ontario in the Dominion of Canada, and in the States of Colorado and South Carolina in the United States of America. Nearly fifty sovereign states and governmental subdivisions have accorded legal recognition to the Bahá'í marriage ceremony. Bahá'í Holy Days are now officially recognized by school authorities in one hundred and five different countries, states and cities, including in the United States, seventy-seven school districts in twenty-seven states, as well as the District of Columbia.

The literature of the Faith has now been translated into no less than two hundred and ninety-six different languages, over two hundred of which have been completed since the beginning of the Ten Year Plan. Virtually all of the ninety-one originally specified by Shoghi Effendi as crusade goals, or those subsequently approved by him as substitutions, have been completed, with the exception of a few used in territories or countries within the Soviet orbit.

The completion and dedication of the Mother Temple of the Antipodes in Sydney, Australia, the second Mashriqu'l-Adhkár to be completed since the inception of the Crusade, constitutes still another milestone in the development of the institutions of the Faith during the past year. The nationwide publicity attending this event, and the public interest which it aroused, foreshadowed the fulfilment of the destiny of this sacred structure, as one of those great "Silent Teachers" of the Cause. In addition to the Temples already completed or under construction in four continents, sites for future Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs have been acquired in nearly forty-five other localities, many of these representing goals of supplementary plans given by the Guardian himself to National or Regional Assemblies established since the beginning of the Crusade. Recent acquisitions include such properties in Rangoon, Burma; Istanbul, Turkey; Montevideo, Uruguay; as well as the site for the Mother Temple of Venezuela, now in the final stages of legal transfer to Bahá'í ownership.

Uninterrupted construction of the third great House of Worship called for by Shoghi Effendi, the Mother Temple of Europe, now rising in the heart of that continent, will require a continuous and sacrificial flow of funds, not only from the European believers, but from the friends in all parts of the globe who, mindful of the stirring promises of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, will wish to share in this noble undertaking and hasten the day when still another continent will receive the blessings which flow from an Edifice dedicated solely to the mention of God and His praise.

During the remaining months of the World Crusade, when the financial requirements for attaining total victory are so tremendous, the friends everywhere must become aware, as never before, of the paramount need for a steady and continuous flow of contributions in support of their National Funds, an outpouring which the beloved Guardian characterized as the "life-blood" of the National and Regional assemblies now called upon to complete their allotted goals in the few remaining months of his Plan. The spiritual significance and blessing of voluntary giving should be emphasized anew by each National Assembly as it presents to the members of its Community the obligations which must still be discharged. The friends must be assisted to grasp the significance of these words of the beloved Guardian, calling upon each and every believer to place his or her share on the altar of Bahá'í sacrifice: "The institution of the National Fund, so vital and essential

for the uninterrupted progress of these activities must, in particular be assured of the whole-hearted, the ever-increasing and universal support of the mass of believers All, no matter how modest their resources, must participate. Upon the degree of self-sacrifice involved in these individual contributions will directly depend the efficacy and the spiritual influence which these nascent administrative institutions, called into being through the power of Bahá'u'lláh, and by virtue of the design conceived by the Centre of His Covenant, will exert."

The body of the Bahá'ís throughout the world, the instruments through whom this latest phase in the Master Plan of 'Abdu'l-Bahá alone can be accomplished, have opportunities now, in the remaining months of the World Crusade, which can never be theirs again, which no group of people will ever have in future decades and centuries. That they will permit a single objective of the Plan to fail owing to lack of the necessary material means to insure its accomplishment is inconceivable.

A special appeal must be made, at this crucial point in the spread of our Faith, to all pioneers to remain steadfastly at their posts. The prizes won at such a cost of sacrifice and devotion on the part of not only those souls who abandoned their own countries or their own homes in order to assist in establishing the Cause in other lands or other centres, but on the part of many dedicated souls who poured their substance into the Joint Deputization Fund and various National funds, must be safeguarded and strengthened at all costs.

In particular those pioneers and believers, struggling in less promising parts of the globe, and lavishing on seemingly barren soil their labour of love for Bahá'u'lláh, should not lose heart; far from feeling discouraged over the lack of results in their territory they should receive fresh stimulation from the remarkable evidences of the progress of the work in other regions. Let them remember that the harvest now beginning to be reaped in India took many years to yield its first fruits, that the present rapid advances being made in Latin America represent the effort of decades, that the victories won in both Africa and the Pacific area are, as our Guardian himself pointed out, due in no small measure to the remarkable spiritual receptivity of the people in those parts of the world. Let them recall the innumerable promises enshrined in our Teachings which assure us that all nations and peoples will be quickened by this Faith and enter beneath its shadow, and, deriving fresh courage from these prophetic words, have confidence in the ultimate triumph of their labours and persevere in their dedicated service to the Cause of God. The friends, whether in lands now witnessing the first waves of mass conversion or striving in more difficult territories, must determine to compensate through their steadfast and unflagging toil for the disabilities still being suffered by the long-oppressed and valiant body of the faithful in Bahá'u'lláh's native land, as well as by their brethren in other countries where the traditional enemies of the Faith are seeking to put out its light and subvert its standard.

Indeed, not only must the host of Bahá'u'lláh's army stay at its post and guard its conquests, redressing the balance a thousandfold for those believers who live in lands where the institutions of the Faith have been officially banned, its properties confiscated, its assemblies dissolved and its members threatened, but it must, on the eve of the last year of Shoghi Effendi's Crusade, recall his emphatic words, "that the newly opened territories of the globe must, under no circumstances, be allowed to relapse into the state of spiritual

deprivation from which they have so recently and laboriously been rescued." While there is yet time it behoves those National Assemblies to which these precious virgin territories were originally entrusted, and some of which are at present without a single believer, to make one last supreme effort to heed the words of their Guardian and to comply with his explicit wish.

In reviewing the wonderful achievements of nine years' unremitting labour, and the heavy responsibilities now resting upon the believers in every part of the world, the realization is forced upon every thinking Bahá'í that the Cause has entered an entirely new stage in its evolution. The response to the appeal of the Guardian in his last Message to the entire body of the faithful throughout the world for " . . . an unprecedented increase in the number of avowed supporters of the Faith, in all continents of the globe, of every race, clime, creed and colour, and from every stratum of present-day society, coupled with a corresponding increase in the number of Bahá'í Centres . . ." has been truly stupendous. Already his ardent wish has been partially fulfilled. Forces over which we have no control are now sweeping us into an era of expansion breath-taking in its possibilities. The sudden enlistment, in a single country, of over thirteen thousand new believers in one year, the news which is pouring into the World Centre of the Faith of the opening of new areas where the possibility of mass enrollment is equally great, and may, at any time, take place on an equally large scale, is awe-inspiring, nay almost frightening in the vista it exposes to our dazzled eyes. The handful of teachers and administrators, labouring in Asia, Europe, the Americas, Africa and the Pacific suddenly find themselves called upon, for the first time in the history of this Cause, to receive and welcome not a few hundred souls eager to enlist in the Army of Bahá'u'lláh but many thousands, and perhaps, in the near future, many hundreds of thousands. Such a sudden turn in the fortunes of a Faith which the Bahá'ís, with considerable complacency, have conceived of as being still in the slowly-growing, gradually maturing, laboriously evolving stage of its development, calls for a complete reorientation of thought, a profound evaluation of motives, a careful study of those texts which can throw light on the needs of the present hour.

It was "troops" which 'Abdu'l-Bahá so ardently desired should enter beneath the shadow of His Father's Cause. Troops are now entering. The entire purpose of His glorious Tablets of the Divine Plan was to initiate teaching on a world scale. "I fervently hope that in the near future," He wrote in those Tablets, "the whole earth may be stirred and shaken by the results of your achievements."

Suddenly, like a thief in the night, we find that our sacrifices, our labours great and small during a period of one hundred and nineteen years, our pioneer efforts, especially those conducted during recent years, our laborious erection of various National and Regional Bodies in all parts of the globe, our silent prayers, our tears and patience and loyalty, have borne their miraculous fruit, and the first ripples of an awakening consciousness of the meaning and glory of Bahá'u'lláh's Message are passing over the sleeping giant of humanity.

This is not a religion destined for any one race or any one people. It is the property of the entire human race. Bahá'u'lláh has come to that soul who believes in Him. What concern is it of ours if, at this particular moment in history, it is those people of the world as yet uncorrupted by a materialistic civilization who are ready to accept Him? Is not this perhaps their unique and golden opportunity to

receive the education of His teachings ere it is too late and the corrosive aspects of that civilization have educated them in ways that lead away from God rather than towards Him. May not, in the mysterious workings of God's Plan so far above the capacity of our finite minds to grasp, this process of conversion on a large scale of the peoples of the Pacific islands, the heart of India, the African continent, and the descendants of the aboriginal population of the Americas now taking place, release forces which will have wide repercussions in these venerable strongholds of both Eastern and Western culture whose people, overcome by spiritual lassitude, disillusioned and cynical, find themselves indifferent for the most part to the redemptive Message of Bahá'u'lláh?

Let us ponder these words of the Guardian and seek out in the light of present events, their implications: "As the Plan bequeathed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá unfolds, through successive decades of the present century, its measureless potentialities, and gathers within the field of its operations nation after nation in successive continents of the globe, it will be increasingly recognized not only as the most potent agency for the development of the World Administrative System, but also as a primary factor in the birth and efflorescence of the World Order itself in both the East and the West."

Nation after nation has been swept into the orbit of the Faith since 1921. The believers, acting for thirty-six years under the direct guidance of the Interpreter of the Teachings of the Bahá'í Revelation, have been laying the foundation and erecting the framework of the Administrative Institutions of this Faith. How can we fail to perceive that the tabernacle having been raised, the people are now seeking its shelter?

Fifty-six great administrative institutions now exist in the Bahá'í world. Were such wonderful institutions as these fashioned to administer the affairs, for the most part, of a handful of believers? Or are they to be regarded as mighty doors flung wide to the world and designed to enable its spiritually hungry multitudes to enter into the stronghold of Almighty God? "The fundamental purpose of the Bahá'í Administration at this time is to teach the Faith. Administering it is only to coordinate its activities and to safeguard it," wrote Shoghi Effendi, four months before he passed away, to one of the new European Regional Assemblies. He informed the Bahá'í World, that same year, that "the preeminent task of teaching the Faith to the multitudes" was "the bedrock on which the solidarity and the stability of the multiplying institutions of a rising Order must rest." In other words these institutions as they grow and consolidate must be outgoing and not ingrowing in their action. "Nothing could be more tragic," he wrote, "than if the establishment of these great administrative bodies should stifle . . . the teaching work." "The purpose of the new National Assemblies . . . and the purpose of any administrative body, is to carry the Message to the people and enlist the sincere under the banner of the Faith." In a letter written as late as July, 1957, to one of the Regional Assemblies he said: ". . . The friends should be very careful not to place hindrances in the way of those who wish to accept the Faith . . . The essential thing is that the candidate for enrollment should believe in his heart in the truth of Bahá'u'lláh. Whether he is literate or illiterate, informed of all the teachings or not, is beside the point entirely . . ." In another of his letters he said: "The early believers, both in the east and the west, we must remember, knew practically nothing compared with what the

average Bahá'í knows about his Faith nowadays, yet they were the ones who shed their blood, the ones who arose and said 'I believe' requiring no proof, and often never having read a single word of the Teachings. Therefore, those responsible for accepting new enrollments must be sure of just one thing—that the heart of the applicant has been touched with the spirit of the Faith. Everything else can be built on this foundation gradually."

"In the world today a two-fold process," the Guardian wrote, "can be distinguished, each tending, in its own way and with an accelerated momentum, to bring to a climax the forces that are transforming the face of our planet. The first is essentially an integrating process, while the second is fundamentally disruptive. The former, as it steadily evolves, unfolds a System which may well serve as a pattern for that world polity towards which a strangely disordered world is continually advancing; while the latter, as its disintegrating influence deepens, tends to tear down, with increasing violence, the antiquated barriers that seek to block humanity's progress towards its destined goal. The constructive process stands associated with the nascent Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, and is the harbinger of the New World Order that Faith must ere long establish. The destructive forces that characterize the other should be identified with a civilization that has refused to answer to the expectation of a new age, and is consequently falling into chaos and decline."

Concomitant with the forces of integration working inside the Faith and those of disintegration working outside it is another process which he many times called to our attention; the chain reaction of victories and crises. Who can doubt for a moment that as the institutions of our Faith in land after land, gathering strength and being epitomized through the election of Independent National Bodies, responsible, in conjunction with the present Regional Assemblies, for the election one year from now of the Supreme House of Justice, are raised, forces will be released of such spiritual power as to galvanize the body of the Faith throughout the world with a new life and enable the Cause to sweep forward on its course and enter a new era in the process of its propagation to the masses of East and West, as well as its recognition and official acceptance as an independent World Religion. Who also can doubt for a moment that this very process of consolidation taking place during this last year of the Crusade, when the goals of the beloved Guardian, susceptible of accomplishment within the present framework of world affairs, are for the most part either won or within our reach, must inevitably unleash fresh trials and tests, challenging the devotion and tenacity of the friends and driving the roots of both the new believers and the national communities deeper into the soil of faith, as well as sifting out the weak and raising up the strong in that constant purification of the ranks of the faithful which takes place in the course of the growth of this World Community.

Whatever the immediate future may hold in store, either for us or for our fellow-men, the path of action we must tread lies clearly before us. "Ours," Shoghi Effendi pointed out, "is the duty to fix our gaze with undeviating attention on the duties and responsibilities confronting us at this present hour, to concentrate our resources, both material and spiritual, on the tasks that lie immediately ahead, to insure that no time is wasted, that no opportunity is missed, that no obligation is evaded, that no task is half-heartedly performed, that no decision is procrastinated."

"The Kingdom of God," the beloved Master assured us, "is possessed of limitless potency. Audacious must be the army of life if the confirming aid of that Kingdom is to be repeatedly vouchsafed unto it . . . Now is the time to reveal the force of one's strength, the stoutness of one's heart and the might of one's soul."

On the occasion of another Centenary, over eighteen years ago, the Guardian, in never-to-be-forgotten words, called upon us to arise and fulfil the work entrusted to our keeping. These words are as applicable, as deeply moving and passionate in their appeal, as if he had meant them for this present fate-laden hour. Let us open our hearts to their message of love and of the longing they convey : ". . . to all, without distinction of race, nation, class, colour, age, or sex, I feel moved, as the fateful hour of a memorable

Centenary approaches, to address my plea, with all the fervour that my soul can command, and all the love that my heart contains, to rededicate themselves, collectively and individually, to the task that lies ahead of them . . . I direct my impassioned appeal to obey, as befits His warriors, the summons of the Lord of Hosts, and prepare for that Day of Days when His victorious battalions will, to the accompaniment of hosannas from the invisible angels in the Abhá Kingdom celebrate the hour of final victory."

Rúhiyyih	Paul Haney
Leroy Ioas	Jalál Kháze
A. Furútan	A. Q. Faizi

April, 1962.

NEWS LETTER

ISSUED FROM THE WORLD CENTRE

Dear Friends,

As we write this letter the Festival of Ridván approaches, the greatest of all Bahá'í festivals, when we do well to ponder the words of Bahá'u'lláh which reveal the potency of this day and of the age in which we live : "*This Day a door is open wider than both heaven and earth. The eye of the mercy of Him Who is the Desire of the worlds is turned towards all men.*" "*This is the Day whereon the unseen world crieth out 'Great is thy blessedness, O earth. for thou hast been made the footstool of thy God, and have been chosen as the seat of His mighty throne.'*"

We stand on the threshold of the year which will precede the Most Great Jubilee, the hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of Bahá'u'lláh; the year in which the remaining goals of the Ten-Year Crusade must be attained and the final sustaining pillars to take part in the first election of God's mighty House of Justice must be raised and firmly established. It is a year of precious, of awe-inspiring responsibility; a year which should see the Cause of God spreading with unprecedented rapidity in every corner of the globe : "*This is the day in which to speak,*" proclaims Bahá'u'lláh. "*It is incumbent upon the people of Bahá to strive, with the utmost patience and forbearance, to guide the peoples of the world to the Most Great Horizon. Every body calleth aloud for a soul. Heavenly souls must needs quicken, with the breath of the Word of God, the dead bodies with a fresh spirit.*" Let us strive with the entire devotion of our hearts to ensure that at the end of this year we may celebrate the glorious Centenary with the clear conscience that we have not neglected the precious charge which God has laid upon us.

The preparations for the World Congress to be held in London are now well under way. The Congress Arrangements Committee met at the end of January and the most urgent decisions have been communicated to the National

Spiritual Assemblies. The holding of the Congress was announced to the world at large through a press conference held in Haifa on Monday, 5th March, and increasing interest in this event is being shown in many quarters. Some fifteen reporters attended the conference, and the press release was communicated to all the major international wire services. Since then we have been receiving a series of articles which have been appearing in newspapers in this country. The news was also broadcast.

In the Holy Land, the passing of the dearly loved Hand of the Cause, Amelia Collins, was a great loss to the World Centre of the Faith. For many years she had been in continual pain, but in spite of this had continued to serve the Faith with an indomitable courage which was a challenge and inspiration to her fellow-servants in the Cause of God.

In our last News Letter we mentioned the visit of the International Council to the President of the State. In a series of visits to Jerusalem some of the Hands introduced the President and Secretary-General of the Council to a number of officials of the State, and the Council is now continuing with these courtesy visits. In response to invitations given on such visits, the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Justice both visited the Shrine of the Báb during February. We have also received a visit from a delegation of prominent parliamentarians of the recently formed African Republic of Niger, accompanied by the acting Ambassador of the Cote d'Ivoire ; these being part of the continual stream of visitors to the Shrine.

On the 14th February the Council gave a reception in the Western Pilgrim House to over 150 of the prominent citizens of Haifa.

In these ways the cordial relations between the World Centre of the Faith and the State in which it is situated, which were so assiduously built up in the lifetime of the

THE BELOVED GUARDIAN'S CRUSADE

On April 21st we cabled the Hands in Haifa :—

12 Assemblies formed 36 maintained Beloved Guardian's goal 48 Assemblies achieved Cardiff Cheadle Norwich incorporated loving Riqdán greetings Bahá'í London.

In answer we received the following message from the Hands:—

Confident outstanding victory won through devotion faithfulness British Bahá'ís Beloved Guardian presages opening new epoch Faith community he greatly loved and admired. Handsfaith.

Received April 24th, 1962.

From Convention to the World Centre.

With inspiring aid Hand Cause John Ferraby British Convention deeply appreciates comprehensive message stimulating deeper understanding Guardian's guidance leading fervent endeavour adults youth towards effective consolidation homefront reinforcement Northern Islands stop implementation plans rapid increase numbers focussed on Wales Ireland Scotland simultaneously British Pioneers Australia achievement our remaining goals deepest love British Convention.

April 29th, 1962.

And back to Convention from the World Centre came this fresh encouragement for the ensuing months.

Greatly encouraged program activities contemplated stop fulfilment these objectives crown labours devoted persevering vital British Bahá'í community praying fresh triumphs final year Beloved Guardian's Crusade. Handsfaith.

Received May 2nd, 1962.

BY THE INTERNATIONAL BAHÁ'Í COUNCIL

beloved Guardian, and developed subsequently by the Hands in the Holy Land, are being continuously fostered.

From many parts of the Bahá'í world we continue to receive news of interesting and thrilling developments. In the Central and East Africa Region, during the five and a half years since the formation of their National Spiritual Assembly, the number of tribes represented in the Faith has been quadrupled, there are five and a half times as many centres, seven times as many Local Spiritual Assemblies, and fourteen times as many Bahá'ís. In November that Regional Assembly reported that following a special training course attended by twenty-one believers, two of them travelled, often on foot, in the Sudan and Congo. They suffered great hardships due to the hostility, suspicion and superstition of the people, and had difficulty in finding food and places to sleep. They contracted serious dysentery from having to drink swamp water, and became critically ill owing to the complete lack of medicine in the dispensaries of the Congo. But despite these difficulties they persevered, using first one method, then another, to convince the people of their sincerity and the true purpose of their visit. They held a number of meetings in an area which had not been reached before, and were able to leave a nucleus of strong believers well able to carry on the activities there.

In South and West Africa two first historic Bahá'í Summer Schools were held, one in Malkerns, Swaziland, from 23rd to 26th December, and one in Mulungushi, Northern Rhodesia, from 24th to 26th December. The holding of these schools is a momentous step in the progress of the Faith in this Region, both for the present consolidation of the Cause and as the laying of foundations for the future. The running theme of the Malkerns School was mass conversion and how to attain it. It was the expressed desire of all who attended that this should be achieved in Swaziland before the end of the Crusade. To follow up the work of this

school, an all-day teaching meeting was held in Mbabane on January 14th, and immediately afterwards three African teachers went out to one of the remote areas of Swaziland and brought in nineteen declarations.

The flame of teaching is still spreading in India, as you will have learned from the announcements of the Hands, and the new believers are showing exemplary devotion and enthusiasm in the path of the Cause. In one place a crippled teacher is carried in his cot from village to village spreading the Word.

A letter from the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil dated 18th February reported that four of the believers had just returned from their bi-monthly trip to visit the Indians high in the mountains above the little town of Itariri on the south east coast of the state of Sao Paulo and, their faces aglow, had announced that all of the nineteen adults who comprise that village had that day registered as followers of Bahá'u'lláh.

In many localities in Mexico there have been rapid gains and the number of believers has risen by over seventy per cent since last April. Already a fifty per cent increase in the number of Local Assemblies is assured for this Riqdán and believers are spreading out to take the Faith to new areas of the country.

From New Zealand comes the long-awaited and wonderful news of the declaration of the first Maori believer, on 15th January in Auckland. Also the report of the celebration of the first Bahá'í marriage legally recognised in that country, on 29th January, in the Ḥaziratu'l-Quds in Auckland.

Perhaps one of the most encouraging signs is the new life shown on many of the Homefronts. Canada reports in the December News an unprecedented number of believers so far this year. Twenty people who became Bahá'ís in the Yukon have spread to such widely scattered places as

Alaska, British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, England, Germany, Washington, California.

Both the United States and the British Isles likewise report unprecedented numbers of declarations, and the rate of increase seems to be rising.

Progress on the Mother Temple of Europe is also continuing. The 27 lower rib-sections are now erected, and the concrete ring joining them is complete. The work of erection had to be suspended until frost-free weather returned, but in the Netherlands, where the sections are being prefabricated, 17 out of the 18 middle sections of the intermediate ribs are complete and work on casting the upper sections of the ribs has begun.

As we rejoice in the roll-call of victories from every part of the world, let us recall the words of our beloved Guardian, written at the close of his message to the Bahá'í world in Riqdán, 1957, and determine that we will, to our utmost capacity, rise to his high expectations and achieve the triumph for which he so fervently strove :

"I appeal, as I close this review of the superb feats already accomplished, in the course of so many campaigns, by the heroic band of the warriors of Bahá'u'lláh, battling in His Name and by His aid for the purification, the unification and the spiritualization of a morally and spiritually

bankrupt society, now hovering on the brink of self-destruction, for a renewed dedication, at this critical hour in the fortunes of mankind, on the part of the entire company of my spiritual brethren in every continent of the globe, to the high ideals of the Cause they have espoused, as well as the immediate accomplishment of the goals of the Crusade, on which they have embarked, be they in active service or not, of either sex, young as well as old, rich or poor, whether veteran or newly enrolled—a dedication reminiscent of the pledges which the Dawn-breakers of an earlier Apostolic Age, assembled in conference at Badasht, and faced with issues of a different but equally challenging nature, willingly and solemnly made for the prosecution of the collective task with which they were confronted.

"May this Crusade, on which the privileged heirs and present successors of the heroes of the Primitive Age of our Faith have so auspiciously embarked, yield . . . such a harvest as will amaze its prosecutors, astonish the world at large, and draw forth from the Source on high a measure of celestial strength adequate to insure its triumphant consummation."

INTERNATIONAL BAHÁ'Í COUNCIL

World Centre of the Faith,
5th April, 1962.

NEWS LETTER

New Believers

In a letter from the Hands to the National Spiritual Assembly in March they said, "We are delighted to hear that the inflow of new believers continues and pray that the increase may become still more rapid until the trickle becomes a torrent and believers enter the Cause in troops. We are particularly glad to see that the British Bahá'í Community has at last succeeded in becoming self-supporting, a goal at which the Guardian had so long urged them to aim. Achievement of this goal must have profound spiritual repercussions upon the work in the British Isles."

Victory on the Home Front

"The news of the victory on the Homefront caused us the greatest joy. It amply vindicated the confidence our beloved Guardian always had in the British Bahá'ís, and his great admiration for their tenacity and determination. We feel sure that both your Assembly and the friends in the British Isles are not only intensely relieved but uplifted by this triumph on the Homefront, which cannot but release great spiritual forces, and usher in a new period in the unfoldment of the Faith in Great Britain. We congratulate you all from the bottom of our hearts, and assure you we will pray in the holy Shrines that unprecedented progress may be made during the last 12 months of the beloved Guardian's Crusade."

Letter from the Hands, April 23rd, 1962.

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Great Britain.

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