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THE NINETEEN-DAY FEAST

The institution of the Nineteen-Day Feast is unique and peerless amongst all the gatherings and the communal efforts of mankind. Its quality and the mode of its functioning show the health and the virility of a Bahá'í Community. From it can flow an incalculable and illimitable measure of spiritual power. The beloved Master once said that should the Bahá'ís make full use of the potentialities of the Nineteen-Day Feast, they could thereby change the destinies of their town. He also said that He would be there in this gathering with the Bahá'ís.

And the converse is also true. A Nineteen-Day Feast held in a climate alien to the life of the Faith, divorced from the principles laid down for the conduct of such a Feast, shut out from its guiding light, becomes a venomous instrument and injures every individual Bahá'í as well as the Community.

'Abdu'l-Bahá has repeatedly said that if religion becomes the cause of discord it is better to be without it. Medicine is to cure, to heal; should it aggravate a disorder, it becomes lethal. Similarly, a Nineteen-Day Feast reduced to the level of a mechanical ritual or made the arena of cantankerous contention cannot but harm. It is better, far better, to be without it.

The more delicate and well-balanced an instrument, the more damaging will be the consequences of its failure.

Attendance at the Nineteen-Day Feast is not obligatory.

For us Bahá'ís, as stated by the beloved Master, the Nineteen-Day Feast is what the Holy Communion is for the Christians. Does a sincere Christian go to the Holy Communion to have a jolly time or to be insufferably bored? Of course not.

The Nineteen-Day Feast, according to the directions of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, is composed of three distinct parts, each one well-defined in its scope, and yet all so blended as to form one continuous and unbroken process. In the art of the ballet, music, movement and decor each stand as a separate entity and yet completely merge into one indivisible unit. So are the component parts of the Nineteen-Day Feast. The link and the keynote is fellowship in Bahá'u'lláh.

Bahá'ís come to a Nineteen-Day Feast not so much to partake in communal worship, to express and exchange views and ideas about the multifarious problems of their Community, to associate lovingly with one another, but above all of these, supremely important and vital as they are, Bahá'ís come to a Feast in order to experience the unity unfolded by the Divine hand of Bahá'u'lláh. A Nineteen-Day Feast that fails to make this experience a blazing, throbbing reality, is nothing but a mechanical performance that will only serve to blazon human frailties.

The conflicting tendencies of the world must be shed outside the doors of the Nineteen-Day Feast. This does not mean either the assumption of an air of indifference or

hiding behind a facade of spiritual pride and affected superiority. It only means emptying our hearts and our minds to make room for the grace of Bahá'u'lláh. Otherwise a barrier wrought by our own hands will intervene between the communal character of the Feast and the Source which is to feed and sustain it.

The first part of the Feast is devotional. Prayer must come from the depths of one's heart. Otherwise it is not prayer. It is automation. The words that we use whilst we pray which are prayers revealed by the Founders of our Faith we must know intimately. We must be familiar with them not just by an intellectual grasp of what they signify, but because of what they evoke from our innermost beings, by the token of the deep longing response they command from our hearts. When the Persian believers chant a prayer at a meeting, it is almost always a prayer that they have used in their own solitary devotionals, with which they are well acquainted. Thus their chanting is not merely giving utterance to a sweet and charming melody. They know the meaning, the import of those words. And words take wings.

Distributing books just a short while prior to the beginning of the devotional part of the Feast and there asking some of the friends present to read prayers or Tablets which they may never have set eyes on before, is a practice which has oftentimes been followed. There are occasions, and abundant they have been, when in spite of this glaring defect, the spirit of the Feast and of those attending it makes full compensation, and the devotional is raised to supreme heights. But this practice is fundamentally wrong, and there have been sad failures. One of my excruciating Bahá'í experiences was sitting through a solemn commemoration meeting and hearing the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá being murdered.

Another very important point to bear in mind is the very injunction of Bahá'u'lláh not to burden souls with lengthy recitations of scriptures. He has said: "To chant but one verse with joy and gladness is better for you than reading all the Revelations of the Omnipotent God with carelessness."

If a believer is giving a Feast, it is his or her privilege to arrange the devotional programme. However no local spiritual assembly is bound to observe the custom which has grown up of having one believer or more acting as hosts at a Nineteen-Day Feast. The Assembly can take full charge of the devotional and have the cost of refreshments defrayed from the local funds at its disposal. There should be no rigidity of procedure in these respects.

The second stage is usually termed "the business part," of the Feast, an appellation which can be misconstrued.

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"WE SHALL NOT FAIL"

HANDS CONFERENCE IN LUXEMBURG.

"We shall not fail, but tired and blissful, will meet in London at The Most Great Jubilee."

With these words, Hand of The Cause, Mr. Hasan Balyuzi brought to a close this seventh and last Crusade Conference of the Hands of the Cause in Europe, the members of the European Auxiliary Boards and National Spiritual Assemblies gathered in Luxemburg from December 7th to December 9th, 1962.

Honoured by the presence of 'Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhiyyih Khánum, the Conference was bountifully inspired and guided. Dr. Grossman, Dr. Giachery, Dr. Mühlischlegel and Mr. Balyuzi completed a most impressive representation of the Hands of the Cause. Participants exceeded one hundred.

The Press and a Television News Flash helped to make an effective proclamation of the Faith in the Grand Duchy. A "Unity Luncheon" arranged for the Sunday exceeded all expectations in numbers attending. Visitors, Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í, were attracted from far distances, accommodation was swamped and the restaurant staff overwhelmed!

At the close of the luncheon, Rúhiyyih Khánum graciously addressed all present. Speaking of experiences in her many travels, especially those in Africa, she called for teaching the spiritual qualities of the Faith and love for Bahá'u'lláh. These were the fundamentals in acceptance of our Faith—that we accept the Manifestation, love Him, believe in Him, be regenerated by Him.

Returning to Conference sessions, inspiring reports from N.S.A's revealed real progress in all fifteen countries of Europe. Some weaknesses and difficult places still remain, but there is confidence that these are well within our capacity to overcome.

It is very noteworthy that the two European countries where obstacles to teaching are greatest—where no public meetings are permitted, and no publicity whatever can be undertaken—have not only exceeded their goals by personal teaching, but have also achieved the most consolidated Assemblies, composed of local believers, on this Continent!

A few European goals still remain unfulfilled, but with the determination to move, dedication and growing teaching capacity, there is no reason why they should not be successfully achieved.

The outer construction of the Mother Temple of Europe is now complete and can be seen for miles around. It has received much publicity in many countries. Some of the interior decoration will be possible before Riqván 1963, but more money is required to complete this interior and supplementary work. Because of the forty four Government injunctions required to be fulfilled before permission can be granted to use the Temple for public worship, it is not likely that the official dedication can take place by Riqván 1963. The German N.S.A. are, however, arranging for a Festival Service to be held in the Temple at the time of the Most Great Jubilee Celebrations in London.

These Conferences, having no administrative authority, pass no resolutions and do not make minutes. The recommendations from the body of the Conference will, however, soon be circulated to the participants and this authoritative information will then be communicated to the friends.

Meanwhile we pass on to you, in outline, guiding principles which we feel emerged clearly from the general discussions:

1. To ensure victory, existing assemblies must be maintained at all costs.

2. These Assemblies must be consolidated: The Universal House of Justice must not be raised on a "crumbling" foundation.
3. Every possible new Assembly must be gained, for these Institutions are the bedrock of the Universal House of Justice. They are also the true basis for Bahá'í statistical information to the world.
4. More and more individual teaching: somewhere, someone may "spark off" mass conversion in Europe.
5. Each believer to obtain an ever deeper understanding of the Covenant and the need for firmness therein.

This is the sole protection for our beloved Cause. Such is our responsibility in ensuring that any jealous attacks aimed at destroying the Oneness of our Faith will be as unsuccessful now and in the future as they have been in the past.

Speaking on the Convention in the Holy Land for the election of the Universal House of Justice, Rúhiyyih Khánum said that this would be a very great Spiritual occasion, and that everything was being arranged by the Hands in the Holy Land to that end.

Rúhiyyih Khánum was looking forward eagerly to that day when some of the burden carried by the twenty-two surviving Hands of the Cause would rest firmly on the shoulders of the Universal House of Justice.

Nearly all those appointed by the beloved Guardian to this high station of Hands of the Cause are very overtired and sick, but through the mercy of God they are rendering great services—bringing the spirit of the Guardian to the Bahá'ís. The success of the Crusade and the protection of the Cause since the passing of Shoghi Effendi has been due to their holding firmly to his guidance in every possible detail. Their love comes to all the friends.

It was emphasised that to teach with wisdom, particularly in some places in Europe, is still very, very necessary. We should temper audacity with caution, avoiding over-zealousness so that we do not lose any ground. Government reprisals should not be provoked against small communities quite unable to cope with such conditions.

NEWS ITEMS FOR BRITAIN

SWITZERLAND deeply appreciated a most successful teaching tour by our Mrs. Meharangiz Munsiff, which was followed by eight declarations.

LUXEMBURG. Our British pioneer settler, Mr. Ronald Bates, now chairman of the Luxemburg N.S.A., welcomed all to the Conference—and we were also delighted to meet his wife and infant daughter.

DENMARK. It was our great pleasure to meet Mr. Egon Kamming again—representative of the Danish N.S.A. He conveys his greetings and those of his wife to friends in Britain.

A CLOSING TEACHING NOTE FROM RÚHIYYIH KHANUM

Have purity of motive in teaching—be like 'Abdu'l-Bahá: love everybody without ulterior motive of what we are going to get out of them—We should do something for everybody who crosses our path so that they will all get a ray from us. In this pure way we should help receptive souls to deepen in His Teachings.

JOAN AND ERNEST GREGORY.

TEACHING CONFERENCE

Teaching Conference took place this year in the Tempest Anderson Hall, York, December 29th and 30th, 1962.

About 150 friends from all parts of the British Isles gathered in this hall, to plan the closing days of the beloved Guardian's Ten Year Crusade. During the Conference the Words of the Holy Ones were used for prayer and meditation, chosen by the four Assemblies of York, Sheffield, Leeds and Bradford.

Our deliberations were blessed by the cable from the Hands in Haifa, who urged us to redouble our efforts in these last days of the Crusade and we were happy to have with us Hand of the Cause Dr. Mühlischlegel, whose wise and gracious counsels were an inspiration. He spoke of the coming, once again, of a Manifestation of God to bless this world and of our privilege in recognising and serving him. He reminded us that we live in a day when everyone is summoned to be a teacher and he quoted 'Abdu'l-Bahá's words about the gift of teaching which "draweth unto us the grace of God and is our first obligation."

Tony McCarthy reviewed the history of the British Bahá'í community since 1944. At that time there were only five Local Spiritual Assemblies and about one hundred and twenty-five believers. Three great campaigns conceived and led by the Guardian had brought us to this day when there were forty-nine Local Spiritual Assemblies. We were in the last few months of the Ten Year Crusade, and goals set by Shoghi Effendi had been largely achieved, but Tony reminded us of the prime requisites before the potentialities of our community could be fully realised and he mentioned in particular the Guardian's last letter to the British community in 1957.

The Secretary of the N.T.C., in her comprehensive and encouraging report, referred to the attributes of a vigorously functioning Local Spiritual Assembly; she spoke of its need to care for the spiritual life of its community, to care for each member as parents for their children, to encourage the friends to understand the spiritual significance of giving to the funds and to be vitally concerned with its primary function of teaching.

Reports of the campaigns in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, as well as those from the Hebrides, Shetland and the Orkneys, revealed a picture of hard work and initiative and a faith that though immediate visible results were few, the seeds sown would bear fruit. All emphasised the vital importance of prayer, the personal approach and fireside teaching.

The closing meeting on Saturday was concerned with various aspects of the Hands' great message concerning the Most Great Jubilee. Adib Taherzadeh spoke of the Heroic Age of our Faith and of its heroes who were intoxicated by Balá'u'lláh and Abdu'l-Bahá. That age had gone for ever and we now live in the more sober atmosphere of the Formative Age. Yet, he said, Bahá'u'lláh has left behind for us the ocean of His utterance; only by plunging into this ocean can we learn to know Him. He spoke of the Guardian's herculean task in welding together all the elements of the Bahá'í world of yesterday into one vast, vigorously functioning world community of today—a community unique in the history of mankind. Ernest Gregory spoke of the individual's contribution to the spreading of our Faith, whether it be a simple act of hospitality or giving to the funds; whether it be passing the message on to a personal friend or active teaching or pioneering. Charles MacDonald dealt with that part of the message concerned with the election of the Universal House of Justice, whilst Joan Gregory spoke of the need

to be united in the face of inevitable crises; but she warned us against what 'Abdu'l-Bahá has called "the unity of the graveyard."

At the Sunday morning session entitled "Achieve Still Mightier Victories," Marion Hofman presented us with the unfinished picture of the Crusade and with her usual dynamic approach showed us how to complete it. She listed for us the four points given by Rúhiyyih Khánum as achievements for the British Bahá'ís for the last phase of the glorious Crusade. They were:—

- (1) Fill the gaps in the lapsed assemblies.
- (2) Preserve the stability of the 48 goal assemblies.
- (3) Grasp all opportunities to exceed the goal.
- (4) Could you get five more assemblies

Marion then called upon the Bahá'ís to complete the first one 'pronto' not 'manana.' Each of the gaps was indicated on a wonderful visual aid designed by John Morley which represented the "sunburst at midnight," to which the Bahá'í Faith has been likened. Each of the gaps was "auctioned" and the majority of them were filled in a very short space of time by valiant souls who arose to pioneer, and others who donated generously to help the pioneers to reach their posts. There was some consultation and then we were introduced to Mr. Rex Ransley who has been appointed by the International Bahá'í Council as Public Relations Officer for the World Congress. He offered to all present advice concerning local publicity.

Mrs. Ferraby, just over from Haifa, gave news from the World Congress Arrangements Committee; reported that one hundred and sixty members of the British community had volunteered help at the Congress, but appealed for more helpers.

Hand of the Cause, Dr. Mühlischlegel closed this unique week-end by speaking from his heart, a wisdom and love we all deeply need. He spoke of the vital importance of the Nineteen-Day Feast in this day and he urged Local Spiritual Assemblies to attend to their agendas "with a spiritual view"; to deliberate with love, courtesy and frank consultation. He spoke of the need to reach a decision, to understand the decision and to execute it. He spoke of the need for prayer and meditation, and said that "our most holy being," should be in connection with Bahá'u'lláh.

Much else was said and done which cannot be reported. Nor can cold print express the spirit of this last National gathering before the Most Great Jubilee.

CABLES AT TEACHING CONFERENCE

From the Hands of the Cause in Haifa to Teaching Conference.

"Wish express friends assembled Teaching Conference loving appreciation contribution British Bahá'í success Crusade including aid Europe Australia. Urge redouble efforts remaining months preservation Assemblies strengthening required number to ensure incorporation maintenance tempo teaching work." (signed) Handsfaith. December 25th, 1962.

To the Hands in Haifa from Teaching Conference.

"Loving greetings Hand Mühlischlegel 150 attendants final Teaching Conference Crusade. Deep appreciation grateful thanks latest message Hands being studied in detail. Conscious vital importance final months demanding supreme individual effort. Immediate response thirteen pioneers financial aid. Confident gaps filled." (signed) York Conference. December 30th, 1962.

From Hands in Haifa to attendants at York Conference.

"Delighted spirit Conference especially those offering pioneer. Praying success efforts." (signed) Handsfaith. January 1st, 1963.

EDWARD THEODORE HALL

It was with deep regret I heard of the death of a much loved friend and guide, Edward Theodore Hall, who passed away on December 5th, 1962, in his 83rd year. Mr. Hall was the second Bahá'í in Manchester, and for many years Secretary of the Assembly when this was only the second Assembly in the British Isles. He was our last link with 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Together with our beloved "Uncle John" Craven (as we affectionately called him in this area) he went to Liverpool to greet 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Unfortunately the boat was delayed through fog and they had to wait until the following day for it to berth.

Many were the learned discussions in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Hall between Mr. Hall, Mr. Craven, who was his brother-in-law, and Mr. Sugar, another brother-in-law. What a wealth of knowledge and love was shared by this trio, so completely contrasting in types, yet so united in their desire to serve mankind and pass on the message of Bahá'u'lláh.

Mr. Hall's appreciation and love of literature and poetry led to the publication of many poems and articles, particularly in the *Salford Reporter* and in *John O'Groats Weekly*, all expressing his vision of the Kingdom.

I knew Mr. Hall from the early 1920's. He it was who taught me to play chess and all the time he was leading me to the goal of appreciation and acceptance of the Bahá'í Faith.

People from all parts of the world visited the Hall's home, and Mr. Hall's correspondence was voluminous, interesting and world-wide. This interchange of visits and letters is a commonplace thing today, but in the 1920's it took courage to pioneer in the field of racial prejudice. Mr. Hall never lacked courage or the ability to prove his point. Many times he must have felt disheartened or frustrated as he plodded on in his uphill fight to get recognition for the Faith.

I know that he had many precious Tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Many names ride across the panorama of my memory as I think of Mr. Hall in the first days of my friendship with him—the speakers who were invited to the Unitarian Chapel in Cross St.—Mrs. Bishop, Mrs. Schopflocher, Martha Root, Lady Blomfield, and many others, come to mind.

The meetings which took place weekly in the warehouse of Jeff and Albert Joseph, where their generous hospitality was renowned, were little gems of radiant warmth amongst the mundane, prosaic world of business and materialism.

Mr. Craven soon felt the impact of the spiritual truths and joined the "Bahá'í Movement," as it was designated in those days. Mr. Sugar was a competent debater, hard and shrewd. A politician and public speaker, he wanted the approach of logic and reasoning and sound conviction. Mr. Hall could fulfil both demands. He loved to meditate among the Writings available to us in those days. He was often carried away by the beauty and poignancy of Bahá'u'lláh's words, that created for him this Kingdom State which was his ideal; Mr. Craven, gentle poetic idealist that he was, found in Mr. Hall a counterpart. Together they would study the great spiritual truths and their eyes would light up with an inner radiance garnered from the harvest available to us all. Then along would come Mr. Sugar, unconvinced, with a rapier-like thrust, demanding answers to his questions—searching, probing, often searing questions—and he wanted answers which sometimes required research and a deep knowledge. What a joy it must have been to Mr. Hall when finally Mr. Sugar did become a member of the Bahá'í Movement.

For many years now, he has lived as an isolated believer, but always in touch; always dedicated in his desire to absorb more and more of the precious Words of the Beloved Beauty. To very few of the Believers today was Mr. Hall known personally, but I am sure there are very few who do not know his name and associate it with the invincible army of Torch Bearers of the Formative Age. PAULINE SENIOR.

DEATH OF A COVENANT BREAKER

Cable from Hands of the Cause in Haifa to the Bahá'í World

"Announce Sohbi arrogant Covenant Breaker cradle Faith who for more than forty years ceaselessly attacked holy Cause, unsuccessfully sought undermine its divine institutions, stricken fatal disease passed away under wretched circumstances, following same pattern other members contemptible band adversaries who lived witness complete frustration their hopes, abject failure their machinations designed prevent world-wide triumph Cause Bahá'u'lláh. Airmail message Hands, National Assemblies." (Signed) Handsfaith.

November 15th, 1962.

THE NINETEEN-DAY FEAST

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It is the period of consultation. The Secretary and the Treasurer of the Assembly and various committees present reports. The purpose of these reports is certainly not a mere enumeration of problems, resolutions and decisions. Otherwise the medium of a bulletin, a newsletter would suffice. The underlying principle is consultation and creative consultation at that. It is a human oddity to cling to the trivial and talk ad nauseam about it. I remember a Nineteen-Day Feast when a great deal was spoken about serving tea at a particular function and tempers were frayed. A principal to uphold most conscientiously is the inalienable, the sacred right of every believer to express freely his views on questions and problems that are the subject of consultation, and to offer suggestions. But the opinions of one or two people, no matter how fervently held and how forcibly expressed, cannot be taken as the considered view of the whole Feast unless definitely voted as a recommendation to the local assembly. And the assembly is duty bound to examine fully any recommendation that emanates from a Nineteen-Day Feast. Should it fail to do so, it will have gravely compromised a fundamental principle of the Cause, and has much to answer to Bahá'u'lláh.

But the deliberations of the Nineteen-Day Feast must rise above petty thoughts and obstinate haggings. They must bypass small matters of little value. Certainly any subject that is related to the work of the Cause and the life of the Community can be brought up at the Feast, but to make ponderous issues of trivialities is a grave betrayal of the purpose of the Feast. At all times this thought must be present in our minds that consultation is a unique feature of our Faith, and that consultation is not argumentation. Creative indeed must be the consultation of a Nineteen-Day Feast.

The third and concluding part of the Feast is of a social nature. When this stage is reached, the atmosphere of the Feast is well established. It can be dismal and intolerably weighed down, it can soar above the stars. And breaking bread together is an ancient and time-honoured custom of mankind, symbolic of fellowship and love. In a Bahá'í Feast it transcends the flat level of custom and rite, and becomes a scintillating expression of unity.

HASAN BALYUZI.

PERSECUTION in MOROCCO: IMPRISONED BAHÁ'ÍS' HEROISM

(News Letter issued from the World Centre by the International Bahá'í Council)

"I know not, O my God, what the Fire is with which Thou didst light the Lamp of Thy Cause, or what the Glass wherewith Thou didst preserve it from Thine enemies. By Thy might ! I marvel at the wonders of Thy Revelation, and at the tokens of Thy glory. I recognise, O Thou Who art my heart's Desire, that were fire to be touched by water it would instantly be extinguished, whereas the Fire which Thou didst kindle can never go out, though all the seas of the earth be poured upon it. Should water at any time touch it, the hands of Thy power would, as decreed in Thy Tablets, transmute that water into a fuel that would feed its flame."

Bahá'u'lláh.

Beloved Friends,

For the second time in the course of this glorious Ten Year Crusade, the enemies of the Cause of God have raised a commotion which is resounding in the ears of all mankind. The "water" with which they thought to extinguish the light of the Faith in an obscure district of Morocco has indeed been transmuted by the Hand of God into a "fuel" which has caused the world to blaze.

At the time when these lines are being written the ultimate fate of our imprisoned brethren is still unknown, the date for the hearing of their appeal has not yet arrived, nor can the repercussions of the events of the past weeks be accurately gauged. Now certainly is not the time to relax our efforts or to cease our fervent prayers, nor can the full story in all its details be told. But it is an opportune moment for the World Centre to share with the entire Bahá'í world the broad outlines and some of the stirring events of the first acts of this drama still unfolding before our eyes.

The first event in this extraordinary sequence was the arrest in Nador, on 12th April, 1962, of four believers of that city. Immediately afterwards, four believers from Tetuan, hearing of this, went to Nador and were themselves arrested, and finally the number of imprisoned Bahá'ís reached the total of fourteen. On May 3rd a cable from the National Spiritual Assembly of North-West Africa reached the Hands resident in the Holy Land with news of these actions, and it was decided that there should be no intervention from outside the country, but that every effort should be made to obtain the release of these innocents by local legal defence and interviews with government officials.

From the very outset the purpose of the Bahá'ís has been to obtain justice with as little publicity as possible, and to keep the matter local to Morocco. Even within the Bahá'í Community news was not disseminated to the believers until it had already been published in the press of the world as a result of the actions of the enemies of the Faith.

The influences motivating these arrests are by no means

clear. The Mulláhs had for some time been opposing the Faith and one of the Ministers was also reported to have said that "during sixty years of occupation the French were unable to convert even one of our subjects. These people (i.e. the Bahá'ís) during a short time have succeeded in taking away many of our well educated and intelligent people."

The imprisoned believers, all of whom are young in years, and all except one of whom are young also in the Faith, showed wonderful devotion in their plight. The spirit of the wives of some of them is exemplified by the wife who, on learning that an appeal for clemency written on her behalf by an acquaintance stated that the accused regretted their acts and asserted their adherence to Islám, unhesitatingly said "Destroy the letter. My husband is a Bahá'í, and he will remain a Bahá'í. He was imprisoned for the Faith of God." Another wife who was not a Bahá'í, who is only 17 years old and whose husband had been imprisoned fifteen days after their wedding, has now become deeply attracted to the Faith and intends to declare herself a Bahá'í.

For four months, while a legal committee of the Bahá'ís of Morocco, aided by an able French lawyer of Rabat, explored in vain all ways to obtain either the release of the prisoners or an early hearing of their case, these fourteen souls were kept in strict isolation from their fellow-Bahá'ís, and only a few messages could be passed orally via the women members of their families who could occasionally visit them. In August a devoted Egyptian Bahá'í lawyer arrived in Morocco to join in the defence of the believers. The authorities returned no answer to his applications, but he was able to see the prisoners, to bring them news and assurance, and to bring back to the Bahá'í Community an account of the steadfastness and devotion of these dear friends.

There had been a number of attacks on the Faith in the Moroccan press, but on August 10th the French newspaper "Le Monde" published an article headed "Inquisition in Morocco," which drew forth a reply in a Moroccan paper. On 22nd August the Hands asked the United States' National Spiritual Assembly to make representations to the Moroccan diplomatic missions in Washington and at the United Nations to make clear to them the non-political character of the Faith, its world-wide extent and true nature, as it was evident that the authorities in their country had been misinformed on these points.

At last, on 31st October, after more than six months of imprisonment, the fourteen accused were arraigned before the Regional Court of Nador which reviewed the accusations and committed the prisoners for trial before the Criminal Court of the same town on the charges of (1) rebellion and disorder, (2) attacks on public security, (3) constitution of

an association of criminals, (4) constitution of an illegal association and (5) attacks on religious faith.

Contrary to the expectations of the enemies of the Faith, the reaction of the general public at the initial hearing, having at first been indifferent, became steadily more favourable to the accused and more and more indignant at the nature of the trial.

Early in October it had been reported to the Hands residing in the Holy Land that the Mulláhs were inciting the ignorant against the Faith and that pressure was being brought to bear on local lawyers not to defend the Bahá'ís. The non-Bahá'í parents of the accused were also being used to try to persuade them to renounce their faith.

In view of these developments and the lack of response from official circles in Morocco, the Hands cabled certain National Spiritual Assemblies to contact Moroccan representatives in their countries and also contact was established with the Ambassadors of certain countries in Morocco, requesting the aid of their good offices on an unofficial level. The aid of other influential bodies was also obtained, particularly that of the International League for the Rights of Man, whose Chairman, Mr. Roger Baldwin, wrote to the Minister of Justice in Morocco.

On December 10th the trial in the Criminal Court of Nador opened, the accused being defended by four of the most able lawyers in Morocco who were advised by two Bahá'í lawyers. It quickly became apparent that no attempt was being made to prove the five charges of the indictment, rather were the accused being charged by the presiding judge with not conforming to the practices of Islám, to which the accused explained that, as they were Bahá'ís, these practices did not concern them.

"So you believe that this Religion follows Islám?"

"Yes."

"Then it abrogates Islám."

"It rather renews Islám."

"How does it renew Islám whilst it has changed prayers, fasting, pilgrimage, etc.?"

"It renews Islám in the same way as Islám renewed the Christian Religion."

The trial was thus seen to be a direct attack on the Bahá'í Faith and its followers as such and involved the far-reaching question of whether a Muslim may change his faith or not. In a specific instance of a Muslim becoming converted to Judaism, the Minister for Islamic Affairs, M. Allal El Fassi, had publicly declared that he had nothing to say against it. For this reason, and because he had instigated the prosecution of the Bahá'ís, the defending counsel requested that M. Allal El Fassi be called as a witness. This the court refused.

Finally, on the grounds that the prisoners were being interrogated on matters that had nothing to do with the five counts of the indictment, the defending lawyers refused to plead any further and withdrew from the court.

The verdict of the trial and the sentences imposed were:—
Sentenced to death:

Muhammad Muhammad 'Alí Al-Kabdání, 23 years of age, unmarried, schoolteacher.

Muhammad Ba-Arafa Ma'anán, 29, unmarried, inspector of police.

Fu'ád Muhammad Javád At-Tahhan, 38, married, 3 children, school director.

Imprisoned for life:

'Abdu'l-Azíz 'Abdu'lláh Al-Waryashí, 22, married, no children, school bursar.

Muhammad Al-Jabbání Al-Hassan, 24, married, one son, teacher.

'Abdu's-Salam Al-Haj Salim As-Sabtí, 31, married, instructor.

Muhammad Muhammad Sa'id Al-Baggalí, 20, unmarried, tailor.

Muhammad Ahmad As-Sabtí, 32, married, one child, cashier.

Imprisoned for 15 years:

'Abdu's-Salam Milwad Ash-Shukrí, 28, married, one child, state official.

The announcement of these sentences came as a thunder-clap. The response from the press of the world was immediate and indignant. By a curious irony of fate the new Moroccan Constitution guaranteeing freedom of religion had only recently been overwhelmingly accepted by a national referendum, and on 7th December, three days before the trial opened, Morocco had voted in favour of a United Nations Resolution for a draft convention on the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance.

In view of these events and the reputation of Morocco for religious tolerance, the widespread reaction was one of stupefaction at this resurrection of a mediaeval inquisition in the 20th Century. One Moroccan newspaper wrote on 17th December: "It can be seen that there is no question in this affair of any accusation other than that of having embraced a new Faith. A right which M. Allal El Fassi has recognized in his time in connection with a Muslim converted to Judaism.

"The purposes of God are inscrutable," the severity of this verdict and its intransigence are, on the contrary, very clear. The attachment of Morocco to the Charter of the United Nations, to the Declaration of Human Rights, which has been many times proclaimed; the recent vote of our representative at U.N.O. supporting a proposal recommending the elimination of all discrimination and of all racial and religious intolerance; the fundamental principles of our Constitution are all diametrically opposed to such a trial and such a verdict.

"There is no doubt that the Nador affair will provoke profound repercussions here and abroad and that it will disappoint all those who thought that liberalism and tolerance were one of the brightest gems of Morocco."

This was followed by a long, most excellent article describing the Bahá'í Faith. In response, M. Allal El Fassi wrote two articles attacking the Faith and threatening to institute legal proceedings against the writer of the above articles. The reply of the paper's editor to this threat was to open a column headed "Tribune" inviting his readers to submit any articles they wished on the Bahá'í Faith. A subsequent edition of this paper carried articles favourable to the Faith occupying almost a whole page, including a feature in which M. Allal El Fassi's description of the Faith was set side by side with the description from Larousse Encyclopedia.

Immediately upon receipt of the news of the verdict an office was set up in a New York hotel where 'Abdu'l-Bahá had once stayed, where the work of obtaining redress for these innocent Bahá'ís could be organized. Since then a group of believers has been working there day and night.

All efforts to obtain an unbiased hearing based on constitutional law having failed, and pending the outcome of the Appeal, the Hands authorized National Spiritual Assemblies throughout the world to obtain widespread publicity in the press. Approaches to various governments were authorized, including a telegram from the British National Assembly to Queen Elizabeth II. The Bahá'í International Community wrote to U Thant, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and other dignitaries, and, quite independently, the British U.N. Association cabled U Thant requesting his intervention. The United States' National Assembly made strong representations to high government officials on behalf of the United States Bahá'ís.

As the session of the General Assembly of the United Nations was to close on the evening of the 21st December, telegrams were sent to thirty-five delegations appealing for help under the Genocide Convention, which is part of International Law.

The next day, causing widespread consternation, a report appeared in the "*Observer*" of London that the death sentences were to be carried out the following Wednesday, Boxing Day. Immediately most National Spiritual Assemblies were asked to cable U Thant. Fortunately this report turned out to be misinformed.

Since that date the stream of comment in the press of the world has swelled far beyond anything that was produced by the Persian persecutions of 1955, and assistance has been forthcoming from influential people in many lands, including the International Commission of Jurists which is considering sending an observer to the appeal trial at the end of January.

On January 1st all National and Local Spiritual Assemblies were asked to cable the Sultan of Morocco appealing for justice, an action that should leave no doubt in the minds of the authorities of the world-wide spread of the Faith.

Then, on January 2nd it was announced over Monaco Radio that M. Allal El Fassi and two other Cabinet Ministers of Morocco had had to resign. This cabinet crisis had a number of causes, of which a prominent one was the furore which had been aroused by the Nador trial.

That is how the situation stands at the moment, pending the hearing of the Appeal at the end of January or early in February. News has just arrived that it was again possible for the Bahá'ís, on 24th December, to visit the prisoners, who are showing exemplary fortitude under great stress. Indeed one of them, Fu'ád Tahhan, the Syrian pioneer, bewailed the fact that his sentence had been appealed against, for this, if successful, would deprive him of the bounty of martyrdom.

As was stated in our last News Letter, such attacks on the Faith are only to be expected following great victories in teaching, and, as we can already witness, the fruits of the attacks are still further victories which excel anything we have achieved without them.

From the beginning of this affair the sole aim of the Cause has been to obtain justice and liberty for the persecuted Bahá'ís. At no time have we wished to bring the Kingdom of Morocco into disrepute, but the intransigence and un-wisdom of the enemies of the Faith in that country have themselves aroused the attention and censure of the whole world, and have forced the Bahá'í Community step by step to the point where our only recourse was to appeal to the highest international authorities and to the goodwill of the masses of mankind. Thus the enemies of the Faith find themselves now bereft of their power and facing the fact that they have blazoned the name of the Faith not only to the entire population of Morocco but from end to end of the world.

INTERNATIONAL BAHÁ'Í COUNCIL

World Centre of the Faith,
19th January 1963.