

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

August 1976

To the Friends assembled at the International Teaching Conference in Paris

Dearly loved Friends,

The brilliance of Paris in the story of European civilization bids fair to be renewed with even greater splendor during the Day of the Lord of Hosts and the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. The annals of Paris in this Day have already acquired eternal luster from events of mightier import, of greater universal significance and more sacred character than any which its past history has witnessed. The visits of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Center of God's inviolable Covenant, alone outshine in historical importance anything in the long history of France, and are immortalized in the greatly loved collection of His discourses given in that capital city. Beyond this, we recall with awe and pride that it was at 'Abdu'l-Bahá's instruction that the illustrious May Maxwell succeeded in establishing in Paris the first Bahá'í center on the European Continent, a continent described by Shoghi Effendi as "the cradle of a civilization to some of whose beneficent features the Pen of Bahá'u'lláh has paid significant tribute; on whose soil both the Greek and Roman civilizations were born and flourished; which has contributed so richly to the unfoldment of American civilization; the fountainhead of American culture; the mother of Christendom, and the scene of the greatest exploits of the followers of Jesus Christ," and experiencing "the first stirrings of that spiritual revolution" which must culminate in the permanent establishment throughout its diversified lands of the divinely ordained Order of Bahá'u'lláh. This first center was rapidly reinforced by the conversion of the first English believer and of the first Frenchman to accept the Faith—the distinguished Hippolyte Dreyfus, whose "preeminent role" it was to kindle "the torch which is destined to shed eternal illumination upon his native land and its people"—and by Laura Barney, whose "imperishable service" was to transmit to posterity *Some Answered Questions*. The steadfastness and devotion of the Paris Bahá'í Community during the dark and somber days of the Second World War earned great praise from the beloved Guardian of the Faith, while the recent signs of widespread and effective teaching work throughout France lend wings to the hope that this veteran, sorely tested and steadfast community is about to gather the harvest of those potent seeds sown and nourished so lovingly by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

It is highly propitious that this city, thrice blessed by the presence of the Master, should be the scene of the first International Bahá'í Conference in France and one of the eight International Conferences to be held around the world during the Five Year Plan. You are gathered in this historic spot to deliberate on the fortunes of that Plan, to derive inspiration from the deeds performed there in the Heroic Age of our Faith and from your association together, to rededicate yourselves to the service of Bahá'u'lláh and to determine, each and every one, how best you can promote the victory of the Five Year Plan. We call to your attention 'Abdu'l-Bahá's words:

The call of Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá can be heard far and wide. It is my hope that this soul-stirring melody of the Abhá Kingdom may also be raised high in Paris, for Paris is tumultuous in all things. I pray the Almighty that the music and singing of the beloved of God will be so loud that the vibrations thereof may cause the limbs of Paris to quake. I await very joyful tidings from the friends in Paris. Unquestionably the divine melody will in the future be raised in that city, but I long that this may happen in these days of the Covenant, and that you will be the enchanting songsters and the sweet-singing nightingales of that land.

Our hopes are high and we pray at the Sacred Threshold that from this Conference will surge throughout Europe a wave of such sacrificial teaching as will impel large numbers of its diverse and highly talented peoples to embrace the Faith of God and dedicate themselves to the redemption of mankind under the glorious banner of the Prince of Peace.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]

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