

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

January 1977

To the Followers of Bahá'u'lláh gathered at the International Teaching Conference in Bahia, Brazil

Dearly loved Friends,

With joyous hearts we hail the convocation of this first of the twin Latin American Conferences closing the series of eight International Bahá'í Conferences held during the midway period of the Five Year Plan.

The ringing call of Bahá'u'lláh in His Most Holy Book to the Rulers of America and the Presidents of the Republics therein was followed after an interval of more than four decades by the revelation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablets of the Divine Plan in which the beloved Master stressed the importance of the Republics of the South American Continent.

The first believer to respond to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's divine call was that star-servant of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, valiant, indomitable Martha Root, who in 1919 visited many important cities in South America. Two years later Leonora Holsapple Armstrong, mother of the Bahá'ís of Brazil, settled in Bahia. The teaching work in the continent progressed steadily to the point where, in 1937, the beloved Guardian launched his first Seven Year Plan paving the way for the raising in subsequent Plans of the institution of Bahá'u'lláh's Administrative Order in every one of its republics and in its islands. It was in the course of that first Seven Year Plan that 'Abdu'l-Bahá's beloved handmaid, May Maxwell, in 1940 won a martyr's crown when she laid down her life in Argentina, thereby adding further luster to the spiritual history of South America.

How truly fitting, then, that this auspicious Conference have its venue in the city of Bahia, singled out for special mention by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Tablets of the Divine Plan. And how timely it is at this crucial point in the Five Year Plan that the friends gathered in Bahia from many lands prayerfully consider, and arise to prosecute expeditiously all measures aimed at achieving glorious victory in all goals of the Plan.

Noteworthy progress has been achieved in many fields of service throughout the South American Bahá'í community, particularly in attracting to the Cause large numbers of its indigenous peoples. But myriads of pure-hearted souls have not yet heard the clarion call of Bahá'u'lláh and hungrily await the spiritual nourishment that only His followers can give them.

Steps must be taken to attract members of every stratum of society to the divine circle of the Faith through effective proclamation and teaching. Greater utilization of radio broadcasts is necessary, not only to reach all levels of society but also to deepen the believers themselves. The valuable and dynamic services of Bahá'í youth must be multiplied in the fields of pioneering and travel teaching. A far wider dissemination of Bahá'í literature must be accompanied by a continuous program of translation of the Sacred Text into the major indigenous languages of the continent.

The continental goals for South America of 8,670 centers and 2,293 Local Spiritual Assemblies must be won, and may even be surpassed, for every country must achieve the goals assigned to it. This calls for the dedicated effort of every National Spiritual Assembly, every Local Spiritual Assembly and indeed every believer. All the divinely ordained instruments of the Administrative Order of Bahá'u'lláh must now unite in executing a symphony of victory in all the unfinished goals of the Five Year Plan, winning thereby the good pleasure of the Blessed Beauty.

Beloved friends, go forward with complete assurance that a continent so rich in spiritual promise, so diverse in its peoples and races, so fertile for the planting of the seeds of Bahá'u'lláh's

Faith will yield a brilliant harvest for all who labor in that Divine Vineyard.

It is our fervent loving prayer at the Sacred Threshold that Bahá'u'lláh's bountiful confirmations and richest blessings may be showered upon you.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]