THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

February 1977

To the Followers of Bahá'u'lláh gathered at the International Teaching Conference in Mérida, Mexico

Dearly loved Friends,

With joyous hearts and eager anticipation we send warmest greetings to you the participants in the last of the eight great International Teaching Conferences marking the halfway point of the Five Year Plan.

The convening of this Conference in the Republic of Mexico, in the capital city of a state that was once an important part of a great Indian empire, provides a unique opportunity to initiate what may well become the widespread reawakening of a people whose ancestors more than 1,200 years ago developed one of the most brilliant pre-Columbian civilizations known to modern man. These present-day descendants, many of whom have already embraced the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh and who consider the Yucatán Peninsula and the seacoast lowlands and rugged spine of mountains joining North and South America to be their homeland, are among the very people mentioned by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Tablets of the Divine Plan as having a great destiny once they have accepted His Father's Cause. Here, too, and throughout Middle America, are those whose forefathers came from the Iberian Peninsula, Africa, and the Far East linking the Old with the New World.

Conscious of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's impassioned plea to promulgate the oneness of mankind to a spiritually impoverished humanity, a handful of itinerant Bahá'í teachers set forth four decades ago, traversed the land bridge connecting the two continents of the Western Hemisphere and carried the healing Message of Bahá'u'lláh to the Spanish-American Republics. Their dedicated efforts were rewarded when, in 1938, the first Local Spiritual Assembly in Latin America was formed in Mexico City. This initial triumph at the inception of the first of the teaching plans formulated by Shoghi Effendi spearheaded other victories leading to the formation of two, then of four Regional Spiritual Assemblies and ultimately to the establishment of National Spiritual Assemblies in each of the republics of Latin America and in the islands of the Caribbean.

Praiseworthy indeed were these achievements but the Bahá'í communities of Central America and the West Indies must not be content to rest on these laurels. The beloved Guardian during the last months of his precious life continually urged the friends of Latin America to pursue what he described as "the paramount task," the teaching work. How much more does that injunction apply today! In less than thirty months, approximately 900 groups and isolated centers and over 400 Local Spiritual Assemblies must be added to those already existing in the mainland and island nations of Middle America!

To accomplish this challenging task, intensive effort to attract new believers, be they black, brown, red or white, from all strata of society, must be exerted. Hand in hand with this endeavor, particularly in local communities, goes the development of the distinctive character of Bahá'í life. Prompt attention must also be given to the acquisition of local Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds and endowments; and the translation and publication of Bahá'í literature, especially in indigenous languages, must be accelerated.

Dear friends, if at the close of the Five Year Plan we are to witness the ensigns of victory lifted high, the wholehearted support of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh must be enlisted now and their energies systematically channeled into areas most in need. We cherish the hope that at this final Conference the friends will arise with enthusiasm and determination not only to win the remaining goals of the Plan but to carry out Shoghi Effendi's injunction to win the allegiance of members of the various tribes of American Indians to the Cause, thereby hastening the period

prophesied by the Master when the Indian peoples of America would become a source of spiritual illumination to the world.

Our hearts, our hopes and our prayers will be with you during all the days of your deliberations. May Bahá'u'lláh inspire each and every one of you.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]

This document has been downloaded from the Bahá'í Reference Library. You are free to use its content subject to the terms of use found at www.bahai.org/legal