

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Naw-Rúz 1980

To the Bahá'ís of the World

Dearly loved Friends,

The successful launching of the Seven Year Plan and the advances made in the first year of its opening phase mitigate, in some degree, the disasters and calamities which, in the past year, have assailed the struggling Faith of God. The newest wave of persecution unleashed against us in the Cradle of our Faith has been compounded by Divine decree afflicting the entire Bahá'í world community. In the full tide of their brilliant services to the Faith of God, and within the short span of twenty weeks three Chief Stewards of Bahá'u'lláh's embryonic World Order, the Hands of the Cause of God Enoch Olinga, Raḥmatu'lláh Muhájir and Ḥasan Balyúzí were summoned to the Abhá Kingdom, leaving the rest of us bereft and shocked by the enormity of our loss and the tragic brutality of the circumstances attending the murder of beloved Enoch Olinga and members of his family.

In Iran, the confusion which has seized the whole country opened the way for the fierce and inveterate enemies of the Faith, unrestrained by any effective authority, to indulge their fanatical hatred. The Holy House of the Báb has been demolished and proposals have been made to erase its very site. The Síyáh-Chál and Bahá'u'lláh's Home in Tehran have been seized, together with all other Holy Places and properties. One member of the National Spiritual Assembly and two of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Tehran have been kidnapped and the whereabouts of two of them is still unknown, while the third is still in prison. Also, a Counselor and some friends who are associated with the National Office or are members of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Tehran have been imprisoned. Bahá'ís have been heavily pressed to recant their faith and in one case a believer, who refused to do so, followed the glorious path of the martyrs and was executed. Beyond all this a campaign of vilification and false charges has been conducted against the friends in an effort to make them the scapegoat of unrestrained mobs.

And yet, as ever in the Cause of God, the beneficent operation of the dialectic of disaster and triumph is clearly apparent. The unwavering faith of the dearly loved, severely tested, ever-steadfast Persian Bahá'í community, guided by the heroic stand and example of its National Spiritual Assembly, supported and inspired by the Counselors and their Auxiliary Board members, has effected a spiritual revitalization of the beloved friends. They have united as one man to present a front of refulgent spirituality and assurance and appear, as one observer reports, like a dazzling community of eager, uplifted, radiant new believers.

Nor is the influence of their response to the sufferings engulfing them confined to their homeland. From farthest east to farthest west, from pole to pole, wherever the Standard of Bahá'u'lláh has been implanted, the friends have felt the impulse of sacrifice and risen to assume that enormous share of the work of the Faith in the fields of teaching, pioneering and financial contribution which the Persian friends, for the time being, are no longer able to shoulder.

The wonderful love aroused in Bahá'í hearts everywhere by the sudden, untimely passing of the beloved Hands of the Cause has moved the believers to dedicate themselves anew with increased ardor and self-sacrifice to the promotion of the work to which all the Hands of the Cause of God have dedicated their lives.

The worldwide response of the friends to these tragedies is the more heartening in view of the clear warnings voiced by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the beloved Guardian of the fierce and widespread opposition which the increasing growth of the Cause of God will arouse. There is no doubt of this. Shoghi Effendi called attention to "the extent and character of the forces that are destined to

contest with God's holy Faith," and supported his argument with "these prophetic and ominous words" from 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "HOW GREAT, HOW VERY GREAT IS THE CAUSE! HOW VERY FIERCE THE ONSLAUGHT OF ALL THE PEOPLES AND KINDREDS OF THE EARTH! ERELONG SHALL THE CLAMOR OF THE MULTITUDE THROUGHOUT AFRICA, THROUGHOUT AMERICA, THE CRY OF THE EUROPEAN AND OF THE TURK, THE GROANING OF INDIA AND CHINA, BE HEARD FROM FAR AND NEAR. ONE AND ALL THEY SHALL ARISE WITH ALL THEIR POWER TO RESIST HIS CAUSE. THEN SHALL THE KNIGHTS OF THE LORD, ASSISTED BY HIS GRACE FROM ON HIGH, STRENGTHENED BY FAITH, AIDED BY THE POWER OF UNDERSTANDING, AND REINFORCED BY THE LEGIONS OF THE COVENANT, ARISE AND MAKE MANIFEST THE TRUTH OF THE VERSE: 'BEHOLD THE CONFUSION THAT HATH BEFALLEN THE TRIBES OF THE DEFEATED!'"

The beloved Guardian expatiated at length upon this theme and its inevitable outcome: "Stupendous as is the struggle which His words foreshadow, they also testify to the complete victory which the upholders of the Greatest Name are destined eventually to achieve."

Now, therefore, it is our sacred duty to make the utmost use of our freedom, wherever it exists, to promote the Cause of God while we may. The surest way to do this and to win the good-pleasure of Bahá'u'lláh is to pursue, with dedication and unrelenting vigor, the goals of whatever Plan is in force, for Bahá'u'lláh has stated: "To assist Me is to teach My Cause."

A good start has been made with the Seven Year Plan. At the World Center of the Faith the uninterrupted progress in raising the Seat of the House of Justice, repairing and refurbishing the House of 'Abdu'lláh Páshá, further extension of the gardens surrounding the Hāram-i-Aqdas at Bahjí, and the initiation of a general reorganization of the work of the World Center to accommodate its ever-growing needs and make use of the most up-to-date technological developments, have taken place.

In the international sphere the enthusiasm with which the friends everywhere greeted the launching of the Seven Year Plan and girded themselves to achieve the goals of the first two-year phase, their generous and sacrificial outpouring of funds, the confident and sustained efforts exerted to carry forward the two sacred enterprises initiated in the Indian subcontinent and at the heart of the vast Pacific Ocean, the constant activity of the Bahá'í International Community in fostering its relations with the United Nations, the great increase in the number of children's Bahá'í classes and the innumerable victories won in the teaching field, recorded by the establishment of the worldwide community of the Most Great Name in over 106,000 localities, all testify to the unassailable, and indeed ever-increasing vigor of the Cause of God.

The number of pioneers and traveling teachers who have entered the field during the first year of the Seven Year Plan, and the increase in the number of national communities which have sent them out are highly encouraging. This stream of pioneers and traveling teachers must be increased and more widely diffused, and we fervently hope that, at the very least, all those pioneers filling the assigned goals of the first phase of the Seven Year Plan will be at their posts by Riḍván 1981.

In the field of proclamation unprecedented publicity has been accorded the Cause of God, chiefly as a result of the persecutions in Iran. In addition significant gains have been made in the Bahá'í radio operation in South America, where short wave transmission has greatly extended the range of Radio Bahá'í in Otavalo, Ecuador, and where a new station is being established in Puno, in Peru, on the shores of Lake Titicaca. Both these achievements offer immeasurable new opportunities for the teaching, proclamation and consolidation of the Cause in that area.

In 88 languages of the world the supply of Bahá'í literature has been enriched, while three new languages have been added to bring to 660 the number of those in which Bahá'í material is

available.

The National Spiritual Assembly of Transkei with its seat in Umtata will be formed at Riḍván 1980. At Riḍván 1981 six new National Spiritual Assemblies will be formed; two in Africa, Namibia with its seat in Windhoek, and Bophuthatswana with its seat in Mmabatho; three in the Americas, the Leeward Islands with its seat in St. John's, Antigua, the Windward Islands with its seat in Kingstown, St. Vincent, and Bermuda with its seat in Hamilton; one in Australasia, Tuvalu with its seat in Funafuti. With great joy we announce the reformation of the National Spiritual Assembly of Uganda, to take place at Riḍván 1981.

In the course of the coming year, the Universal House of Justice, in consultation with the International Teaching Centre, will review the accomplishments of the initial phase and will then announce to all National Spiritual Assemblies the goals towards which they should strive in the next stage of the Seven Year Plan.

During this final year of the initial phase National Spiritual Assemblies are urged to continue their wise and dignified approaches to people prominent in all areas of human endeavor in order to acquaint them with the nature and spirit of the Faith and to win their esteem and friendship. At the same time vigorous campaigns must be continually mounted to proclaim more and more directly and to as large audiences as possible the existence and basic principles of the Faith of God. Now is the time, as all human endeavors to repair the old order only result in deeper and deeper confusion, to proclaim constantly and openly the claims of the Faith and the redemptive power of Bahá'u'lláh.

The marvelous momentum generated at the beginning of the Plan and now propelling the Bahá'í world community forward to the achievement of the immediate objectives of the initial phase must be maintained and indeed accelerated, so that firm foundations in the spiritual life of the community may be laid and its forces gathered for the winning of the specific tasks with which it will be challenged in the major part of the Plan.

Our hearts go out in love and admiration to the friends in Iran and in gratitude to the believers throughout the world for their spontaneous defense of their persecuted brethren and their shouldering of the load which must, at all costs, be borne.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]