

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

21 November 1990

To the Friends gathered at the Moscow Conference

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

It is with a sense of joy and wonderment that we address you, the representatives of the Bahá'í communities throughout the USSR and of the National Spiritual Assemblies which have been given the awesome responsibility for raising up the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in that vast area. The march of world events has utterly transformed the scene of your labors, presenting you with formidable problems but with achievements and opportunities which must cause your hearts to sing with joy to the Almighty.

In the Heroic Age of the Faith many events occurred to link it with the peoples of Russia. We need but mention the offer of asylum extended to Bahá'u'lláh by the Russian Government prior to His banishment to Iraq; His Tablet addressed to Tsar Alexander II; the deep interest that the Cause aroused in Russian scholars and leading literary figures; the glories of the Bahá'í community which arose in 'Ishqábád; the exemplary action of the members of that community in appealing for clemency for its persecutors; and the raising of the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in that city. A beginning which showed such promise was eclipsed by the restrictions following the First World War but, even in those dark days, the beloved Guardian saw clearly that it was but a temporary veiling of the light of this Revelation. In a letter he wrote in Persian to the believers in 'Ishqábád on 11 January 1923 we find these insightful words:

There is no doubt that the day will come when the very people who are now engaged in destroying the foundations of faith in God and promoting this baseless doctrine of materialism will arise and, by their own hand, snuff out the flame of this commotion. They will sweep away the entire structure of their unrestrained godlessness and will arise with heart and soul, and with hitherto unmatched vigor, to atone for their past failures. They will join the ranks of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh and arise to promote His Cause.... If the friends remain steadfast, and discharge their duties with loyalty and prudence, the veils of God's inscrutable wisdom will be lifted and extraordinary events will be witnessed. The hosts of divine confirmation, fortified by the power of the Spirit will, in unimaginable ways and from unexpected quarters, provide the means for the triumph of the Cause of our Self-Subsisting Lord, and in so doing will brighten the eyes of the faithful throughout the world.

And again, on 2 January 1930:

Russia will in the future become a delectable paradise, and the teaching work in that land will be carried out on an unprecedented scale. The House of Worship established in its very heart will shine forth with dazzling splendor, and the call of the Most Great Name will reverberate in its temples, its churches, and its places of worship. We need to show forth patience and forbearance. In these momentous convulsions there lie concealed mighty and consummate mysteries, which will be revealed to men's eyes in the days to come.

We have been blessed to see the beginning of the unfoldment of these mysteries, and to this generation has been entrusted the task of conveying the Message of Bahá'u'lláh to the many races and peoples of that land, and of raising up Bahá'í communities in its cities, towns and villages.

The society in the midst of which you are called upon to work is undergoing radical changes in every aspect of its life, changes which are but a concentration of the problems with which every country, and world society as a whole, is grappling. The underlying cause of this

transformation is that this is the age of the Oneness of Mankind, and therefore every people, whether of the USSR or in other parts of the world, must find its way to the unity in diversity, the harmony of formerly conflicting elements, which Shoghi Effendi held forth as the goal towards which mankind is striving. On this theme he wrote on 11 March 1936 to the emerging Bahá'í communities of the West, directing their attention to the challenging statements made by the Founder of their Faith:

"A new life," Bahá'u'lláh proclaims, "is, in this age, stirring within all the peoples of the earth; and yet none hath discovered its cause, or perceived its motive." "O ye children of men," He thus addresses His generation, "the fundamental purpose animating the Faith of God and His Religion is to safeguard the interests and promote the unity of the human race ... This is the straight path, the fixed and immovable foundation. Whatsoever is raised on this foundation, the changes and chances of the world can never impair its strength, nor will the revolution of countless centuries undermine its structure." "The well-being of mankind," He declares, "its peace and security are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established." "So powerful is the light of unity," is His further testimony, "that it can illuminate the whole earth. The one true God, He Who knoweth all things, Himself testifieth to the truth of these words ... This goal excelleth every other goal, and this aspiration is the monarch of all aspirations." "He Who is your Lord, the All-Merciful," He, moreover, has written, "cherisheth in His heart the desire of beholding the entire human race as one soul and one body. Haste ye to win your share of God's good grace and mercy in this Day that eclipseth all other created days."

Commenting on the implications of these momentous words, Shoghi Effendi states:

The unity of the human race, as envisaged by Bahá'u'lláh, implies the establishment of a world commonwealth in which all nations, races, creeds and classes are closely and permanently united, and in which the autonomy of its state members and the personal freedom and initiative of the individuals that compose them are definitely and completely safeguarded....

A world federal system, ruling the whole earth and exercising unchallengeable authority over its unimaginably vast resources, blending and embodying the ideals of both the East and the West, liberated from the curse of war and its miseries, and bent on the exploitation of all the available sources of energy on the surface of the planet, a system in which Force is made the servant of Justice, whose life is sustained by its universal recognition of one God and by its allegiance to one common Revelation—such is the goal towards which humanity, impelled by the unifying forces of life, is moving.

No one who contemplates the present conditions of the world, let alone of the USSR, could expect that such a consummation will come without great effort, without traversing manifold difficulties. But the mainspring of its achievement is the awakening of ever more human beings to the truth of the Message of Bahá'u'lláh, and their adherence to His Cause and His Covenant, the illumination of their spiritual and moral lives by the light of His Teachings, and the unification of their efforts through His Administrative Order. Through their individual transformation and through their combined efforts they will transform the conditions of the world and bring to birth a new, worldwide civilization.

The culmination of this process lies in centuries ahead, but it is not in the end alone that joy is found. The true nature of the human soul is spiritual; it is the relationship of each soul to God and its kinship with every other soul that brings true happiness and fulfillment. Our Bahá'í communities are still far from the perfection that Bahá'u'lláh desires for us, but it is in our loving support of one another, in our forbearance of each other's failings, in our determination to develop and uphold the institutions which Bahá'u'lláh has ordained, in our spirit of love and of tolerance

towards all people, and in our courage and perseverance through all difficulties, that we achieve the fulfillment of our lives.

Now, at this Conference, you are to consider the conditions of the Cause in your lands, to examine the possibilities before you and to recommend the courses of action that you deem to be most advantageous in the months immediately ahead. There are tasks to which you must now set your hands to prepare for the achievements of tomorrow. Do not permit the problems in your way to dismay you or deflect you from your goals; it is to overcome the problems of humankind that the Bahá'í community has been brought into being. Your vital task is to immerse yourselves in the study of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, to enrich your spiritual lives and to discover thereby the best direction for your endeavors, to express them in your actions, and to convey them to those who thirst for guidance. You are the instruments of the purpose of God, the channels of His grace, the bearers of His Message, the holders of the key to the challenges of the age. Follow His guidance and the successes you will achieve will be an inspiration to your fellow-believers and the quickener of hope in the hearts of the people.

Be assured that as you arise for the promotion of His Cause, the confirmations of Bahá'u'lláh will surround you, and you will witness the truth of these exalted words uttered by Him in His Most Great Prison:

Verily, We behold you from Our realm of Glory, and shall aid whosoever will arise for the triumph of Our Cause with the hosts of the Concourse on high and a company of Our favored angels.

We shall pray ardently on your behalf in the Holy Shrines and eagerly await news of the outcome of your deliberations.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]