

Chapter 11

Rúhíyyih Rabbani

Original English



Chapter 11

The Development of the International Institutions of the Faith

The development of the World Centre of the Faith under the aegis of the Guardian represents one of the major achievements of his life and can only be compared in importance to the spread and consolidation of the Cause itself throughout the entire globe. Of the unique significance of this Centre Shoghi Effendi wrote that it was: "...the Holy Land — the Qiblih of a world community, the heart from which the energizing influences of a vivifying Faith continually stream, and the seat and centre around which the diversified activities of a divinely appointed Administrative Order revolve".

When in 1921 Shoghi Effendi assumed the responsibilities conferred upon him in the *Will and Testament* of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Bahá'í holdings in Haifa and Akka consisted of the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh in Bahjí, which was situated in a house belonging to the Afnan heirs of the daughter of Bahá'u'lláh, in whose home He had been interred after His ascension; the Shrine of the Báb on Mt Carmel, surrounded by a few plots of land, purchased during the lifetime of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, on one of which stood the Oriental Pilgrim House; the house of 'Abbúd, where Bahá'u'lláh had resided for many years in Akka and in which He revealed the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*; the Riḍván and adjacent gardens; and the house of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Haifa. The Mansion of Bahá'u'lláh, adjoining His Shrine, was occupied by the Arch-Covenant-breaker Muḥammad 'Alí; and the title to almost all the Bahá'í properties was registered either in the names of various members of the family or in those of a few Bahá'ís. So insecure was the entire legal position of the Faith and its properties that the work Shoghi Effendi accomplished during his ministry in safeguarding and adding to these Holy Places, in extending the lands surrounding them, in registering these lands, in many instances in the names of locally incorporated Palestine Branches of various National Bahá'í Assemblies, and in securing exemption from municipal and national taxes for them, is little short of miraculous. When we remember that his position in 1922 was so precarious that Muḥammad 'Alí was emboldened to seize the keys of Bahá'u'lláh's Holy Tomb, that many Muslim and Christian elements, jealous of the universal favour 'Abdu'l-Bahá had enjoyed at the end of His life, were only too anxious to discredit His young successor in the eyes of the authorities, and that Shoghi Effendi himself had been immediately overwhelmed by grave problems of every conceivable nature, within and without the Cause, we cannot but marvel anew at the wisdom and statesmanship that characterized his conduct of affairs at the World Centre.

The Heroic Age of the Faith had passed. What Shoghi Effendi termed the Formative Age dawned with his own ministry, and was shaped for all time by him. Fully realizing that neither



ORIGINAL

his own station nor his capacities were the same as those of his beloved Master, Shoghi Effendi refused to imitate Him in any way, in dress, in habits, in manner. To do so would have been, he believed, completely lacking in both judgment and respect. A new day had come to the Cause, new methods were required. This was to be the era of emancipation of the Faith, of recognition of its independent status, of the establishment of its Order, of the up-building of its institutions. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had come to the Holy Land a prisoner and exile; although He could proclaim, during His travels in the West and through His letters, the independent character of the Cause of His Father, locally He could not, at the end of His life, break through the chrysalis of common custom that had bound Him so long to the predominantly Muslim community; to do things ungracefully and hurtfully was no part of the Bahá'í Teachings. But Shoghi Effendi, returning from his studies in England, young, western in training and habit, was now in a position to do this. However much loved and esteemed 'Abdu'l-Bahá had been, He was not viewed as the Head of an independent world religion but rather as the saintly protagonist of a great spiritual philosophy of universal brotherhood, a distinguished notable among other notables in Palestine. By sheer force of personality He had dominated those around Him. But Shoghi Effendi knew he could never do this in the circumstances surrounding him at the outset of his Guardianship, neither had he any desire to do so. His function everywhere — but particularly at the World Centre — was to win recognition of the Cause as a world religion entitled to the same status and prerogatives that other religions, such as Christianity, Islam and Judaism, enjoyed.

From the very beginning he appreciated the fact that if he was to establish the World Centre on a proper basis during the years in which the Bahá'í Faith must inevitably expand abroad, then locally his own position — which was not that of a local or national Head but the World Head of that Faith — must be put on an entirely different footing. Palestine, although it was sacred to these three great World Faiths, was not at one and the same time the spiritual and administrative heart of any one of them, and therefore no one in the country held a comparable position to his own. He, however, because he was the Head of a comparable Faith, and resided at both its spiritual and administrative heart, should enjoy the right of precedence over all other religious Heads in the country. Although Shoghi Effendi, from the outset of his ministry, understood this, he was wise enough to realize he had no hope at that time of winning others over to this view. He displayed his brilliance by not entering into the activities of the Master, and not mingling freely at various social functions, official or otherwise. He well knew that among the local pundits he could not hope to receive the right of precedence his position deserved and that should he be relegated as the Bahá'í representative to a secondary position, owing to his youth and the power the large Muslim community wielded, the situation would crystallize about this precedent and it would be almost impossible later to assume his rightful place as Head of a World Religion. Primarily because of this, for thirty-six years, with one or two exceptions, Shoghi Effendi avoided all government and municipal functions and took no part in social life whatsoever, constantly, albeit tactfully, insisting that he or whomsoever he chose to send in his stead should receive the precedence he deserved; by the end of his life he had practically won this long battle and although the Bahá'í representative was not always accorded the priority Shoghi Effendi desired, he effectively prevented that representative from being allocated a permanently minor position at official functions. On the rare occasions he himself attended state functions in Israel, he received his due as the Head of a World Faith. In view of his constant preoccupation with his work, the repeated crises that rocked him all his life and the demands pilgrims made upon his time, to give up all social life was no great deprivation for Shoghi

Effendi. But it did add to his isolation and deprived him effectively of any intellectual companionship and stimulation he might have derived from meeting men of calibre and significance.

During the first two decades of his ministry, however, Shoghi Effendi had more or less close personal contact with various High Commissioners and District Commissioners and through this he was able to win back the keys of Bahá'u'lláh's Tomb and assert his undisputed right to its custody, to obtain possession of the Mansion of Bahá'u'lláh, to receive permission to bury 'Abdu'l-Bahá's closest relatives in the vicinity of the Báb's Shrine, in the centre of a residential district on Mt Carmel, to have the Bahá'í Marriage Certificate accepted by the Government on the same footing as that of Jews, Christians and Muslims and, above all, through his persistent efforts, to succeed in impressing upon the British authorities the sacred nature of the Bahá'í holdings in Palestine and in winning from them the exemption from taxes, both municipal and national, which he sought.

Bahjí was always Shoghi Effendi's first preoccupation and he was determined to safeguard not only the Shrine where Bahá'u'lláh lay buried but the last home He had occupied in this world and the buildings and lands that adjoined it. From the time Bahá'u'lláh passed away in 1892 until 1929 Muḥammad 'Alí and his relatives had been in possession of this home, known as the "Qasr", or "Palace", of 'Údí Khammar, a building unique in Palestine for its majestic style of architecture and which had been purchased for Bahá'u'lláh towards the end of His life. This Mansion was not falling into a serious and pitiful state of disrepair, stained, rainworn, its roof caving in, its once lovely rooms abandoned or used as store rooms. In November 1927 Shoghi Effendi wrote to one of the friends that "The Qasr is still occupied by Muhammad 'Ali and Majdiddin [his cousin] has sent a message requesting us to repair the roof which may collapse at any time. He has been told emphatically that we shall not proceed with any repair unless and until they evacuate the entire building." Eventually it seems the situation of the Mansion reached a point where the Covenant-breakers had no alternative and were forced to comply with Shoghi Effendi's demand. On 27 November 1929, the day before the eighth anniversary of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing, Shoghi Effendi cabled a relative: "...Qasr evacuated. Restoration commenced", and on 5 December he wrote to one of the friends: "...the Mansion of Bahá'u'lláh, occupied for about forty years by Muhammad 'Ali and his followers, has at last been evacuated and the enclosed photograph will indicate in what a state they have left it! Restorative work has commenced and the pilgrims are already visiting the room where Bahá'u'lláh passed away and where He passed the most peaceful and happiest days of His life." Two years later the work was completed. Shoghi Effendi had had the building renovated and refurbished in all its original beauty. He brought one of the Bahá'ís who had often been there in his youth, and was capable and conscientious, to supervise the work. The roof, the woodwork, the frescoes on the balcony, the intricate stencilled decoration on the walls of all the rooms on the upper floor, the fine wooden-beam ceilings — all were restored to their original state. Having done this Shoghi Effendi proceeded to carpet it with valuable rugs sent by the Bahá'ís in Persia, to hang rare illuminations in the writing of the famous Bahá'í calligraphist, Mishkin Qalam, on its walls, to furnish it with bookcases filled with the translations of Bahá'í literature in many languages, to place innumerable photographs and documents of historic interest in its various rooms and then to invite the British High commissioner to come and see it, he himself accompanying him on this tour of inspection. When all had been viewed Shoghi Effendi asked His Excellency if he did not feel that such a

place as this, so sacred in its associations to Bahá'ís the world over, far transcended the right to be considered any individual's private residence and should be preserved as a place of pilgrimage and an historical museum. His Excellency, no doubt as much impressed by the advocate as by the testimony, agreed, and the Mansion remained in Shoghi Effendi's hands. By April 1932 the pilgrims were privileged to sleep overnight in this historic and sacred spot and its doors were opened to non-Bahá'í visitors as well, who wandered through its beautiful rooms and gazed on the impressive array of testimonials to the world-wide nature of the Cause, on the innumerable photostatic copies of Bahá'í Assembly incorporations, marriage licenses and other historical material as well as photographs of the martyrs and pioneers of the Faith.

I remember how, in spite of the fact that Shoghi Effendi had possession of the Mansion, he was constantly irked, until the very end of his life, by the fact that Covenant-breakers still occupied the adjacent house. The night of the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, when the Guardian, at the head of the Bahá'í men, would proceed to His Shrine after visiting the room in the Mansion in which He had passed away, he was obliged to pass in front of the room where the Covenant-breakers were keeping their own vigil and often they would make audible comments on him as he passed, adding to the distress of a night that was already distressing enough in its associations. It was not until June 1957 that he was able to cable the Bahá'í world: "With feelings profound joy exultation thankfulness announce morrow sixty-fifth anniversary Ascension Bahá'u'lláh signal epoch making victory won over ignoble band breakers His Covenant which course over six decades has entrenched itself precincts Most Holy Shrine Bahá'í world".

From the time, in January 1923, when he had written to the eldest son of Bahá'u'lláh's daughter requesting him to make a definite pronouncement that whatever the legal rights of these Afnans might be the Shrine at Bahjí because of its nature belonged to the Bahá'í Movement, until the end of his life, Shoghi Effendi struggled to place on an unshakeable foundation the legal position of this Sacred Spot, in spite of the opposition of that tainted band of relatives who resisted his every effort for over thirty years. It was due to the mysterious workings of Providence that after the War of Independence, through the mass exodus of the Arabs, including many enemies of the Faith, Shoghi Effendi was able to at last emerge triumphant from this long struggle. In 1952 the long-coveted lands surrounding the Tomb and Mansion of Bahá'u'lláh, amounting to over 145,000 square metres, were obtained. As early as 1931 Shoghi Effendi had endeavoured to get the government to requisition part of this land — which had originally belonged to the Mansion property but had been usurped by the Muslim friends and supporters of Muḥammad 'Alí — but it had refused to intervene and the asking price was over ten times the market value of the land. The Guardian had to wait over twenty years until the fortunes of war brought it back to its rightful owners. In addition to this both the Pilgrim House, which had been under the control of 'Abdu'l-Bahá since the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, and a building known as the Tea House of the Master, where He often entertained the believers — including the first group of pilgrims from the West — were acquired by the Guardian during the last years of his life. In 1952 the Government of Israel lifted from the civil court in Haifa a case brought against the Guardian by the Covenant-breakers in connection with the demolition of a house in Bahjí, and supported his contention that the issue was a religious one, thus enabling him to emerge once more triumphant in his struggle with the entrenched enemies of 'Abdu'l-Bahá who had never relinquished their jealously guarded base near Bahá'u'lláh's Holy Shrine. Finally, in 1957, again through the co-operation of the State authorities, Shoghi Effendi was able to secure an

expropriation order, on the grounds of their nearness to a sacred place of pilgrimage, for the houses occupied by what he termed the “wretched remnants” of the Covenant-breakers and thus at long last bring about what he described as the cleansing of the Ḥaram-i-Aqdas of this spiritual defilement. So hotly was this expropriation order, which involved their eviction from Bahjí, contested by the Covenant-breakers that they took it before the Supreme Court of Israel, lost their case and were obliged to leave once and for all.

It had been the expressed desire of the Guardian himself to supervise the demolition of these houses that abutted on the Mansion and were right next to the Shrine, but he never returned to the Holy Land. When, in fulfilment of his own plan, they were pulled down, a few months after his passing, it was found that the large formal garden he had made in front of them was so accurately measured out and planned that it could be continued — I am tempted to say rolled out like a carpet — with complete accuracy right over the place where they had stood and up to the very wall of the Mansion.

Ever mindful of what was to him the deepest trust of his Guardianship — to fulfil to the letter in so far as lay within his power every wish and instruction of his beloved Master — Shoghi Effendi’s second greatest concern at the World Centre was the Shrine of the Báb. The work connected with this second holiest Shrine of the Bahá’í Faith had two aspects: the completion of the building itself and the protection and preservation of its surroundings. The first involved the construction of three additional rooms as well as a superstructure — an entire building in itself — which is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful edifices on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, and the second the gradual purchase, during a third of a century, of a great protective belt of land surrounding the Shrine and reaching from the top to the bottom of Mt Carmel. This area of over fifty acres is best discerned at night, as it lies a huge unlighted “V” in the heart of the city, in whose centre seems pinned a golden brooch, the flood-lit Shrine of the Báb, resting majestically on the bosom of the mountain, set off by the velvety black space of its gardens and lands. For thirty-six years Shoghi Effendi devoted himself to the development of this Sacred Spot in the midst of God’s Holy Mountain; so impressive, so unique and of such vast proportions was his work there that it seems to me some of his very essence must be incorporated in its stones and soil.

It took more than one hundred years for Bahá’u’lláh, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi to finally discharge the sacred trust which the Báb’s remains represented for them, a trust which lasted from the day of His martyrdom in 1850 until the final completion of His Shrine in 1950. From the moment when He was apprised of the execution of the Báb until He ascended in 1892 Bahá’u’lláh had watched over that Sacred Dust, supervising its removal from one place of concealment to another. During a visit to Mt Carmel He had pointed out to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with His own hand where the Báb’s body was to rest forever, instructing Him to purchase this piece of land and bring the hidden remains from Persia and inter them there. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Himself a prisoner, succeeded in having the small wooden box containing the remains of the Báb and His martyred companion conveyed, by caravan and boat, from Persia to Akka. When the first group of western pilgrims visited the prison-city in the winter of 1898–9, this precious casket was already concealed in the Master’s home, its presence a carefully guarded secret.

One day in 1915, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá stood on the steps of His home and looked up at the Báb's Tomb, He remarked to one of His companions: "The sublime Shrine has remained unbuilt. Twenty thousand pounds are required. God willing it will be accomplished. We have carried its construction to this stage." To a pilgrim He had said: "The Shrine of the Báb will be built in the most beautiful and majestic style", and had even gone so far as to order a Turk in Haifa to make him a sketch of how it would appear when completed. But in spite of the clear concept He had of the nature of the Shrine He desired so much to build for the Forerunner of the Faith, the ultimate task was to fall to Shoghi Effendi.

In 1928 he had work started on the excavation of the solid rock of the mountain behind the existing building in order to make place for the three extra, massive, vaulted and high-ceilinged rooms required to complete the ground floor. By 14 February 1929 we find him cabling one of the Afnans: "Work on Maqám started" ("Maqám" was the Persian term used for the Báb's Shrine), and in December of that same year he informs a friend: "the construction of the three additional chambers contiguous to the Shrine on Mt. Carmel will soon be completed and the plan of the Master of having nine chambers as the ground floor of the Mausoleum of the Báb's realized." It is interesting to note that the completion of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's original structure, in itself a major undertaking, and the costly and exacting restoration of the Mansion of Bahá'u'lláh were undertaken during the same year and took about the same length of time.

In everything Shoghi Effendi did he was guided by what he knew to be the desire of the Master. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had succeeded, by 1907, in completing only six of the nine rooms which would compose a square, in the centre of which the body of the Bab would repose, and already during that year meetings were held in the ones facing the sea. In 1909, with His own hands, He had laid the remains of the Martyr-Herald of the Faith away in their final resting-place. The next year He set out on His western journeys, the war ensued and He passed away. He had, however, expressed His concept of the finished structure: it should have an arcade surrounding the original nine rooms He had planned and be surmounted by a dome. The thought of this plan of the Master never left Shoghi Effendi but its realization seemed very indefinite. Where and when would he find the architect to design such a Shrine and the money to build it?

The answer came in a most unexpected way. In 1940 my mother died in Buenos Aires and my father was left entirely alone, as I was his only child. With that kindness of his which was so incomparable Shoghi Effendi said to me one day that now my mother was dead, my father's place was with us. He invited him to join us and in spite of the war, whose arena was rapidly spreading, my father was able to do so. For years any construction work Shoghi Effendi had undertaken on the Bahá'í properties he had carried out with the occasional help of a local architect or an engineer. In addition to the three rooms added to the Bab's Shrine, the erection of the large and distinctive monuments over the graves of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's immediate family and the restoration of the Mansion, Shoghi Effendi had built a handsome entrance to the resting-place of the Greatest Holy Leaf, had demolished Dumit's house when he succeeded in purchasing it and used the stones, doors and window frames to construct an annex to the Oriental Pilgrim House and had built a bridge over a street to carry one of the terraces in front of the Shrine. In 1937 my father had designed a few additional rooms to be added to the ones occupied by the Guardian on the roof of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's home. With the exception of such things as these, which had required professional help, Shoghi Effendi invariably worked out for himself

the dimensions of stairs and minor entrances he placed in the gardens. I had had no experience myself of such things and I can remember how, when he once wanted to build a more pretentious flight of steps, flanked by two piers, leading to the Báb's Shrine at the end of a new path, we worked for hours on the proportions and I finally made him a paper model to scale which we viewed with considerable misgivings! The finished product, however, was not only interesting but satisfactory. The point is that the Guardian was not a professional and did not wish to spend money unnecessarily on an architect for such small things, which posed a problem for him and consumed his time for nothing. One day, when he came home from the Shrine gardens, he asked me how I thought such and such dimensions for a flight of steps would look. I asked him why, when he had one of Canada's best architects living across the street in the Western Pilgrim House, he did not ask Daddy to work it out for him. I remember he looked at me in surprise and asked if I thought he could. I assured him that for my father it was child's play to design such a thing and he could do it at once. It was not that Shoghi Effendi lacked confidence in him as an architect; he had already sent to him in Montreal photographs of an iron gate he had ordered for the bottom terrace of the Shrine and asked him to incorporate this gate in a design for its completion; indeed, he had liked the plan of my father very much, but could not come to an agreement with the City about the conjunction of his terrace and the municipal property and so the scheme was never carried out. It was just that it never occurred to him, after years of struggle with such problems alone, that he now had someone who could do these things for him. This marked the beginning of a beautiful partnership. I have never known two people who had such a perfect sense of proportion as Shoghi Effendi and my father and of the two the Guardian's was the finer.

It seems to me, in looking back on Shoghi Effendi's life, that aside from the great sweep of the Faith, whose victories meant so much to him, Martha Root in one way and Sutherland Maxwell in another brought him more deep personal satisfaction than any other believers. They were very much alike in some ways, saintly and modest souls who adored Shoghi Effendi and gladly gave him the best they had in service and loyalty. Though Martha's services were far more important for the Cause, the talents of Sutherland became a medium through which Shoghi Effendi could express at last with ease the great creative and artistic side of his own nature and this gave him both satisfaction and happiness. Until the end of his life my father designed for him stairs, walls, pillars, lights and various entrances to the gardens on Mt Carmel. In addition to being an experienced architect he drew and painted beautifully and could model and carve anything with his hands. I remember one night, after Shoghi Effendi had asked him to design for him a main entrance to the Shrine property, incorporating the ironwork already executed for the above-mentioned, uncompleted last terrace of the Shrine, I brought this design to him. He was sitting in bed and when I handed him the small coloured drawing he gazed at it fixedly in silence and then said "It's not fair!" I was considerably taken aback by this and asked him what he meant. "Why", he said, "no one can resist anything when it looks as beautiful as this!" He not only built the entrance but had the sketch framed and hung on the wall beside his bed.

Having tried my father on various small projects and found him far from wanting, suddenly — I think it was towards the end of 1942 — Shoghi Effendi told him he wished him to make for him a design for the superstructure of the Shrine of the Báb. The Builder had at last been given the vehicle whereby he could realize the plan of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

In looking back upon the months that followed I marvel that Shoghi Effendi, completely absorbed by his work on *God Passes By* — which he was so pressed for time to complete before the approaching Centenary of the Faith — should have been able to devote any attention to this other major project. At the outset, Shoghi Effendi had given Sutherland only a few brief indications of what was required; he told him that the Shrine must have a dome and an arcade, must be neither purely western nor purely eastern in style and not look like a mosque or a church; he left him free to conceive his own design. The first one he made showed a structure with an arcade and a clerestory section, surmounted by a pyramid-shaped dome, which Shoghi Effendi did not like; he discussed the dome with Sutherland and said he would like it to resemble in shape that of St Peter's in Rome, which he considered the most beautiful dome in the world. If God had provided Shoghi Effendi with an architect He had also in His infinite mercy bestowed upon that architect not only an incalculable spiritual blessing but an opportunity rare in the life of any professional man — the chance to pour out the mature wine of his talent and life-long experience in a worthy expression of his genius. The second drawing my father made Shoghi Effendi considered too European in emphasis — though he was satisfied with its proportions — and asked my father to change it. My father was delighted by this suggestion and reverted to the style of dome he had used in his design for the American Bahá'í Temple which he had entered in the original competition for that building, and which showed a marked Indian influence in some of its details. This last design greatly pleased the Guardian with the exception of the treatment of the upper part of the clerestory which he felt needed some height at the eight corners. For weeks and weeks Sutherland submitted to him sketch after sketch until the present highly original minarets were approved by him on 25 December³⁵³. His suggestions had also influenced the four corners of the arcade, which he felt needed to be more pointed and which were accordingly modified. Although Shoghi Effendi liked very much the design in its final form, as shown in the coloured elevation my father had drawn, he said he wished to have a scale model made before reaching a final decision on a subject of such tremendous importance as in that way he could better visualize the structure as it would appear when built; should this meet with his approval he planned to officially unveil it on the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of the Báb during the Centenary festivities that were to be held in Haifa.

It was extremely difficult in those days to find anyone capable of executing such a model and though nominally someone undertook to do the work, in practice most of it devolved on my father himself, who was extremely pressed for time to get it completed. In May the model was delivered. After carefully studying it, Shoghi Effendi came to his decision and on 22 May the press was informed that the design for the completed Shrine of the Báb had been chosen and would be built as soon as circumstances permitted. In the Oriental Bahá'í Pilgrim House, during the afternoon meeting on 23 May when the Bahá'í men were gathered in the presence of the Guardian — including many visitors from neighbouring countries — to commemorate the dawn of their Faith a hundred years earlier, Shoghi Effendi had the model brought out and placed on a table for all to see. Two days later he cabled America: "...Announce friends joyful tidings hundredth anniversary Declaration Mission Martyred Herald Faith signaled by historic decision complete structure His sepulchre erected by 'Abdu'l-Bahá site chosen by Bahá'u'lláh. Recently designed model dome unveiled presence assembled believers. Praying early removal obstacles

consummation stupendous Plan conceived by Founder Faith and hopes cherished Centre His Covenant."

When this announcement was made the world was approaching the end of the most terrible war in history; the Bahá'ís of the Western hemisphere had strained themselves to the utmost in order to win the goals of their first Seven Year Plan; the believers were affected by the general economic depletion prevailing in most countries. It was no doubt because of this, and because the Guardian made no effort to inaugurate a Shrine fund, that this project slipped relatively noiselessly into existence and no more was heard of it until on 11 April 1946 Shoghi Effendi instructed Mr Maxwell to set plans in motion for building the first unit of the Shrine and later himself wrote to the municipal authorities:

Haifa
Dec. 7th,

Haifa Local Building and Town Planning Commission.
To the Chairman

Dear Sir:

In connection with the accompanying drawings and application for permission to build, I wish to add a word of explanation.

The Tomb of the Báb, and of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, so well known to the people of Haifa as 'Abbás Effendi, is already in existence on Mt. Carmel in an incomplete form. In its present state, in spite of the extensive gardens surrounding it, it is a homely building with a fortress-like appearance.

It is my intention to now begin the completion of this building by preserving the original structure and at the same time embellishing it with a monumental building of great beauty, thus adding to the general improvement in the appearance of the slopes of Mt. Carmel.

The purpose of this building will, when completed, remain the same as at present. In other words it will be used exclusively as a Shrine entombing the remains of the Báb.

As you will see from the accompanying drawings the completed structure will comprise an arcade of twenty four marble or other monolith columns surmounted by an ornamental balustrade, on the first floor or ground floor of the building. It is this part of the building that we wish to begin work on at once, leaving the intermediary section and the dome, which will surmount the whole edifice when completed, to be carried on in the future, if possible at an early date after the completion of the ground floor arcade.

The Architect of this monument building is Mr. W.S. Maxwell, F.R.I.B.A., F.R.A.I.C., R.C.A., the well-known Canadian architect, whose firm built the Chateau Frontenac Hotel in Quebec, the House of Parliament in Regina, the Art Gallery, Church of the Messiah, various Bank buildings, etc., in Montreal. I feel the beauty of his design for the completion of the Báb's Tomb will add greatly to the appearance of our city and be an added attraction for visitors.

Yours
Shoghi Rabbani

truly,

I have quoted this letter in full as it demonstrates the masterly, tactful and clear manner in which Shoghi Effendi dealt with the authorities and which secured for him the necessary permission to build. On 15 December Shoghi Effendi cabled America: "Happy announce completion of plans and specifications for erection of arcade surrounding the Báb's Sepulchre constituting first step in process destined to culminate in construction of the Dome anticipated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and marking consummation of enterprise initiated by Him fifty years ago according to instructions given Him by Bahá'u'lláh."

The first historic steps had been taken but the obstacles in the way of the realization of this plan grew to what seemed insurmountable proportions. The British Mandate was nearing its end; Palestine was rocked by civil strife and was soon to be engulfed in a local war. Inquiries showed that the quarries from which suitable stone could be procured for the Shrine locally lay so near the Lebanese frontier that the owners could give no idea of when they could start deliveries. In addition to this the tremendous amount of carved material on the building would require a corps of expert workers and such labour was practically unavailable in the country. In view of this Shoghi Effendi came to another decision which was typical of his practical and audacious mind: he would see if part of the work could be done in Italy.

It is impossible to go into all the details, so fascinating in every way, that comprise the saga of the building of the Shrine. A letter, dated 6 April 1948, which I wrote on behalf of the Guardian to Dr Ugo Giachery conveys very clearly the situation at that time: "... Mr. Maxwell...because of various difficulties...has not been able to place any contracts for the actual work to be carried out here in Palestine. However, he has been in touch with an Italian firm in Carrara about placing contracts for the granite columns which will surround the building on the first floor. he is now proceeding to Italy primarily to place the contract for these, and, if suitable stone, matching the Palestinian stone which will be used here can be found, to also place additional contracts for the capitals and certain pieces of the carved ornamentation...Mr. Benjamin Weeden... will accompany Mr. Maxwell to both take care of him and facilitate in expediting the work there...As conditions in this country are extremely disturbed and the immediate future most uncertain, the Guardian is very anxious to have the contracts placed in Italy as soon as possible and have Mr. Maxwell and Mr. Weeden return here before they might possibly be cut off from us temporarily. He would therefore greatly appreciate your giving as much time as you can to assisting them, translating for them and seeing that they are in touch with reliable Italian firms and dealt with fairly...Unfortunately, owing to the fact that practically all communication with Jerusalem is cut off...Mr. Weeden was not able to contact the Italian Consulate there and obtain his visa. He will, if you and he cannot arrange for a visa in Rome when his plane comes in, have to go on with the same plane to Geneva...and return to join Mr. Maxwell...as Mr. Maxwell is now 74, though in the best of health, we hope you will take good care of him...Things are so acute here that it is extremely important that they get through with their business and return to Palestine..."

On the 15th of that same month I wrote, on behalf of the Guardian, to Horace Holley, Secretary of the American national Assembly, informing him of this trip to Italy in detail and explaining that as funds of the Guardian were blocked in Palestine because of strict currency regulations "He

therefore has in mind asking the friends, those in a position financially to do so, to raise a loan in order to place these contracts...he himself wishes to be considered the guarantor in this matter and will repay the loan at the earliest possible moment. He is very anxious to have no misunderstanding on this point. He is financing this work from the international funds of the Cause and will only consider an arrangement by which he will repay this temporary loan...As our situation here is so uncertain that any day we may find mail and even cables suspended temporarily he is hastening to get this information off to you...if suitable arrangements can be made and contracts signed Mr. Giachery will have to act as representative in this matter, receiving the sums from the States which you will send, keeping an eye on the work in Italy, and generally assuming responsibility there if we all get cut off from each other...He has urged Mr. Maxwell and Mr. Weeden to be back here in Palestine in three weeks if possible as he is afraid that we might be entirely cut off from them...It is wonderful to know that the actual work on the Shrine is now so far advanced as to see the possibility of building operations being begun some time soon. But tremendous obstacles must be overcome, and, he feels confident, will be overcome."

In such a storm yet another step in the unbelievably troubled history of the Báb's remains and the building of His Tomb was undertaken. It was not yet reassuring, the following day, 16 April, to see my father and Mr Weeden off in a taxi entirely covered with armour-plate, a slit half an inch wide providing the visibility for the driver. Until they cabled from Italy we had no idea of what their fate had been. Half-way to the airport they had been forced to descend from the taxi and walk some hundreds of metres, carrying their heavy suitcases, to reach another taxi, a wholly unnecessary hardship typical of what the people of the country had to pass through in those days. Theirs was one of the last planes out of Lydda Airport before it was stormed and taken and all plane services suspended for some time. During their absence the War of Independence was fought and the country lapsed into the uneasy days of an armed truce.

During 1948 Shoghi Effendi himself undertook — for the second time in twenty years — the excavation of rock behind the Shrine in order to enlarge the area sufficiently to enable the arcade to be built. This was a tremendous work, involving the removal of hundreds of square metres of stone. The ingenuity of the Guardian was continually displayed as this work proceeded: he had a second-hand set of rails and a cart purchased, laid down on the path which ran parallel with the Shrine and in front of it, and the excavated material, directed down wooden chutes, carted off to the easternmost point of the terrace and dumped as fill for the extension of the terrace itself. From early morning until dark, often more than eight hours on his feet, day after day and month after month he directed the work. It was certainly not his work to do this, but he was determined to ensure it was done not only quickly, but economically, and there was no one else with the will power and stamina it required to take his place. It was in ways such as this, with indefatigable determination and unflagging perseverance, that Shoghi Effendi made of the Holy Places at the World Centre what we see before us today.

I have a note in my dairy dated Tuesday, 24 February 1949 which reads: "Sunday M___ [the contractor] starts on the southeastern and western corners foundations. A week later on the

placing of the threshold stones — so the work is going to really start at last.” The long months of the Guardian’s toil were at an end; the edifice could now rise! Relentlessly Shoghi Effendi built the Shrine which he said was “the consummation of Bahá’u’lláh’s irresistible Purpose of erecting a lasting and befitting memorial to His Divine Herald and Co-Founder of His Faith.” He not only built it, he dramatized it until it became a living experience for all Bahá’ís, a project to which their hearts, as well as the Guardian’s heart, were linked. He made thrilling the commonplace work of erecting a building. When he would announce the arrival of a new shipment of stones from Italy, and give the number of tons received, or report the erection of a new unit, or inform us that the dome had two hundred and fifty square metres of surface, or describe the beauty of some detail, his magic of words and the enthusiasm they reflected swept us away on tides of joy and raised us out of ourselves, making us feel we were co-sharers in something infinitely great and thrilling, so that what would have normally been a dull fact in a dull world reported to dull people fired our imaginations and identified us more deeply with our Faith. Small wonder that the believers, preoccupied with their national affairs in the post-war world, rallied round him and assisted him to complete, in five years, a three-quarters-of-a-million-dollar, truly “world-wide enterprise”.

Originally Shoghi Effendi had contemplated the possibility of erecting only the arcade of the Shrine and leaving the actual superstructure for a later date, but the remarkable response of the Bahá’ís all over the world in rallying to support this sacred edifice, the general worsening of the international situation, economic trends leading to increased costs and the fact that the same highly efficient and skilled labourers who had executed the work on the arcade so perfectly were still available at the company which had contracted for the stonework in Italy decided him to go on uninterruptedly with its construction.

Such an undertaking, lasting over so many years, was time-consuming and fraught with many heart-aches and difficulties. Negotiations with the supervising engineer and the contractor — at all of which I represented the Guardian — were frequently exceedingly difficult as no one could either mislead or cheat Shoghi Effendi; whenever an estimate quoted was too high he flatly refused it and even stated on one occasion he would stop work on the Shrine indefinitely as he had no intention of paying what he felt was an exorbitant price. He battled his way through every obstacle and I often found, to my great surprise, that I was his sword! Not only was all the stonework imported from Italy but for a time even the cement and steel had to be procured from there owing to acute local shortages, and this also was a source of endless complications and worry.

In addition to problems of this nature there was another that preoccupied him for a long time, and even caused him to delay the construction of the actual superstructure of the Shrine, for it must be remembered that the arcade merely embraces the original building and is not built on it. In order to build the remainder of the Shrine eight reinforced concrete piers had to be sunk through eight of its interior walls to reach bed-rock. This was a source of great concern to the Guardian because the exact dimensions of the chamber in which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s remains are interred are not known and there was a very real danger that in going down through one of the walls they might break into the tomb itself. I learned more about what reverence, dignity and sanctity really imply through the Guardian’s attitude towards this problem than in the entire rest of my life. Shoghi Effendi said if we broke into the vault the body of the Master would have to be

removed. To me this seemed very simple; He would just be removed temporarily to somewhere else. How wonderfully Shoghi Effendi spoke then! I wish I could remember his exact words. He said the remains of the Master could never be treated so uncereemoniously. They must be befittingly removed, with great ceremony, and laid befittingly in some other place and then with equal reverence be re-interred. Where would he find, Shoghi Effendi asked, the people to be present on such solemn and sacred occasions, with a lukewarm local community, composed mostly of servants, and all the doors to neighbouring countries closed? And above all where would he find a suitable place for the sacred remains of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to rest temporarily pending the completion of the work in the interior of His Shrine? His very voice breathed awe. I understood a great deal more about religion after that event. Finally, after my father and the engineer had exhaustively percussed the floors and walls a number of times, and old Bahá'ís present at the funeral of the Master had given their recollection of where the vault was, it seemed most unlikely that any of the piers, set as near the outer walls as possible, would break into the actual tomb, and so the work was begun.

In March 1952 Sutherland Maxwell died after two years of illness. Though his death could not impair the fulfilment of the design he had conceived for the Shrine, it deprived the dome section of the benefit of large-scale drawings made by him and hence of that blush of ultra-perfection which his own detailed treatment of his work always produced. In recognition of the services which both he and Dr Giachery had rendered the Shrine of the Báb, Shoghi Effendi called the two as yet unnamed doors of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's original building after them, and at a later date the door to the octagon after Mr Ioas, who supervised the construction of the drum and dome.

When the Shrine he had erected with so much love and care was completed, Shoghi Effendi, recognizing in it an essentially feminine quality of beauty and purity, called it the "Queen of Carmel". He described it as "enthroned on God's Holy Mountain, crowned with glowing gold, robed in shimmering white and girdled with emerald green, a sight enchanting every eye, whether viewed from the air, the sea, the plain or the hill." Of the innumerable passages in which Shoghi Effendi has extolled and explained the profound spiritual significance of this Spot none is more striking and more powerful than that in which he visualizes the remains of the Martyr-Herald of the Faith as the centre of a spiritual vortex. The Báb, Whom Bahá'u'lláh Himself had described as "*The Point round Whom the realities of the Prophets and Messengers revolve*" in the realm of the spirit, is, Shoghi Effendi said, in the Sacred Dust of His physical form left upon earth, the heart and centre of nine concentric circles: the outermost of these circles is the planet itself; inside this lies the Most Holy Land, described by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as "*the Nest of the Prophets*"; inside this Nest is the Mountain of God, the Vineyard of the Lord, the Retreat of Elijah Whose Return the Bab Himself symbolized; contained on this Mountain are the sacred precincts, the international endowment-lands of the Faith; it is their gardens and terraces which constitute the Most Holy Court; within this Court, standing in all its exquisite beauty, is the Mausoleum of the Báb, the Shell; within this Shell is the Pearl of Great Price, the Holy of Holies, the original Tomb built by the Master Himself; preserved inside this Holy of Holies is the Vault or Tabernacle, the central chamber of the Shrine; within this Vault is the alabaster Sarcophagus, the Most Holy Casket "in which", Shoghi Effendi wrote, "is deposited that inestimable Jewel, the Báb's Holy Dust."

The Shrine, Shoghi Effendi said, was an “institution” and too much emphasis could not be laid on the role which this institution was destined to play in the “unfoldment of the World Administrative Centre of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh and in the efflorescence of its highest institutions constituting the embryo of its future World Order.” As the superstructure rose in all its majesty Shoghi Effendi revealed more and more of the true significance of the Shrine; it was, he wrote, not only the first and most holy edifice reared at the World Centre of the Faith but was “the initial international institution heralding the establishment of the Supreme Legislative Body of the World Administrative Centre...”

Bahá'u'lláh's Dust, the “Point of Adoration” or “Qiblih” of the faithful, was too sacred in its essence, His station too infinitely exalted, to act as the spiritual dynamo galvanizing the institutions of His World Order. The Dust of the Báb, however — Who had described His own station in relation to Bahá'u'lláh as that of *“a ring upon the hand of Him Whom God shall make manifest,”* Who *“turneth it as He pleaseth, for whatsoever He pleaseth, and through whatsoever He pleaseth”* — had been chosen by Bahá'u'lláh Himself to be the Centre around which His Administrative Institutions would cluster and under Whose shadow they would function through His act in choosing the site on Mt Carmel where the Báb's remains were to rest and instructing ‘Abdu'l-Bahá to purchase that spot and bring the remains from Persia and inter them there. We must remember that long before the declaration by Bahá'u'lláh of His station, it was the Báb Who raised the clarion call of the “New Order”. What then more appropriate and significant than the choice of His remains for this purpose? Shoghi Effendi made this distinction clear when he referred to the twin nature of so many buildings at the World Centre, the Twin Shrines, the Twin Administrative and Spiritual Centres of the Faith.

There can be little doubt that upon reading the *Will and Testament* of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá Shoghi Effendi's first thought was the speedy establishment of the Supreme Administrative Body of the Bahá'í Faith, the Universal House of Justice. One of his earliest acts, in 1922, had been to summon to Haifa old and key believers to discuss this matter with him. He repeatedly mentioned it in his communications — indeed in his first letter to Persia, written on 16 January 1922, he refers to it and states that he will announce to the friends later the preliminary arrangements for its election. There was never any question in his mind as to its function and significance; in March 1923 he had described it as “that Supreme Council that will guide, organize and unify the affairs of the Movement throughout the world”. There can be no doubt that two forces were at work in the Guardian in those first days of his ministry; one was his youthful eagerness to speedily carry out all the instructions of his beloved Master, which included the establishment of the Universal House of Justice; and the other was the Divine guidance and protection promised him in the Will; the latter modified the former. Over and over again Shoghi Effendi essayed to put in motion at least the preliminaries for electing this Supreme Body — and over and over again the Hand of Providence manipulated events in such a way that premature action became impossible. At the consultations he held in 1922 it must have suddenly become apparent to him that however highly desirable even a preliminary stage in the formation of the Universal House of Justice might be, it was dangerous to take such a step at that time. The firm administrative foundation required to elect and support it was lacking as well as a sufficient reservoir of qualified and well-informed believers to draw from.

Having discovered that the door to the formation of the Universal House of Justice was not open, Shoghi Effendi set about trying to establish at least the preliminary forms that might precede its election. When he sought, in the first years of his ministry, to draw to Haifa people who would assist him in his work he had in mind the formation of a definite body at the World Centre. This is borne out by his own words. On 30 August 1926 he wrote to one of the Bahá'ís: "I am anxiously considering ways and means for the formation of some sort of efficient, competent Secretariat in Haifa...I have thought of it a great deal and I am still exploring and searching for a competent, reliable, methodical, and trained associate who, untrammelled and unhampered, can devote...continuous months to such a delicate and responsible task. When this is achieved I cherished the brightest hopes for the strengthening of the vital bonds that bind the Centre in Haifa with all the Assemblies in the Bahá'í world." On 7 December of that same year he informed a relative that two of the prominent Bahá'ís had joined him in Haifa and "we hope to form some sort of international Bahá'í Secretariat..." However, the true significance this Secretariat had in the mind of Shoghi Effendi is clearly stated in a letter of his, written two weeks later, in which he introduced these same two Bahá'ís to Mr Abramson, the Commissioner for the Northern District of Palestine, and, after mentioning their names, wrote that these "two representative Bahá'ís...I have asked to come here to consider with me and with other Bahá'ís from the East the formation of an International Bahá'í Secretariat as a preliminary step to the establishment of the International Bahá'í Council."

From an Indian pilgrim's notes in a letter to a friend, written in Haifa on 15 June 1929, we find the following: "Shoghi Effendi says...so long as the various National Assemblies do not have stabilized, well organized positions, it would be impossible to establish even an informal House of Justice. He wants us to at once draw up a constitution of the National Assembly on the lines of the American Trust and get it registered with the Government of India, if possible as a religious body, otherwise as a commercial body...Shoghi Effendi has urged in his recent letters to Eastern countries to have National Assemblies recognized as Religious Courts of Justice by local Governments..."

It is of interest to note that in a letter to Mrs Stannard, who was in charge of the International Bahá'í Bureau in Geneva — an office designed to promote in Europe the affairs of the Faith as well as to stimulate its international functions throughout the world and which was constantly encouraged and directed by the Guardian in its work — Shoghi Effendi writes, in August 1926, that he wishes the Bahá'í Bulletin it publishes to be "in the three dominant languages in Europe i.e. English, French and German...I have expressed in my cable to you my readiness to extend regular and financial assistance to you in order to ensure that the proposed circular will be published in the three recognized official languages of the western section of the Bahá'í world... Your Centre in Switzerland and the Bahá'í Esperanto Magazine published at Hamburg are both destined to shoulder some of the functions and responsibilities which will in future be undertaken by the International Bahá'í Assembly when formed."

In many such references, particularly in the first ten years of his ministry, Shoghi Effendi reveals that he is constantly anticipating the formation of some kind of International Secretariat or Council pending the election of the Universal House of Justice itself, the functions, significance and importance of which were growing in his mind. Some time during the summer of 1929 the Guardian conceived the idea of the Bahá'ís holding an International Conference, at which the

friends would informally gather to discuss ways and means of hastening the formation of oriental National Bahá'í Assemblies as well as the subject of the Administration in general as he was developing it, and thus hasten the day when the House of Justice could be elected as envisaged by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Some of the old Bahá'ís had a different concept of what should take place at this conference, wishing to see some form of interim body elected. When Shoghi Effendi became apprised of this fact he immediately cabled on 12 December 1929 to two of the men most concerned in arranging this conference and peremptorily cancelled it as he said it would be "a source of confusion, misunderstanding and even controversy". He recoiled before the great danger he foresaw of immature people, not yet steeped in understanding of the Administrative Order he was unfolding and building, assuming a rank and power they were certainly incapable of safely holding. For over twenty years the whole idea was left in abeyance and the repeated mention of the formation of the Universal House of Justice, which is to be found in Shoghi Effendi's earlier letters, ceased until he created an International Council, composed of members he himself nominated. There is no doubt in my mind, from things he told me at different times, that in the opening years of his Guardianship he sensed from certain prominent believers a desire to be on a body such as the House of Justice or some interim institution, and that he felt a belittling of his judgment and capacity on their part and a trend to seize the reins of the Cause of God; these were men old enough to be his father, who, whatever their thoughts about the Master's Will, looked upon him in some ways as an inexperienced young man.

From the very beginning Shoghi Effendi concentrated on multiplying and strengthening the "various Assemblies, local and National". As early as 1924, he stated they constituted "the bedrock upon the strength of which the Universal House is in future to be firmly established and raised." Almost invariably, in later years, when he called for the formation of new national bodies, the Guardian used phrases such as the following in his cable to the Fourth European Teaching Conference in 1951: "...Future edifice Universal House of Justice depending for its stability on sustaining strength pillars erected diversified communities East West, destined derive added power through emergence three National Assemblies...awaits rise establishment similar institutions European mainland..." In anticipation of the election of that august Body Shoghi Effendi made statements that, added to the words of its Founder, Bahá'u'lláh, and the clear and unmistakable powers and prerogatives conferred upon it by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His *Will and Testament*, cannot but buttress the strength and facilitate the tasks of that Universal House for at least a thousand years. Shoghi Effendi said the Universal House of Justice would be the "nucleus and forerunner" of the New World Order; he said "that future House" was a House "posterity will regard as the last refuge of a tottering civilization"; it would be "the last unit crowning the structure of the embryonic World Order of Bahá'u'lláh"; it was "the highest legislative body in the administrative hierarchy of the Faith: and its "supreme elective institution". The Guardian stated: "To the Trustees of the House of Justice" Bahá'u'lláh "assigns the duty of legislating on matters not expressly provided in His Writings, and promises that God will *'inspire them with whatsoever He willeth,'*" and wrote that "...the powers and prerogatives of the Universal House of Justice, possessing the exclusive right to legislate on matters not explicitly revealed in the Most Holy Book; the ordinance exempting its members from any responsibility to those whom they represent, and from the obligation to conform to their views, convictions or sentiments; the specific provisions requiring the free and democratic election by the mass of the faithful of the Body that constitutes the sole legislative organ in the world-wide

Bahá'í Community — these are among the features which combine to set apart the Order identified with the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh from any of the existing systems of human government.”

Quite suddenly, one day in Switzerland in November 1950, at the time when my father had, as Shoghi Effendi announced, “miraculously” recovered from a severe illness, the Guardian sat down and, to my great astonishment, sent cables inviting the first of that group who later became members of the International Bahá'í Council to come to Haifa. Like almost everything he did, first it began to dawn and later the sun of the finished concept rose above the horizon. After our return to the Holy Land, when Lotfullah Hakim (the first to arrive), Jessie and Ethel Revell, followed by Amelia Collins and Mason Remey were all gathered at table one day in the Western Pilgrim House, with Gladys Weeden and her husband Ben who were already living there, the Guardian announced to us his intention of constituting, out of that group, an International Council, we were all overcome by the unprecedented nature of this step he was taking and the infinite bounty it conferred upon those present as well as the entire Bahá'í world. It was not, however, until 9 January 1951 that he released this news through an historic cable: “Proclaim National Assemblies East West weighty epoch making decision formation first International Bahá'í Council forerunner supreme administrative institution destined emerge fullness time within precincts beneath shadow World Spiritual Centre Faith already established twin cities 'Akká Haifa.”

The fulfilment of the prophecies of both Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, through the establishment of an independent Jewish State after the lapse of two thousand years, the unfoldment of the portentous historic undertaking associated with the construction of the superstructure of the Báb's Shrine, the now adequate maturity of the nine vigorously functioning National Assemblies, had all combined to induce him to make this historic decision, which was the most significant milestone in the evolution of the Administrative Order during thirty years. In that cable Shoghi Effendi went on to say that this new institution had a three-fold function: to forge links with the authorities in the newly emerged State, to assist him in building the Shrine (only the arcade of which had then been completed), and to conduct negotiations with the civil authorities as regards matters of personal status. Further functions would be added as this first “embryonic International Institution” developed into an officially recognized Bahá'í Court, was transformed into an elected body and reached its final efflorescence in the Universal House of Justice; this in turn would find its fruition in the erection of many auxiliary institutions, constituting the World Administrative Centre. This message, so thrilling in portent, burst upon the Bahá'í world like a clap of thunder. Like a skilled engineer, locking the component parts of his machine together, Shoghi Effendi had now buckled into place the frame that would eventually support the crowning unit — the Universal House of Justice.

Fourteen months later, on 8 March 1952, Shoghi Effendi, in a long cable to the Bahá'í world, announced the enlargement of the International Bahá'í Council: “Present membership now comprises Amatu'l-Bahá Ruḥíyyih chosen liaison between me and Council. Hands Cause Mason Remey, Amelia Collins, Ugo Giachery, Leroy Ioas, President, Vice-President, Member-at-Large, Secretary-General respectively. Jessie Revell, Ethel Revell, Lotfullah Hakim, Treasurer, Western and Eastern Assistant Secretaries.” The original membership had been changed through the departure of Mr and Mrs Weeden, for reasons of health, the arrival of Mr Ioas, who had offered

his services to the Guardian, and the inclusion of Dr Giachery, who continued to reside in Italy and supervise the construction of the Shrine — every single stone of which was quarried, cut and carved in that country and then shipped to Haifa and the golden tiles of whose dome were ordered in Holland — and to act as the agent of Shoghi Effendi in ordering and purchasing many other things required in the Holy Land. In May 1955 the Guardian announced that he had raised the number of members of the International Bahá'í Council to nine through the appointment of Sylvia Ioas. In its functions the International Bahá'í Council acted as that Secretariat the Guardian, so many years earlier, had desired to establish; its members received their instructions from him individually, in the informal atmosphere of the dinners at the Pilgrim House table, and not formally as a body; its meetings were infrequent as all its members were kept constantly busy with the many tasks allotted to them by the Guardian himself. Skilfully Shoghi Effendi used this new institution to create in the minds of government and city officials the image of a body of an international character handling the administrative affairs at the World Centre. It was no concern of the public how much or how little that body had authority; we who were on it knew Shoghi Effendi was everything; the public, however, began to see an image which could evolve later into the Universal House of Justice.

Between the first and second messages Shoghi Effendi sent informing the Bahá'í world of the formation and membership of the International Bahá'í Council, he took another fundamental step in the historic development of the World Centre of the Faith through the official announcement of the appointment, on 24 December 1951, of the first contingent of the Hands of the Cause of God, twelve in number, and equally allocated between the Holy Land, the Asiatic, American and European continents. The people raised by the Guardian at that time to this illustrious rank were Sutherland Maxwell, Mason Remey and Amelia Collins who became Hands of the Cause of God in the Holy Land; Valíyü'lláh Varqá, Ṭarázu'lláh Samandarí and 'Alí-Akbar Furútan in Asia; Horace Holley, Dorothy Baker and Leroy Ioas in America; George Townshend, Hermann Grossmann and Ugo Giachery in Europe. Two months later, on 29 February 1952, Shoghi Effendi announced to the friends in East and West that he had raised the number of the Hands of the Cause of God to nineteen through nominating Fred Schopflocher in Canada, Corinne True in the United States, Zikrullah Khadem and Shuaullah Alai in Persia, Adelbert Mühlischlegel in Germany, Musa Banani in Africa and Clara Dunn in Australia. In making these two appointments of Hands of the Cause Shoghi Effendi said that the hour was now ripe for him to take this step in accordance with the provisions of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Testament and that it was paralleled by the preliminary measure of the formation of the International Bahá'í Council, destined to culminate in the emergence of the Universal House of Justice. He announced that the august body of the Hands was invested, in conformity with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Testament, with the two-fold sacred function of the propagation of the Faith and the preservation of its unity.

In Shoghi Effendi's last message to the Bahá'í world, dated October 1957, he announced he had designated "yet another contingent of the Hands of the Cause of God...The eight now elevated to this exalted rank are: Enoch Olinga, William Sears and John Robarts, in West and South Africa; Hasan Balyuzi and John Ferraby in the British Isles; Collis Featherstone and Rahmatullah Muhajir, in the Pacific area; and Abul-Qasim Faizi in the Arabian Peninsula — a group chosen from four continents of the globe, and representing the Afnan, as well as the black and white races and whose members are derived from Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Pagan backgrounds."

The Guardian, in a two-month period in 1952, created a body of one Váhid (nineteen) of Hands of the Cause and he kept them at this number until 1957, when he added eight more, thus bringing them to three multiples of nine. Whenever one of the original nineteen passed away, Shoghi Effendi appointed another Hand. Two of the Hands thus appointed were raised to the position occupied by their fathers, thus the “mantle” of my father fell on my shoulders, on 26 March 1952, after the death of Sutherland Maxwell; and Ali Muhammad Varqa was appointed to succeed his father on 15 November 1955 and also became the Trustee of the Ḥuqúq in his place. After Dorothy Baker was killed in an accident, Paul Haney was made a Hand of the Cause on 19 March 1954 and following the passing of Fred Schopflocher, Jalal Khazeh was elevated to the same rank on 7 December 1953; not long after George Townshend’s death the Guardian appointed Agnes Alexander on 27 March 1957; thus the number of nineteen was maintained by him until the third contingent of Hands was nominated in his last great message at the midway point of the World Crusade.

Between 9 January 1951 and 8 March 1952, remarkable and far-reaching changes took place in the Administrative Order of the Faith at its World Centre, changes which, Shoghi Effendi wrote, at long last signified the erection of “the machinery of its highest institutions”, “the supreme Organs of its unfolding Order” which were now, in their “embryonic form” developing around the Holy Shrines. In his writings he had pointed out to the believers that the progress and unfoldment of Bahá’u’lláh’s World Order was guided by the directives and the spiritual powers released through three mighty “charters”, which he said had set in motion three distinct processes, the first given to us by Bahá’u’lláh Himself in the *Tablet of Carmel*, and the other two from the pen of the Master, namely, His Will and Testament and His Tablets of the Divine *Plan*. The first operated “in a land which”, Shoghi Effendi stated, “geographically, spiritually and administratively, constitutes the heart of the entire planet”, “the Holy Land, the Centre and Pivot round which the divinely appointed, fast multiplying institutions of a world-encircling, relentlessly marching Faith revolve”, “the Holy Land, the Qiblih of a world community, the heart from which the energizing influences of a vivifying Faith continually stream, and the seat and centre around which the diversified activities of a divinely appointed Administrative Order revolve”. The hub of this *Tablet of Carmel* was those words of Bahá’u’lláh that “*ere long will God sail His Ark upon thee and will manifest the people of Bahá who have been mentioned in the Book of Names*”; the “*people of Bahá*”, Shoghi Effendi explained, signified the members of the Universal House of Justice.

Whereas the Charter of the *Will and Testament* of the Master operated throughout the world through the erection of those administrative institutions He had so clearly defined in it, and the Charter of His *Tablets of the Divine Plan* was concerned with the spiritual conquest of the entire planet through the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh and likewise had the globe itself as its theatre of operations, the *Tablet of Carmel* cast its illumination and its bounties literally upon Mt Carmel, upon “that consecrated Spot which,” Shoghi Effendi wrote, “under the wings of the Báb’s overshadowing Sepulchre...is destined to evolve into the focal Centre of those world-shaking, world-embracing, world-directing administrative institutions, ordained by Bahá’u’lláh and anticipated by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and which are to function in consonance with the principles that govern the twin institutions of the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice.

The significance of the “unfolding glory” of these institutions at the World Centre was reflected in many messages sent by Shoghi Effendi during the last years of his life, messages which stirred a man like George Townshend to write to him, in a letter dated 14 January 1952, sent at the time he thanked the Guardian for the bounty of being made a Hand: “Permit me to pay you a humble tribute of the utmost admiration and gratitude for the nearing vision of the Victory of God which you almost by your sole might now have spread before the astonished Bahá’í world.”

In the course of these messages Shoghi Effendi revealed both the station and some of the functions of his newly created body of Hands. He hailed the unfoldment, during the “opening years” of the second epoch of the Formative Age of this Dispensation, of that “august institution” which Bahá’u’lláh Himself had not only foreshadowed but a few members of which He had already appointed during His own lifetime and which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had formally established in His *Will and Testament*. In addition to the support the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land had already given him, through erecting the Báb’s Shrine, reinforcing the ties with the State of Israel, extending the international endowments in the Holy Land and initiating preliminary measures for the establishment of the Bahá’í World Administrative Centre, they had also taken part in the four great Intercontinental Teaching Conferences held during the Holy Year, from October 1952 to October 1953, at which they represented the Guardian of the Faith, and after which, at his request, they had travelled extensively in North, Central and South America, Europe, Asia and Australia. This body, Shoghi Effendi said in April 1954, was now entering upon the second phase of its evolution, signaled by the forging of ties between it and the National Spiritual Assemblies engaged in the prosecution of the Ten Year Plan; the fifteen Hands who resided outside the Holy Land should, during the Ridván period, appoint in each continent separately, from among the believers of that continent, Auxiliary Boards whose members would act as “deputies”, “assistants” and “advisers” to the Hands and increasingly assist in the promotion of the Ten Year Crusade. These Boards were to consist of nine members each in America, Europe and Africa, seven in Asia and two in Australia. The Boards were responsible to the Hands of their respective continents; the Hands, on their part, were to keep in close contact with the National Assemblies in their areas and inform them of the activities of their Boards; they were also to keep in close touch with the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, who were destined to act as the liaison between them and the Guardian. At this time Shoghi Effendi inaugurated Continental Bahá’í Funds for the work of the Hands, opening these Funds by himself contributing one thousand pounds to each.

A year later Shoghi Effendi nominated the thirteen Hands of the Cause he wished to attend as his representatives the thirteen Conventions to be held in 1957 to elect new National Assemblies; from the time he formally appointed Hands of the Cause until his death he constantly used them for this purpose. In 1957, exactly four months before he passed away, Shoghi Effendi, in a lengthy cable, informed the believers that the “triumphant consummation series historic enterprises” and the “evidences increasing hostility without” and “persistent machinations within” foreshadowing “dire contests destined range Army Light forces darkness both secular religious” necessitated a closer association between the Hands in five continents and the National Assemblies to jointly investigate the “nefarious activities internal enemies adoption wise effective measures counteract their treacherous schemes” in order to protect the mass of the believers and to arrest the spread of the evil influence of these enemies. At the beginning of this cable Shoghi Effendi points out that the Hands, in addition to their newly assumed

responsibility of assisting the National Spiritual Assemblies in the prosecution of the World Spiritual Crusade, must now fulfil their “primary obligation” of watching over and protecting the Bahá’í World Community, in close collaboration with the National Assemblies. He ends this portentous message with these words: “Call upon Hands National Assemblies each continent separately establish henceforth direct contact deliberate whenever feasible frequently as possible exchange reports to be submitted by their respective Auxiliary Boards National Committees exercise unrelaxing vigilance carry out unflinchingly sacred inescapable duties. Security precious Faith preservation spiritual health Bahá’í Communities vitality faith its individual members proper functioning its laboriously erected institutions fruition its worldwide enterprises fulfilment its ultimate destiny all directly dependent befitting discharge weighty responsibilities now resting members these two institutions occupying with Universal House Justice next institution Guardianship foremost rank divinely ordained administrative hierarchy World Order Bahá’u’lláh.”

The last great message of Shoghi Effendi’s life — dated October, but actually conceived in August — again reinforced the significance and importance of the institution of the Hands of the Cause. In it Shoghi Effendi not only appointed his last contingent of Hands but took the highly significant step of inaugurating a further Auxiliary Board in each continent: “This latest addition to the band of the high-ranking officers of a fast evolving World Administrative Order, involving a further expansion of the august institution of the Hands of the Cause of God, calls for, in view of the recent assumption by them of their sacred responsibility as protectors of the Faith, the appointment by these same Hands, in each continent separately, of an additional Auxiliary Board, equal in membership to the existing one, and charged with the specific duty of watching over the security of the Faith, thereby complementing the function of the original Board, whose duty will henceforth be exclusively concerned with assisting the prosecution of the Ten Year Plan.”

It is almost impossible to imagine what state the Bahá’í world would have been plunged into after Shoghi Effendi’s death if he had not referred in these terms to the Hands of the Cause, and if he had not so clearly charged the National Assemblies to collaborate with the Hands in their primary function as protectors of the Faith. Can we not discern, in these last messages, a black cloud the size of a man’s hand on the horizon?

It was the duty and right of Shoghi Effendi, explicitly stated in the Master’s Will, to appoint the Hands of the Cause. With one exception he made only posthumous appointments during the first thirty years of his ministry. It was the highest honour he could confer on a believer, living or dead, and he so named many Bahá’ís, East and West, after their death; the most outstanding of these was Martha Root, whom he characterized as the foremost Hand raised up in the first century of the Faith since the inception of its Formative Age. The one exception was Amelia Collins. He cabled her on 22 November 1946: “Your magnificent international services exemplary devotion and now this signal service impel me inform you your elevation rank Hand Cause Bahá’u’lláh. You are first be told this honour in lifetime. As to time announcement leave it my discretion”. It was the custom of Shoghi Effendi to inform each Hand of his elevation to this position at the time he made public his choice. Three of them, Fred Schopflocher and Musa Banani, who were in Haifa as pilgrims at the time he made his announcement, and myself, he informed to our faces. To try to describe with what feelings of stupefaction, of unworthiness and

awe the news of this honour overwhelmed the recipients of it would be impossible. Each heart received it as a shaft that aroused an even greater love for and loyalty to the Guardian than that heart had ever held before.

The long years of preparation — outside in the body of the Bahá'í world through the erection of the machinery of the Administrative Order, inside its heart through the erection of the superstructure of the Shrine of the Báb and the general consolidation of the World Centre — had involved the creation of a Spot suitable to form the “focal centre”, as Shoghi Effendi termed it, of the mightiest institutions of the Faith. This Spot was no less than the resting-places of the mother, sister and brother of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, those “three incomparably precious souls”, as he called them, “who, next to the three Central Figures of our Faith, tower in rank above the vast multitude of the heroes, Letters, martyrs, hands, teachers and administrators of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.”

It had long been the desire of the Greatest Holy Leaf to lie near her mother, who was buried in Akka, as was her brother, Mihdí. But when Bahíyyih Khánum passed away in 1932 she had been befittingly interred on Mt Carmel near the Shrine of the Báb. Shoghi Effendi conceived the idea of transferring the remains of her mother and brother, so unsuitably buried in Akka, to the vicinity of her resting-place and in 1939 he ordered in Italy twin marble monuments, similar in style to the one he had erected over her own grave. Fortunately these reached Haifa safely in spite of the war. Far from being a simple procedure “the consummation of this long, this profoundly cherished hope” proved to be extremely difficult. I will quote from my own published account of these events as I was, of course, present in Haifa at the time: “Whilst their tombs were still in process of excavation from the solid rock of the mountain, the Guardian had learned that the Covenant-breakers were protesting against the right of the Bahá'ís to remove the mother and brother of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá to new graves, actually having the temerity to represent to the government their so-called claim as relatives of the deceased. As soon, however, as the civil authorities had the true state of facts made clear to them — that these same relatives had been the arch-enemies of the Master and His family, had left the true Cause of Bahá'u'lláh to follow their own devices, and had been denounced by ‘Abdu'l-Bahá in His *Will and Testament* — they approved the plan of the Guardian and immediately issued the necessary papers for the exhumation of the bodies. Without risking further delay Shoghi Effendi, two days later, himself removed the Purest Branch and his mother to Mount Carmel”.

After daybreak, accompanied by a few Bahá'ís, Shoghi Effendi went to Akka, opened one grave after the other, and brought the remains to Haifa. He later told me about it; it had been a nerve-racking experience for him in every way. In the first place there was a very real risk that the Covenant-breakers might decide to come with a party of supporters to the cemeteries and try to prevent by force the exhumations; in this they would have had the sympathy of the Muslims who believe that to open a grave is the greatest desecration, and indeed open graves just for the purpose of inflicting this greatest of all insults. Aside from this danger, to stand while a grave is being opened, no matter how noble the purpose for doing it may be, is a very harrowing experience; how much more so for a sensitive person like Shoghi Effendi! When the earth was removed from the coffin of the Master's mother he discovered the wood was still intact, except for the bottom which had rotted away, and so he instructed them to gently remove the top. He told me the figure of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá's mother, would in her shroud, lay there so clearly outlined

that one could almost discern her features, but it collapsed in dust and bones at the first touch. He descended into the grave and with his own hands helped to place the skeleton in the new coffin prepared for it; this was then closed, loaded on a waiting vehicle, and they all proceeded to the second Arab cemetery where the Purest Branch was buried and there opened his grave. As he had been buried two decades longer than his mother, and the interment had been hastily carried out in the days when Bahá'u'lláh was so strictly confined in the prison barracks of Akka, the coffin had entirely disintegrated and Shoghi Effendi again gathered up himself the few bones and dust that remained and again placed them himself in the second coffin that lay beside the grave to receive them. Although all this was carried out successfully it took many harrowing hours of strain and anxiety to accomplish before Shoghi Effendi, with his precious trust, could return to Haifa. I will again quote from what I wrote at the time as it is so much more vivid than anything I could rewrite at this distance from the event: "Twilight has fallen on Mount Carmel and the veils of dusk have deepened over the bay of 'Akká. A group of men stand waiting by the gate, beneath the steps. Suddenly there is a stir, the gardener runs to illumine the entrance and amidst the white shafts of light a procession appears. A man clothed in black rests the weight of a coffin on his shoulder. It is the Guardian of the Cause and he bears the mortal remains of the Purest Branch, Bahá'u'lláh's beloved son. Slowly he and his fellow bearers mount the narrow path and in silence approach the house adjacent to the resting-place of the Greatest Holy Leaf. A devoted servant speeds ahead with a rug and candelabra from the Holy Shrines and swiftly prepares the room. The gentle, strong face of the Guardian appears as he enters the door, that precious weight always on his shoulder, and the coffin is laid temporarily to rest in a humble room, facing Bahjí, the Qiblih of the Faith. Again those devoted servants, led by their Guardian, return to the gate and again remount the path with another sacred burden, this time the body of the wife of Bahá'u'lláh, the mother of the Master."

The moment this task had been safely accomplished the American Assembly, on 5 December, received the following cable from Shoghi Effendi: "Blessed remains Purest Branch and Master's mother safely transferred hallowed precincts Shrines Mount Carmel. Long inflicted humiliation wiped away. Machinations Covenant-breakers frustrate plan defeated. Cherished wish Greatest Holy Leaf fulfilled. Sister brother mother wife 'Abdu'l-Bahá reunited one spot designed constitute focal centre Bahá'í Administrative Institutions at Faith's World Centre. Share joyful news entire body American believers. Shoghi Rabbani." The signing of the Guardian's full name was required as we were at war and all correspondence was censored.

The exquisite taste and sense of proportion, so characteristic of everything the Guardian created, is nowhere better reflected than in the marble monuments he erected over the four graves of these close relatives of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Designed in Italy according to Shoghi Effendi's own instructions and executed there in white Carrara marble, they were shipped to Haifa and placed, in the decade between 1932 and 1942, in their predestined positions, around which he constructed the beautiful gardens which we commonly referred to as the "Monument Gardens" and which he evolved into the fulcrum of that arc on Mt Carmel about which are to cluster in future the International Institutions of the Faith.

For three weeks these precious remains were kept in that room until, as Shoghi Effendi cabled in 26 December: "Christmas eve beloved remains Purest Branch and Master's mother laid in state Báb's Holy Tomb. Christmas day entrusted Carmel's sacred soil. Ceremony presence

representatives Near Eastern believers profoundly moving. Impelled associate America's momentous Seven Year enterprise imperishable memory these two holy souls who next twin founders Faith and perfect Exemplar tower together with Greatest Holy Leaf above entire concourse faithful. Rejoice privilege pledge thousand pounds my contribution Bahíyyih Khánúm Fund designed inauguration final drive insure placing contract next April last remaining stage construction Mashriqu'l-Adhkar. Time pressing opportunity priceless potent aid providentially promised unfailing."

The genius of the Guardian for doing things befittingly, ever following so faithfully in the footsteps of his beloved grandfather, is nowhere better demonstrated than in the extreme honour and reverence with which he accomplished the final interment of those two holy souls who had been so much loved by both Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. So unique is this entire event in religious history that I feel it must receive its full due here. Again I refer to the above-mentioned article: "The last stone is laid in the two vaults, the floors are paved in marble, the name plates fixed to mark their heads, the earth smoothed out, the path that leads to their last resting-place built...And now, again on the shoulder of the Guardian, they are borne forth to lie in state in the Holy Tomb of the Bab. Side by side, far greater than the great of this world, they lie by that sacred threshold, facing Bahjí, with candles burning at their heads and flowers before their feet...The following sunset we gather once again in that Holy Shrine...Slowly, held aloft on the hands of the faithful, led by Shoghi Effendi, who never relinquishes his precious burden... Once they circumambulate the Shrines, the coffin of beloved Mihdí, supported by the Guardian, followed by that of the Master's mother, passes us slowly by. Around the Shrine, onward through the lighted garden, down the white path, out onto the moonlit road, that solemn procession passes. High, seeming to move of themselves, above the heads of those following, the coffins wend their way...They pass before us, outlined against the night sky...They approach, the face of the Guardian close to that priceless burden he bears. They pass on toward the waiting vaults. Now they lay the Purest Branch to rest. Shoghi Effendi himself enters the carpeted vault and gently eases the coffin to its preordained place. He himself strews it with flowers, his hands the last to caress it. The mother of the Master is then placed in the same manner by the Guardian in the neighbouring vault...Masons are called to seal the tombs...Flowers are heaped upon the vaults and the Guardian sprinkles a vial of attar of rose upon them...And now the voice of Shoghi Effendi is raised as he chants those Tablets revealed by Bahá'u'lláh and destined by Him to be read at their graves."

When we remember that all these events, of such an extremely delicate nature, causing so much anxiety and suspense, and so harrowing to the feelings in every way, transpired less than two months after the Guardian had risen from his bed after one of the most serious illnesses he had ever had, we cannot but marvel anew at the pathos of his life and the iron determination, the courage and devotion that animated him in everything he did.

At last Shoghi Effendi, so powerfully guided from on high, had succeeded in establishing his "focal Centre". But it was not until over fourteen years later that he was in a position to inform the Bahá'í world that he was now taking a step which would "usher in the establishment of the World Administrative Centre of the Faith on Mt. Carmel — the Ark referred to by Bahá'u'lláh in the closing passages of His *Tablet of Carmel*". This step was none other than the erection of an international Bahá'í Archives.

Shortly after the addition of three rooms to the Báb's Shrine, in the early thirties, Shoghi Effendi had established an Archives at the World Centre, housed temporarily in these quarters and based on the precious relics of both Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá which were already in the possession of the Master's family and many of the old Bahá'ís living in Palestine. Visiting them became a deeply moving experience. "If one could have walked into a museum of the authentic relics of the days and life of Christ," I wrote in 1937, after my first seeing them, "what would it have meant to the Christian believers? If they had seen His sandals, dusty from the road between Bethlehem and Jerusalem, or the mantle that hung from His shoulders — or the cloth that protected His head from the sun; what atmosphere of assurance, of wonder, even of adoration would have stirred the inheritors of His Faith. If their eyes could have rested on even one fragmentary line penned by His hand... To most of the people of the world the meaning of such things is beyond their imagining; but to Bahá'ís, believers in the newest Revelation of God's Will as yet revealed to unfolding mankind upon this planet, this inestimable privilege has been vouchsafed."

As the Bahá'ís learned more about these Archives and the pilgrims visited them in increasing numbers and saw how safely historic and sacred material was preserved, how beautifully exhibited, how reverently displayed, they began to send from Persia truly priceless articles associated with the three Central Figures of the Faith as well as its martyrs and heroes. Amongst these most welcome additions were objects belonging to the Báb, contributed by the Afans, which greatly enriched the collection. It grew to such dimensions that at a later date the little house where the remains of the Purest Branch and his mother had been placed before their reburial was transformed by the Guardian into an additional Archives and the two places were referred to, for convenience's sake, as the "Major" and "Minor" Archives, or just as the "old" and the "new" Archives.

It was in 1954, during the first year of the World Crusade, that Shoghi Effendi decided to start on what he said was "the first of the major edifices destined to constitute the seat of the World Bahá'í Administrative Centre to be established on Mt. Carmel". His choice fell on a building he considered both urgently needed and feasible, namely, one to house the sacred and historic relics collected in the Holy Land which were dispersed at that time throughout six rooms in two separate buildings. By Naw-Rúz 1954, the excavation for its foundations had begun. Shoghi Effendi was, in choosing his initial design for buildings of the importance he had in mind, guided by three things: it must be beautiful, it must be dignified and it must have a lasting value and not reflect the transient (and to him for the most part very ugly) style of modern buildings being erected in an age of experimentation and groping after new forms. He was a great admirer of Greek architecture and considered the Parthenon in Athens one of the most beautiful buildings ever created; he chose the proportions of the Parthenon as his model, but changed the order of the capitals from Doric to Ionic. After his many suggestions had been incorporated in the final design Shoghi Effendi approved it and what he described as "this imposing and strikingly beautiful edifice" was completed in 1956. It had cost approximately a quarter of a million dollars and was, like the Shrine of the Báb, ordered in Italy, entirely carved and completed there, and shipped to Haifa for erection; not only was each separate stone numbered, but charts showing where each one went facilitated its being placed in its proper position. Except for the foundations and reinforced cement work of floor, walls and ceiling, it would not be incorrect to say it was a building fabricated almost entirely abroad and erected locally.

No enterprise undertaken by Shoghi Effendi better demonstrates his originality, his independence of the views and advice of others and his determination to get things done expeditiously than the way he personally handled this entire project. First he spent much time in studying, through strings laid out on the ground marking the dimensions of the building, the exact position he wanted it to occupy, which he changed a number of times until he was satisfied with its location; he then proceeded to landscape all the area in front of it, laying out paths and planting trees and lawns. He then informed Leroy Loas, who was to supervise the work locally (as Ugo Giachery was supervising the other part of it in Italy), that the building would have to be built from the rear, fitting the front into the gardens that already surrounded it, for practically its full length on all three sides, leaving only about five metres' leeway to work in! The result of this was that as the edifice rose, it rose in a setting of gardens which appeared well-grown and mature and when it was completed, far from having that usual desolate stretch of tramped down land around it, it looked as if it had been standing there for years. How providential it was that the Guardian did this, that under his guidance, with his impeccable taste, his perfect sense of proportion, it was all completed before he passed away. Indeed, so complete were all his preparations that when the time came to place in the Archives the furniture and *objets d'art* he had himself purchased and chosen to furnish it, practically everything needed was there at hand and the relics and many things of historic interest he had so assiduously assembled in the Major and Minor Archives could be placed in the setting he had designed for them, more or less as he would have done it himself.

In his last Ridván Message to the Bahá'í world Shoghi Effendi's satisfaction with the Archives building he had chosen and erected is clearly reflected; after announcing its completion he wrote that it is "contributing, to an unprecedented degree, through its colourfulness, its classic style and graceful proportions, and in conjunction with the stately, golden-crowned Mausoleum rising beyond it, to the unfolding glory of the central institutions of a World Faith nestling in the heart of God's holy Mountain.

In a message addressed to the Bahá'í world on 27 November 1954 — linked by the Guardian once again to the anniversary of his beloved Master's passing — Shoghi Effendi dwelt on the significance of this building, stating that possession of a long-desired piece of land had at last been assured and that the ownership of this plot would now make it possible to proceed with the erection of the International Bahá'í Archives. "The raising of this Edifice will in turn", he goes on to say, "herald the construction, in the course of successive epochs of the Formative Age of the Faith, of several other structures, which will serve as the administrative seats of such divinely appointed institutions as the Guardianship, the Hands of the Cause, and the Universal House of Justice. These Edifices will, in the shape of a far-flung arc, and following a harmonizing style of architecture, surround the resting-places of the Greatest Holy Leaf, ranking as foremost among the members of her sex in the Bahá'í Dispensation, of her brother, offered up as a ransom by Bahá'u'lláh for the quickening of the world and its unification, and of their mother, proclaimed by Him to be His chosen '*consort in all the worlds of God*'. The ultimate completion of this stupendous undertaking will mark the culmination of the development of a world-wide divinely-appointed Administrative Order whose beginnings may be traced as far back as the concluding years of the Heroic Age of the Faith.

So great was the importance Shoghi Effendi attached to this “arc”, the lines of which he had studied very carefully on the ground and which sweeps around on the mountain in the form of a gigantic bow, arched above the resting-places of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s closest relatives, and on the right side of which now stands the Archives, that he announced its completion in his last Ridván Message in 1957: “the plan designed to insure the extension and completion of the arc serving as a base for the erection of future edifices constituting the World Bahá’í Administrative Centre, has been successfully carried out.”

