

## Chapter 12

Rúhíyyih Rabbani

Original English



## Chapter 12

### The Rise of the World Centre

Underlying, reinforcing, and indeed often making possible such major undertakings as the erection of the superstructure of the Báb's Shrine, the construction of the Archives, the building of the terraces on Mt Carmel, and many other activities, was the purchase of land, both in Haifa and Bahjí; it was a task to which the Guardian attached great importance and which he pursued throughout all the years of his ministry. Before he passed away he had succeeded in creating great protective rings of land around the holiest of all Shrines, Bahá'u'lláh's Tomb, and around the resting-places of the Báb, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His mother, sister and brother. In addition to this he had chosen and directed the purchase of the land on Mt Carmel which would serve as the site of the future Bahá'í Temple to be erected in the Holy Land. If we consider that at the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing the area of Bahá'í properties on Mt Carmel probably did not exceed 10,000 square metres, and that Shoghi Effendi had, by 1957, raised this to 230,000 square metres, and that in Bahjí the comparable figures would be 1,000 square metres for 1921 and 257,000 square metres for 1957, we get an idea of his accomplishments in this one field alone. Through the generosity of individual Bahá'ís, through their bequests, through their response to his appeals in times of crisis, through the use of funds he held at the World Centre, Shoghi Effendi succeeded in purchasing land on the scale reflected by these figures and thus metamorphosed the situation of the Faith at its World Centre.

In May 1931 the Guardian cabled the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada: "American Assembly incorporated as recognized religious body in Palestine entitled hold property as trustees American believers. Mailing title deed property already transferred their name. Prestige Faith greatly enhanced its foundations consolidated love". This was the first step in constituting Palestine Branches — which were later changed to Israel Branches — of various National Assemblies and registering in their names properties owned in the Holy Land. Although the power of disposing of these properties was entirely vested locally at the World Centre, the prestige of the Faith was greatly enhanced by this move, its Holy Places were buttressed and safeguarded, its world character emphasized in the eyes of the authorities, and national Bahá'í communities were encouraged and strengthened. The messages of Shoghi Effendi referring to this subject reflect very clearly his policy and motives: "Palestine Branch Indian National Assembly established. Congratulate believers India Burma incorporation their National Assembly first legally constituted institution eastern section Bahá'í world..." "... recognition preeminent services continually enriching record achievements associated preeminent community Bahá'í world arranging transfer extensive valuable property acquired



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precincts Shrines Mount Carmel name Palestine Branch American Assembly..." "Every effort will be exerted in the Holy Land, as a tribute to the superb spirit animating the Australian and New Zealand believers and to their incessant and meritorious labours...to hasten the transfer of a part of the Bahá'í international endowments to the name of the newly constituted Israel Branch of your Assembly — an act that will at once bestow a great spiritual and material benefit on your Assembly and reinforce the ties binding it to the World Centre..."

At the time of Shoghi Effendi's passing he had already established nine of these Branches, namely, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the British Isles, Iran, Pakistan, Alaska and that of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India and Burma.

When Shoghi Effendi had built the three additional rooms of the Shrine of the Báb and completed the restoration of the Mansion of Bahá'u'lláh, thus producing local, tangible evidences of the strength of the Bahá'í Community, and had demonstrated to the British authorities, through the victories won over the Covenant-breakers, that he had the solid backing of Bahá'ís all over the world, he set about procuring for the Bahá'í Holy Places exemption from both municipal and government taxes. It was not as difficult to get a building, obviously a place of sacred association and visited by pilgrims, exempted from taxes as it was to secure similar exemption for the steadily increasing area of land owned by the Faith, most of which was registered in the names of individuals. Governments and municipalities are always reluctant to lose sources of income, always very afraid that a precedent will be established which other communities will pounce upon for their own gain. Because of this the ultimate exemption from all forms of taxation, including customs duty, which Shoghi Effendi obtained for the Bahá'í buildings and holdings throughout the country, was truly a great achievement. The major victories in this field were all won in the days of the British Mandate, the Israeli Government accepting the status achieved by the Bahá'ís before the new State was formed in

In his early efforts, at the beginning of the 1930's, to obtain this form of recognition Shoghi Effendi was greatly assisted by Sir Arthur Wauchope, the High Commissioner for Palestine during that period, who seems to have been, judging by his letters to Shoghi Effendi, a gentle, courteous and noble-minded man. On 26 June 1933 we find him writing to the Guardian: "I have received your letter of 21st June and I hasten to write to thank you for it and to assure you that when the case which you mention is referred to me for a decision under the Palestine (Holy Places) Order in Council, it will receive my most careful consideration." Almost a year later, on 10 May 1934, Shoghi Effendi cabled America: "Prolonged negotiations Palestine authorities resulted exemption from taxation entire area surrounding dedicated Shrines Mount Carmel" and indicated that he considered this step tantamount to "securing indirect recognition sacredness Faith International Centre..." In connection with this there are two letters, one dated 16 May 1934 from Sir Arthur to Shoghi Effendi in which he says "I hope this exemption will help you in carrying on your fine work", and one from Shoghi Effendi to him, dated six days earlier, in which he states "The gratifying news has just come to me from the District Commissioner at Haifa that the petition for exemption from taxation of the Bahá'í property holdings on Mt. Carmel has been granted by the Government." He goes on to add his own and the Bahá'ís deep appreciation for His Excellency's effective interest in this matter and says this decision opens the way for "our plan to gradually beautify this property for the use and enjoyment of the people of Haifa..."

By thus reading the pleasant tail end of events one does not get any idea of what Shoghi Effendi went through in connection with purchasing, exempting from taxes and safeguarding the properties at the World Centre. In a cable to the American National Assembly, of 28 March 1935, one of innumerable examples of what took place is given: "Contract for purchase and transfer to Palestine Branch American Assembly Dumits property situated centre area dedicated to Shrines on Mount Carmel signed. Four year litigation involving Bahá'í World's petitions Palestine High Commissioner abandoned. Owners require four thousand pounds. Half sum available. Will American believers unitedly contribute one thousand pounds before end of May and remaining one thousand within nine months. Am compelled appeal entire body American community subordinate national interests of Faith to its urgent paramount requirements at its World Centre", to which the American Assembly replied, two days later, that the American Bahá'í Community "will with one heart fulfil glorious privilege conferred upon it by beloved Guardian".

So many times Shoghi Effendi referred to the Holy Land as the "heart and nerve centre" of the faith. To protect it, develop it and noise abroad its glory was part of his function as its Guardian. In addition to his official contacts with government and municipal authorities he maintained courteous and friendly relations with many non-Bahá'ís, of prominence and otherwise. The catholicity of spirit which so strongly characterized the Guardian, his complete lack of any breath of prejudice or fanaticism, the sympathy and courtesy that distinguished him so strongly, are all reflected in his letters and messages to such people. He carried on a lengthy correspondence, during the earliest years of his ministry, with Grand Duke Alexander of Russia, whom it was obvious, from the tone of his letters, he liked. He addresses him as: "My true brother in the service of God!", "My dear brother in the love of God!" The Grand duke was very interested in a movement called the "Unity of Souls" and Shoghi Effendi encouraged him: "I am more and more impressed", he writes, "by the striking similarity of our aims and principles and I beseech the Almighty to bless His servants in their service to the cause of suffering humanity." The Grand Duke, in a letter to the Guardian writes: "...I must confess to you, my dear brother and fellow worker, that in my modest work occasionally I feel discouraged...the power of evil forces under the influence of which the majority of humanity is living, is appalling." Shoghi Effendi answers this most beautifully: "...I assure my dear fellow-worker in the service of God, that I too feel oftentimes overwhelmed by the rising wave of selfish, gross materialism that threatens to engulf the world, and I feel that however arduous be our common task we must persevere to the very end and pray continually and ardently that the ever-living spirit of god may so fill the souls of men as to cause them to arise with new vision for the service and salvation of humanity. Prayer and individual persistent effort, I feel, must be given greater and wider prominence in these days of stress and gloom..."

Shoghi Effendi was in touch not only with Queen Marie of Rumania and a number of her relatives, but with other people of royal lineage, such as Princess Marina of Greece who later became Duchess of Kent, and Princess Kadria of Egypt. To many of these, as well as to men of such prominence as Lord Lamington, a number of former High Commissioners for Palestine, Orientalists, university professors, educators and others, Shoghi Effendi was wont to send copies of the latest *Bahá'í World* volumes or one of his own recently published translations, with his visiting card enclosed — practically the only occasion on which he ever used one, as their main function seemed to be for him to keep notes on! He was always very meticulous — as long as the relationship was one of mutual courtesy and esteem — to send messages of condolence to

acquaintances who had suffered a bereavement, expressing his “heartfelt sympathy” at that person’s “great loss”. Such messages, often sent as cables or wires, deeply touched those who received them and gave him a reputation among them which belied the picture of him the Covenant-breakers did their best to create. He also often congratulated people on the occasion of a marriage or a promotion.

In addition to these personal relationships Shoghi Effendi had far more contact with certain non-Bahá’í organizations than is commonly supposed. This was particularly true of the Esperantists, whose whole object was to bring about the fulfilment of the Bahá’í principle that a universal auxiliary language must be adopted in the interests of World Peace. We have copies of his personal messages to the Universal Congress of Esperantists held in 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930 and 1931, and he no doubt sent many messages of a similar nature at other times. Shoghi Effendi not only responded warmly when there was any overture made to him, but often took the initiative himself in sending Bahá’í representatives, chosen by him, to various conferences whose interests coincided with those of the Bahá’ís. We thus find him writing to the Universal Esperantist Association, in 1927, that Martha Root and Julia Goldman will attend their Danzig Congress as official Bahá’í representatives, and that he trusts this “will serve to strengthen the ties of fellowship that bind the Esperantists and the followers of Bahá’u’lláh, one of whose cardinal principles...is the adoption of an international auxiliary language for all humanity.” In his letter addressed to the delegates and friends attending this nineteenth Universal Congress of Esperantists he writes:

My dear fellow workers in the service of humanity

I take great pleasure in addressing you and wishing you...from all my heart the fullest success in the work you are doing for the promotion of the good of humanity.

It will interest you, I am sure, to learn that as the result of the repeated and emphatic admonitions of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá His many followers even in the most distant villages and hamlets of Persia, where the light of Western civilization has hardly penetrated as yet, as well as in other lands throughout the East, are strenuously and enthusiastically engaged in the study and teaching of Esperanto, for whose future they cherish the highest hopes...

The Guardian himself was held in high esteem by many people working for ideals similar to those the Bahá’ís cherish. Sir Francis Younghusband, in 1926, wrote to him in connection with the “World Congress of Faiths”: “Now I wish to ask a great favour of you. Once more I want to try and persuade you to come to England to attend the Congress. Your presence here would carry great influence and would be highly appreciated. And we would most willingly defray the expenses you might be put to.” The Guardian declined this invitation, but arranged for a Bahá’í paper to be presented. His own plans and work precluded him, he felt, from opening such a door.

In 1925 the Zionist Executive in Jerusalem invited him to attend an event in connection with the establishment of a university there. Shoghi Effendi wired them, on 1 April: “Appreciate kind invitation regret inability to be present. Bahá’ís hope and pray the establishment of this seat of learning may contribute to the revival of a land of hallowed memories for us all and for which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá cherished the highest hopes.” To this message they replied in cordial terms:

"Zionists Executive much appreciate your friendly message and good wishes we trust that newly established university may contribute not only advancement of science and learning but also to better understanding between men which ideal is so well served by Bahá'ís". Twenty-five years later the tie established is still there: "The Hebrew University was very gratified indeed to receive your check for £100. — as the contribution from His Eminence Shoghi Effendi Rabbani towards the work of this institution... We were happy to know that His Eminence is aware of the important work that the University is doing and to receive this generous token of appreciation from him..."

A cable of Shoghi Effendi, sent to India in December 1930, is of particular interest because it shows how, up to the very end of her life, he would tenderly include the Greatest Holy Leaf in messages that seemed particularly suitable: "Convey to Indian Asian Women's Conference behalf Greatest Holy Leaf 'Abdu'l-Bahá's sister and myself our genuine profound interest their deliberations. May Almighty guide bless their high endeavours".

Aside from this wide correspondence with prominent individuals as well as various Societies, Shoghi Effendi was wont to receive in his home the visits of many distinguished people, such as Lord and Lady Samuel; Sir Ronald Storrs, another friend of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; Moshe Sharett, later to become one of Israel's most loved and prominent officials; Profession Norman Bentwich and many writers, journalists and notables.

However important were such contacts and exchanges as these, undoubtedly the most important of all such relations was that which the Guardian had with officials at the World Centre, whether under British rule during the Mandate in Palestine or later after the War of Independence and the establishment of the State of Israel. Cordial though these relations were with the representatives of both governments there is no doubt whatsoever that they would have been much more cordial, and led to much greater things, had it not been for the insidious, persistent influence exerted by all kinds of enemies of the Faith, whether disaffected Bahá'ís or jealous members of other religious groups. To the effect produced by such as these must be added the results of the fact that for the most part Shoghi Effendi's helpers lacked calibre. Once he remarked to me that it was a great pity so many good people lacked good judgment and so many intelligent people lacked good character, pointing out that the ideal thing was a good person who was intelligent at the same time. He had his full share as Guardian of both extremes and very seldom found in those who served him the combination he desired. I remember on another occasion his telling me of a Persian proverb that says it is better to have a wise enemy than a foolish friend! An example of what the Guardian had to contend with is a remark a member of his family made to me: he said an Englishman — by no means a mere nobody — had told him he would like to call on Shoghi Effendi, to which this person replied that he was welcome to do so, but he must not expect the Guardian to return his call, as he never did this. One can easily see how remarks as tactless and thoughtless as this built a wall of misunderstanding around Shoghi Effendi which, combined with the whispers of real ill-wishers, served to misrepresent him to the public and put him in a most unkind light; if the man had met Shoghi Effendi he would have been so impressed he would not have even thought of whether the Guardian was going to return his call or not. But of course, after this remark he never came near the Guardian. The Guardian's own judgment was so perfect, however, that by

strictly guiding his would-be co-workers and subordinates he accomplished, in the face of what often seemed hopelessly complicated situations, miracles. Without having a tortuous mind himself he could see into the workings of the minds of those who did, and thus did not press issues unwisely at the wrong time, or find himself caught by refusals that would manœuvre the Cause into an impasse out of which he might not be able to extricate it for a very long time.

When one thinks of who Shoghi Effendi was, how exalted both his station and his capacities were, one cannot but feel intense regret that he was denied the company of the great men of this world who, to at least a small extent, might have provided him with interesting and stimulating companionship. That he felt the lack of such relationships in his life he often indicated in remarks he made to me. Shoghi Effendi saw through people very clearly, with a shrewdness that would better be described as divine rather than human.

In all his relationships with both government and municipal officials Shoghi Effendi sought from the very beginning to impress upon them that the Faith was an independent religion, universal in character, and that its permanent World Spiritual and Administrative Centre was situated in the Holy Land. He spent thirty-six years winning from the authorities the recognition and rights that such a status entitled the Bahá'í Faith to enjoy, one aspect of which was that he himself should receive the treatment on official occasions which was his due as the hereditary Head of such a Faith. For a number of reasons, such as the numerical insignificance of the Bahá'í Community in Palestine, the challenge to his authority made by the Covenant-breakers immediately after the Master's passing, the reluctance of all civil authorities to become involved in religious issues, both the British and the Israeli Governments were loath to accord Shoghi Effendi the degree of respect and precedence his unique office warranted, and because of this, with very few exceptions, he avoided ever attending official functions. When we recall the fact that from 1868, when He arrived in Akka, until His death in 1921, 'Abdu'l-Bahá never set foot in Jerusalem, because, Shoghi Effendi said, He would not have been treated as befitted His exalted station and the historical significance a visit by Him to Jerusalem deserved, and that because of this He avoided ever going there, we get some idea of the issues involved in this struggle.

Early in his ministry Shoghi Effendi had had an experience that drove home to him the pitfalls involved if he accepted the invitations the local authorities sent him to be present on such occasions as the visit of a high official to Haifa. He told me of how he attended one of these receptions, given by the District Commissioner in honour of the High Commissioner. On entering the room the Guardian found the High Commissioner seated at the centre and top of the room; the only chair near him which was vacant was the one on his right. Unhesitatingly Shoghi Effendi advanced and seated himself in it; as this was the one reserved for the District Commissioner, and he did not wish to request the Guardian publicly to vacate it, another one was brought for this official. Shoghi Effendi well knew that on any similar occasion this would not be permitted to happen and he never again attended such a function.

There seems to be an allusion to this, or at least an allusion to the dilemma Shoghi Effendi found himself in, in a letter to Colonel Stewart B. Symes, former Governor of Haifa who had recently been transferred to Jerusalem and appointed Chief Secretary of the Palestine Administration. On 17 May 1925 Shoghi Effendi wrote and congratulated him on this appointment. It then seems that Colonel Symes came on an official visit to Haifa for we find the Guardian writing to him again, on the 25th, that "In view of various considerations arising out of the still undefined status

of the Bahá'í Community I find it, to my regret and sorrow impossible to participate in person in the various public functions arranged in your honour. I thus find myself denied the great pleasure and privilege of raising my voice not only in the name of the local community but also on behalf of the Bahá'ís throughout the world in appreciation and gratitude for the good will and high sense of justice which have characterized your attitude towards the various problems arising out of the sudden passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. I am sure you will realize that my enforced absence from these public gatherings implies in no way a want of cordiality and friendship towards the representative of an administration which the Bahá'ís have every reason to regard with high esteem and deep confidence." He goes on to invite Colonel and Mrs Symes and her mother to tea in the gardens, or, if this cannot be arranged conveniently, he will call personally at their home. It is interesting to note how, almost a quarter of a century later, a similar situation arose, this time in connection with Prime Minister Ben Gurion's first visit to Haifa, and the same motives persuaded Shoghi Effendi to pursue an identical course.

The Guardian was on very friendly terms with Colonel Symes, who was none other than that Governor of Phoenicia who spoke at the Master's funeral and attended the fortieth-day meeting in His home. It had been to Colonel Symes that Shoghi Effendi had written, on 5 April 1922, at the time of his withdrawal: "As I am compelled to leave Haifa for reasons of health, I have named as my representative during my absence, the sister of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahíyyih K̲hánum" and gone on to say "To assist her to conduct the affairs of the Bahá'í Movement in this country and elsewhere, I have also appointed a committee of the following Bahá'ís [eight men of the local community, three of them the sons-in-law of 'Abdu'l-Bahá]...The Chairman of this Committee, to be soon elected by its members, with the signature of Bahíyyih K̲hánum has my authority to transact any affairs that may need to be considered and decided during my absence. I regret exceedingly to be unable to see you before my departure, that I may express more adequately the satisfaction that I feel to know that your sense of justice will safeguard the interests of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh whenever called upon to act."

The cordial relations between Symes and Shoghi Effendi and the esteem he evidently had for the character of the Governor are reflected in the letter he wrote to him upon his return: "It is my pleasant duty to inform you of my return to the Holy Land after a prolonged period of rest and meditation and of my assumption of my official functions", and he went on to say: "I had felt after the passing of my beloved Grandfather too exhausted, overwhelmed and sorrowful to be able to conduct efficiently the affairs of the Bahá'í Movement. Now that I feel again restored and refreshed and in a position to resume my arduous duties, I wish to express to you on this occasion my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for the sympathetic consideration you have shown towards the Movement during my absence." The letter contains, in the next paragraph, an unusual warmth of feeling: "It is a great pleasure and privilege for me to be enabled to renew my acquaintance with you and Mrs. Symes which I am confident will in the course of time grow into warm and abiding friendship." Shoghi Effendi ended it with his "kind regards and best wishes" and simply signed it "Shoghi". The exchange of correspondence with Colonel Symes — who later was knighted, and became Governor General of the Sudan before and during the second World War — went on for many years, even after his retirement.

In 1927 Shoghi Effendi wrote to him: "I take the liberty of enclosing for your information a copy of latest communication addressed to Bahá'ís in Western lands regarding the Egyptian situation... We are greatly heartened by the thought that at a time when we are faced with delicate and perplexing issues, Palestine is under an Administration which is actuated by the highest motives of fairness and justice, and for which we Bahá'ís have every reason to be appreciative and thankful. I am glad the Bahá'í Year Book has interested you..." and again ended by sending kindest regards to him and Mrs Symes. On 27 December 1935 we find Symes (now Sir Stewart) writing to Shoghi Effendi from "The Palace, Khartoum": "Very many thanks for your kind Christmas greetings and for the Book..." and, also from the Sudan, a year later on 9 April 1936: "Thank you for so kindly sending me Volume V of the 'Bahá'í World'. I wish some of the Bahá'í Spirit might be transformed into national and international affairs! I trust all is well with you and your work..."

The last letter from him, in Shoghi Effendi's files, was written in July 1945, and testifies to the permanence of Shoghi Effendi's relationships with people who treated him, and responded to his overtures, with the same warmth and courtesy he was ever ready to shower on them. He had learned that the Symes's son had been killed in the war. "My wife and I", Symes wrote, "were much moved by your cable. It was indeed kind of you to remember us in our sorrows..." and ended his long letter to the Guardian: "If you should visit England I hope you will advise us. For it would be a great pleasure to us to meet you again, with kindest remembrances and regards..."

Another official, whose position, though not so high, involved directly the affairs of the Bahá'í Community at its World Centre, was the District Commissioner. During those years when Shoghi Effendi was beginning to seek recognition for the Faith in tangible privileges, Edward Keith-Roach, O.B.E., held this office. Although a man of an entirely different calibre from Colonel Symes he was nevertheless friendly and helpful and seemed to be fond of Shoghi Effendi, whose correspondence with him runs from 1925 to 84. Keith-Roach, undoubtedly because he knew the higher authorities would approve, was at times very co-operative not only in facilitating and expediting Shoghi Effendi's work, but in making suggestions which the Guardian sometimes carried out. The first copy we find of a letter from Shoghi Effendi to him is so simple and yet so typical of the warmth with which the Guardian invariably responded to other people's overtures when they were made in the right spirit, that I cannot refrain from quoting it. It was dated simply "Haifa, 25-12-25" and said: "My dear Mr. Keith-Roach: I am touched by your welcome message of good-will and greeting and I hasten to assure you that I fully reciprocate the sentiments expressed in your letter. With best wishes for a happy Christmas, I am yours very sincerely, Shoghi Rabbani".

In many of the letters exchanged between Shoghi Effendi and Keith-Roach it is evident that they often met. When Keith-Roach was in hospital in Jerusalem, in 1935, Shoghi Effendi wrote to him: "Many thanks for your letter...I am so glad to hear your health is improving, and I trust you will on your return be able to have tea with me in the newly-extended gardens surrounding the Resting-Place." Throughout Shoghi Effendi's correspondence with both Keith-Roach and Symes there are invitations for them to have tea with him in the gardens on Mt Carmel; in Colonel Symes's case the invitation sometimes included Mrs Symes. It was not only Shoghi Effendi's way of extending some hospitality to these officials, but served to show them, by bringing them into

the midst of the Bahá'í property, the latest developments and the most recent extension of the gardens and, I have no doubt, he made use of their presence to point out to them his future plans and seek their sympathetic support. Indeed, many of these appointments were made for that specific purpose.

From the beginning of his Guardianship up into the 1940's, it had been Shoghi Effendi's practice to see officials, engineers, lawyers and other non-Bahá'ís himself in connection with his important business; he did not go to their offices, but met them at their residences or, more often, they either came to his home or he met them on the Shrine properties. An example of what this friendly co-operation led to is shown in the important events that transpired in 1930. On 19 November the monument for the grave of the Greatest Holy Leaf was delivered in the port of Haifa. On the 20th Shoghi Effendi wrote to Keith-Roach: "May I ask your help in connexion with the marble monument which is to be erected above the grave of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's sister and which was landed safely at Haifa yesterday afternoon. A subordinate official of the Customs' Department is willing to exempt it from duty if the necessary authorization is granted by higher authorities. I therefore appeal to you and feel confident that you will do all you can to facilitate the entrance into Palestine of a work of art which, in some of its features, may well be regarded as unique in this country. With deepest appreciation and gratitude, Yours very sincerely". On 22 November Shoghi Effendi again wrote to him: "May I offer you my deepest thanks for your kind and prompt response to my request. The monument has been safely delivered, and I have given the necessary instructions for its immediate erection. Thanking you again and with kind regards and best wishes..." The entrance of this monument duty free created a precedent of far-reaching implications, which was to ensure the Faith at its World Centre, in the course of coming decades, a steadily increasing area of exemption, ending in concessions obtained from the State of Israel of a nature which had not been obtainable during the Mandate.

Four days later Shoghi Effendi reminds the District Commissioner of a demand of far greater significance which he had made of him; the whole letter, following as it did immediately upon the two quoted above, represents a truly masterly diplomacy — one is tempted to say on the part of both God and Shoghi Effendi — for the Former provided the sequence of events and the latter leapt upon the opportunity they afforded.

Haifa,  
Nov. 26, 1932

Dear Mr. Keith-Roach:

I am sure you will be interested to learn that I am taking the necessary preliminary steps for the extension of the terraces, forming an integral part of the Shrine, and leading to the German Colony.

I have approached the Municipal Engineer and found him very sympathetic and favourable. I intend, therefore, to submit to the Town Planning Commission an official statement of the conditions under which we are prepared to open and extend the terraces, at our own expense and following the general design already adopted.

It is my earnest hope that before the end of the year 1933 the wish that you have expressed, and for the realization of which I will heartily endeavour, will be completely realized.

I am sure that the application which I have recently submitted to you regarding the sacredness of the Mansion at Bahjí, which forms an integral part of the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh, will receive your sympathetic consideration, and that the necessary certificate will be granted for the exemption from custom duty of the articles consigned for that building.

Shoghi Effendi obviously not only kept his District Commissioner fully informed, but kept after him, in a courteous, friendly and masterly way, to secure for the Faith those privileges he believed were its right. And Keith-Roach, having no doubt ascertained that the Administration in Jerusalem was sympathetic towards the work Shoghi Effendi was carrying out, helped him actively, with suggestions and co-operation. Thus we find Shoghi Effendi writing to him, on 2 February 1934, a letter that was one of the major links in the long struggle to exempt Bahá'í properties from taxation:

Dear Mr. Keith-Roach,

In accordance with your suggestion I am enclosing the formal declaration which I have signed as Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith and which I trust will facilitate the exemption from taxation of the area surrounding the international Bahá'í Shrine on Mt. Carmel.

I should be grateful if you would issue the authorization required to exempt from custom duty the gilded ornamental gate which forms a part of the entrance to the tomb of the Greatest Holy Leaf.

I am enclosing the key to the upper gate of the Shrine, which I hope you will use when passing through the Gardens.

Assuring you of my abiding gratitude and heartfelt appreciation of your assistance and sympathetic consideration of the interests of the Bahá'í Community,

I am yours very sincerely,

Three months later, on 10 May, we find the Guardian writing to him again: "I wish to express to you my deepest appreciation of the action you have taken to exempt from taxation the entire area surrounding and dedicated to the international Bahá'í Shrines on Mt. Carmel." One of the great victories in the course of the development of the World Centre had been won.

In another letter, dated 21 June 1935, Shoghi Effendi, in calling Keith-Roach's attention to matters connected with a court case, says: "Any assistance you can find it possible to extend in this respect would, I am sure, be deeply appreciated by me no less than by the various Bahá'í Assemblies whose interests I represent." Throughout his ministry Shoghi Effendi always let it be known very clearly to officials that, although he was the Head of the Faith, behind him stood a great concourse of Bahá'ís in many countries, ready to back up, with all the power they possessed, his claims and demands; and in expressing his thanks, he very often included their sentiments of gratitude and appreciation along with his own.

Although the Guardian did not attend any government receptions or functions, for reasons already stated, he was often willing to call on officials privately. We find him writing to Keith-Roach: "...I should be delighted to have you come to tea tomorrow afternoon at my home, where we could discuss the matter...I can call at the Hospice, if it is more convenient to you, and at any time it will suit you." On 27 December 1936 we find Keith-Roach in a warm letter in his own hand, marked "Personal", thanking Shoghi Effendi for "your much appreciated Christmas greetings which were both fragrant and beautiful." He not only thanked Shoghi Effendi for a gift of flowers, but on many occasions had cause to thank him for various Bahá'í books, which he appreciated receiving. After the Guardian was married, in March 1937, Keith-Roach wrote to him: "May I congratulate your bride and you with real sincerity on your marriage and wish you both a life rich in service of the great task set you by god to carry out. When may I come and call upon you. With deep regard..." This letter, of such a warm personal nature, Shoghi Effendi replied to on the same day he received it, 23 April: "I am deeply touched by the sentiments you have expressed to me on the occasion of my marriage. I greatly value your message of good wishes, and will always remember with feelings of gratitude the assistance you have extended to me in my arduous task. I will be most pleased to welcome you at our home on any day that may be convenient to you. Thanking you most warmly for your message..." Shortly after this Keith-Roach was made District Commissioner of Jerusalem, but the friendly tie remained and a few years later we were congratulating him on his marriage, which he had written us he was contemplating. As we have almost no record whatsoever of Shoghi Effendi's attitude towards non-Bahá'ís with whom he was on a friendly basis, I have referred to his correspondence with Keith-Roach in some detail as it reveals to us another side of the Guardian's many-sided nature.

Immediately upon his return to the Holy Land after the Master's passing, Shoghi Effendi pursued the policy of keeping the authorities informed, locally and particularly at the seat of Government in Jerusalem, not only of his plans, but of his problems and various crises that arose, such as the seizure of the keys of Bahá'u'lláh's Shrine in Bahjí and His House in Baghdad, as well as the persecutions and injustices the Faith was suffering. Commencing with his first letter to the High Commissioner, Sir Herbert Samuel, the friend of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, written on 16 January 1922, Shoghi Effendi maintained this contact with the government until the end of his life, first with the British and later with the Jewish representatives. When Shoghi Effendi left Palestine, so crushed and ill, in the spring of 1922, he had informed Sir Herbert of the measures he had taken to protect the Cause during his absence; after his return to Haifa on 15 December of that same year, he had wired Sir Herbert on the 19th: "Pray accept my best wishes and kind regards on my return to Holy Land and resumption of my official duties".

In May 1923 we find Shoghi Effendi keeping both the Governor of Haifa and the High Commissioner informed of events, for in a letter to the former he writes that the "Haifa Bahá'í Spiritual Assembly" has been "officially reconstituted and will, in conjunction with me, direct all local affairs in this region. I have lately informed H.E. the High Commissioner of this matter..." The letter he referred to, dated 21 April, had stated that he enclosed a copy of his recent circular letter to the Bahá'í communities in the West, similar to one written in Persian to the Bahá'í communities in the East, "As you had expressed in your last letter to me the desire to learn of the measures that have been taken to provide for the stable organization of the Bahá'í Movement...I shall be only too glad to throw further light on any point which Your Excellency might desire to

raise in connection with the enclosed letter, or regarding any other matter bearing upon the interests of the Movement in general.”

It is impossible to go into the details of the thirty-six years of Shoghi Effendi's relations with the authorities, first of Palestine and later of Israel. That he succeeded in winning and maintaining their good will, their co-operation in his various undertakings at the World Centre, and their recognition of that Centre as the historic heart of the Bahá'í Faith entitled to enjoy the same rights as other Faiths in the Holy Land — indeed, in some respects to enjoy greater rights — all this in the face of the continuous mischief stirred up by various enemies who, whether overtly or covertly, consistently opposed every step he took is a tribute to the extraordinary wisdom and patience that characterized Shoghi Effendi's leadership of the Cause of God.

When Sir Herbert Samuel's term of office was drawing to a close the Guardian sent to him, on 15 June 1925, one of those messages that so effectively forged links of good will with the government, expressing his own and the Bahá'ís' abiding sense of gratitude and deep appreciation of the “kind and noble attitude which Your Excellency has taken towards the various problems that have beset them since the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá...The Bahá'ís... remembering the acts of sympathy and good will which the Palestine Administration under your guidance has shown them in the past, will confidently endeavour to contribute their full share to the material prosperity as well as the spiritual advancement of a land so sacred and precious to them all.” Sir Herbert replied to this letter in the following terms: “...I have been happy during my five years of office to maintain very friendly relations with the Bahá'í Community in Palestine and much appreciate the good will which they have always shown towards the Administration and to myself.”

When, in 1929, there was an outbreak of trouble in Palestine, we find the Guardian writing to the then High Commissioner, Sir John Chanallor, on 10 September a highly significant letter:

Your Excellency:

I have learned with profound regret of the lamentable occurrences in Palestine, and hasten, while away from home, to offer Your Excellency my heartfelt sympathy in the difficult task with which you are faced.

The Bahá'í Community of Palestine, who, by reason of their Faith, are deeply attached to its soil truly deplore these violent outbursts of religious fanaticism, and venture to hope that, as the influence of Bahá'í ideals extends and deepens, they may be enabled in the days to come to lend increasing assistance to your Administration for the promotion of the spirit of good will and toleration among the religious communities in the Holy Land.

I feel moved to offer Your Excellency in their behalf the enclosed sum as their contribution for the relief of the suffering and needy, irrespective of race or creed...

It was during that same year of 1929, that Shoghi Effendi, through the instrumentality of a formal petition to the government made by the Bahá'í Community of Haifa on 4 May, succeeded in obtaining for it permission to administer according to Bahá'í law the affairs of the Community in such matters of personal status as marriage, thus placing it, in this regard, on an equal footing

with the Jewish, Muslim and Christian Communities in Palestine. Shoghi Effendi hailed this as “an act of tremendous significance and wholly unprecedented in the history of the Faith in any country”. The Guardian’s own exclusively Bahá’í marriage was registered and became legal as a result of this recognition he had won for the Faith.

One of the men who occupied the important office of High Commissioner during these years when the Cause was beginning to win in such tangible ways recognition for its independent status, was Sir Arthur Wauchope, a man who, like Colonel Symes, had a personal liking for Shoghi Effendi and who, one suspects, understood how heavy the burden was that rested on the shoulders of the young man who was the Head of the Bahá’í Faith. It was during the period of his administration — which partly coincided with the time Keith-Roach was District Commissioner in Haifa — that some of the greatest victories in winning concessions from the authorities took place, the most important of these, next to the right of the Community to obey some of its own laws governing personal status, being the exemption from taxation of the entire area surrounding the Shrine of the Báb on Mt Carmel. Unlike most High Commissioners, Sir Arthur seems to have met Shoghi Effendi personally as he refers to this in some of his letters.

In one of them, dated 26 June 1933, Sir Arthur states: “I have received your letter of the 21st June and I hasten to write to thank you for it and to assure you that when the case which you mention is referred to me for a decision under the Palestine (Holy Places) Order in Council, it will receive my most careful consideration. I have also received the ‘Bahá’í World’ for 1930-32. I am most grateful to you for this extremely interesting book...I hope to have the pleasure of another visit to the beautiful Gardens on the hillside outside Haifa.”

On 13 March 1934 Shoghi Effendi wrote to him: “...As the case recently referred to Your Excellency concerning the Bahá’í Shrines on Mt. Carmel has vital international importance, I have asked Mr. \_\_\_ to come to Palestine to confer with me about it. I would greatly appreciate Your Excellency’s kindly according him an interview in order to clarify one or two points which I do not quite understand and upon which my future action in this matter depends.” On 1 May of that same year Shoghi Effendi again wrote to him: “I deeply appreciated the kind message of sympathy and support for the projected plan of the Bahá’í Community to beautify the slopes of Mt. Carmel which you sent to me through Mr. \_\_\_. It greatly encouraged me. Unfortunately there are strong and influential interests that are seeking to obstruct the plan. These are in part merely real estate speculators who, in their short-sightedness, are doing their utmost to develop the northern slope of Mt. Carmel for their immediate benefit. More difficult and dangerous for our plan however are those who definitely seek to frustrate the efforts of the followers of Bahá’u’lláh in anything that they may undertake. We believe that these people were back of the case brought against us by the Domets [Dumits], for example, and it was for that reason that we felt justified in our endeavour to have it withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the courts and submitted to Your Excellency’s personal consideration...With kind regards and renewed expression of my warm appreciation of Your Excellency’s sympathy and support...” The case in question, which involved four years of litigation, was finally abandoned and in 1935 a contract for the purchase of the Dumit land was signed and Shoghi Effendi cabled the National Assembly in America that he was planning to register it in the name of their Palestine Branch. It is interesting to note that to the Bahá’ís he transliterated the name, but not to the High Commissioner.

Shoghi Effendi had been endeavouring for some time to obtain exemption from taxation on Bahá'í properties surrounding the Báb's Shrine and had finally received news this had been granted. Behind the formal lines of this letter to Sir Arthur, written on 11 May 1934, his inner jubilation over this victory can be sensed:

Your Excellency,

The gratifying news has just come to me from the District Commissioner at Haifa that the petition for exemption from taxation of the Bahá'í property holdings on Mt. Carmel has been granted by the Government.

I hasten to express to Your Excellency for the World Bahá'í Community and myself our deep appreciation of the sympathetic and effective interest which Your Excellency has taken in the matter and which I know must have contributed in large measure to this outcome. And I venture to hope for the continuation of Your Excellency's sympathetic support in our plan to gradually beautify this property for the use and enjoyment of the people of Haifa, for which this action of the Government now opens the way.

To this letter Sir Arthur replied in person, five days later:

Dear Shoghi Effendi,

Thank you for your letter of May 11th and the kind words it contains. I have always had great sympathy with your projects for beautifying the slopes of Mt. Carmel and I hope this exemption will help you in carrying on your fine work.

Yours very sincerely,  
Arthur Wauchope

In another letter the High Commissioner wrote: "I am most grateful to you for your kind present of the 'Dawn Breakers'. I shall read the book with much interest, for you know how the wonderful story stirred me when I first heard it in Persia. The book is charmingly produced and the illustrations and reproductions add to its attraction. Again with very many thanks for your kind thoughts and welcome gift..." There are similar letters thanking the Guardian for *Gleanings* and *The Bahá'í World*. The last letter, written in February 1938, by this man, who through his high office assisted Shoghi Effendi in winning a major victory at the World Centre of the Faith, was typical of his courteous kindness: "...I had every intention of visiting you in Haifa, where I hoped to see the progress you had made with your garden and say good-bye in person. Unfortunately the many calls on my time...made this impossible, so I take this opportunity of bidding you farewell and expressing my best wishes to the Bahá'í community." At the bottom of the letter he added by hand "I hear your garden is growing more beautiful every year."

At the time when the Mandate drew to its close and the troubled people of Palestine were preparing to fight it out, the United Nations appointed a Special Committee on Palestine, headed by Justice Emil Sandstrom. On 9 July he wrote to Shoghi Effendi from Jerusalem, stating that under the terms of reference of this committee it was charged with giving most careful consideration to the religious interests in Palestine of Islam, Judaism and Christianity, and goes on to say "I should appreciate it if you would advise me whether you wish to submit evidence —

in a written statement on the religious interests of your Community in Palestine." Because of the historic importance to Bahá'ís of Shoghi Effendi's reply to this letter I quote it in full:

14th July 1947

Mr. Justice  
Chairman,  
United Nations Special Committee on Palestine

Sandstrom,

Sir:

Your kind letter of July 9th reached me and I wish to thank you for affording me the opportunity of presenting to you and your esteemed colleagues a statement of the relationship which the Bahá'í Faith has to Palestine and our attitude towards any future changes in the status of this sacred and much disputed land.

I am enclosing with this letter, for your information, a brief sketch of the history, aims and significance of the Bahá'í Faith, as well as a small pamphlet setting forth its views towards the present state of the world and the lines on which we hope and believe it must and will develop.

The position of the Bahá'ís in this country is in a certain measure unique: whereas Jerusalem is the spiritual center of Christendom it is not the administrative center of either the Church of Rome or any other Christian denomination. Likewise although it is regarded by Moslems as the spot where one of its most sacred shrines is situated, the Holy Sites of the Muḥammadan Faith, and the center of its pilgrimages, are to be found in Arabia, not in Palestine. The Jews alone offer somewhat of a parallel to the attachment which the Bahá'ís have for this country inasmuch as Jerusalem holds the remains of their Holy Temple and was the seat of both the religious and political institutions associated with their past history. But even their case differs in one respect from that of the Bahá'ís, for it is in the soil of Palestine that the three central Figures of our religion are buried, and it is not only the center of Bahá'í pilgrimages from all over the world but also the permanent seat of our Administrative Order, of which I have the honor to be the Head.

The Bahá'í Faith is entirely non-political and we neither take sides in the present tragic dispute going on over the future of the Holy Land and its peoples nor have we any statement to make or advice to give as to what the nature of the political future of this country should be. Our aim is the establishment of universal peace in this world and our desire to see justice prevail in every domain of human society, including the domain of politics. As many of the adherents of our Faith are of Jewish and Moslem extraction we have no prejudice towards either of these groups and are most anxious to reconcile them for their mutual benefit and for the good of the country.

What does concern us, however, in any decisions made affecting the future of Palestine, is that the fact be recognized by whoever exercises sovereignty over Haifa and Acre, that within this area exists the spiritual and administrative center of a world Faith, and that the independence of that Faith, its right to manage its international affairs from this source, the right of Bahá'ís from any and every country of the globe to visit it as pilgrims (enjoying the same privilege in this respect as Jews, Moslems and Christians do in regard to visiting Jerusalem), be acknowledged and permanently safeguarded.

The Sepulchre of the Báb on Mt. Carmel, the Tomb of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in that same spot, the Pilgrim Hostel for oriental Bahá'ís in its vicinity, the large gardens and terraces which surround these places (all of which are open to visits by the public of all denominations), the Pilgrim Hostel for western Bahá'ís at the foot of Mt. Carmel, the residence of the Head of the Community, various houses and gardens in Acre and its vicinity associated with Bahá'u'lláh's incarceration in that city, His Holy Tomb at Bahjí, near Acre, with His Mansion which is now preserved as a historic site and a museum (both likewise accessible to the public of all denominations), as well as holdings in the plain of Acre — all these comprise the bulk of Bahá'í properties in the Holy Land. It should also be noted that practically all of these properties have been exempted from both Government and Municipal taxes owing to their religious nature. Some of these extensive holdings are the property of the Palestine Branch of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, incorporated as a religious society according to the laws of the country. In future various other Bahá'í National Assemblies will hold, through their Palestine Branches, part of the International Endowments of the Faith in the Holy Land.

In view of the above information I would request you and the members of your Committee to take into consideration the safeguarding of Bahá'í rights in any recommendation which you may make to the United Nations concerning the future of Palestine.

May I take this opportunity of assuring you of my deep appreciation of the spirit in which you and your colleagues have conducted your investigations into the troubled conditions of this Sacred Land. I trust and pray that the outcome of your deliberations will produce an equitable and speedy solution of the very thorny problems which have arisen in Palestine.

Yours  
Shoghi Rabbani

faithfully,

It must be remembered that the only oriental notable of any standing whatsoever who had not fled from Palestine before the War of Independence was Shoghi Effendi. This fact was not lost upon the authorities of the new State. By acts such as this, the Guardian had succeeded in impressing upon non-Bahá'ís, who had no reason whatever to take him on faith alone, the sterling personal integrity and strict adherence to what he believed was the right course that characterized his leadership of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. Largely because of this, and a knowledge of what the Bahá'í Teachings represented, of which the *avant garde* of the Jewish Movement for independence were well aware, the new authorities were extremely co-operative in every way. One of their first acts, when the fighting was still going on, had been to place a notice on the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh — much more isolated than the Shrines in Haifa — stating that it was a *Lieu Sainte* or "Holy Place", thus ensuring that it would be treated with respect by all Jews.

However, the same old problem of how to maintain his position on formal occasions faced the Guardian under the new State as had faced him under the old administration. In January 1949 Mr Ben Gurion, the Prime Minister of the Provisional Government, came to Haifa on his first official visit and the Mayor naturally invited Shoghi Effendi to attend the reception being given in his honour by the Municipality. The dilemma was acute, for if the Guardian did not go, it would, with every reason, be taken as an affront to the new Government, and if he did go he would inevitably be submerged in a sea of people where any pretence at protocol would be

swept away (this was indeed the case, as my father, Shoghi Effendi's representative, reported after he returned from this reception). The Guardian therefore decided that as he would not be attending, but was more than willing to show courtesy to the Prime Minister of the new State, he would call upon him in person. With great difficulty this was arranged through the good offices of the Mayor of Haifa, Shabatay Levy, as Mr Ben Gurion's time in Haifa was very short and it was only two days before the first general election in the new State.

The interview took place on Friday evening, 21 January, in the private home the Prime Minister was staying in on Mt Carmel and lasted about fifteen minutes. Ben Gurion inquired about the Faith and Shoghi Effendi's relation to it and asked if there was a book he could read; Shoghi Effendi answered his questions and assured him he would send him a copy of his own book *God Passes By* — which he later did, and which was acknowledged with thanks.

Typical of the whole history of the Cause and the constant problems that beset it was a long article which appeared in the leading English-language newspaper on 20 December 1948, in which, in the most favourable terms, its teachings were set forth and the station of Shoghi Effendi as its World Head mentioned. On 28 January 1949 there appeared in the letter column of this paper a short and extraordinary statement, signed "Bahai U.N. Observer", which flatly refuted the article and asserted "Mr. Rabbani is not the Guardian of the Bahai faith, nor its World Leader" and gave the New History Society in New York as a source of further information. As there was no such thing as a "Bahai U.N. Observer" this move was plainly inspired by the once-more hopeful band of old Covenant-breakers, who sought, at the outset of a new regime, to blacken Shoghi Effendi's reputation and divert attention from his station by referring to Ahmad Sohrab's rootless group in America. At a later date, when in 1952 the Covenant-breakers in Bahji brought their case in the local courts against Shoghi Effendi for the demolition of an old building near the Mansion of Bahá'u'lláh, Sohrab sought, unsuccessfully, to bring pressure on the Minister of Religious Affairs to discredit the Bahá'í claims. It was with attacks such as this, both open and covert, that the Guardian, on the threshold of a new phase in the development of the affairs of the Faith at its World Centre, once more had to contend.

The cordiality of the authorities towards Shoghi Effendi and the Bahá'í Faith is reflected in many communications. But it was not only a question of words; tangible evidences of the State's recognition of the status of the Faith at its international headquarters was also forthcoming.

It had long been the desire of Shoghi Effendi to obtain control of the Mansion at Mazra'ih, where Bahá'u'lláh had first lived when He quitted once for all the walls of the prison-city of Akka. This property was a Muslim religious endowment and had now fallen vacant. It was planned by the government to turn it into a rest home for officials. All efforts, through the departments concerned, to procure this property were unavailing until Shoghi Effendi appealed directly to Ben Gurion, explaining its significance to the Bahá'ís and his desire to have it visited by pilgrims as a place so closely associated with Bahá'u'lláh. The Prime Minister himself then intervened in the matter and it was leased to the Bahá'ís as an historic site. Shoghi Effendi proudly informed the Bahá'í world, on 16 December 1950, that its keys had been delivered to us, by the Israeli authorities, after the lapse of more than fifty years.

The affairs of the Bahá'í Community, in matters concerning its day-to-day dealings with the government in connection with the work at the World Centre, had been placed under the

...I am pleased to inform you of my decision to establish in our Ministry a separate Department for the Bahá'í Faith. I hope that his department will be of assistance to you in matters concerning the Bahá'í Centre in our State.

This victory was all the more welcome, following as it did the previously mentioned court case against Shoghi Effendi brought on a technicality by the Covenant-breakers in connection with the demolition of a house adjoining the Shrine and Mansion of Bahá'u'lláh in Bahjí. Never tired of seeking to publicly humiliate and discredit the Head of the Faith, be it 'Abdu'l-Bahá or the Guardian, they had had the temerity to summon Shoghi Effendi to appear in court as a witness. Once more, greatly concerned for the honour of the Cause at its World Centre, Shoghi Effendi appealed direct to the Prime Minister, sending as his representatives the President, Secretary-General and Member-at-Large of the International Bahá'í Council (whom he had summoned from Italy for this purpose) to Jerusalem on more than one visit to press the strategy he himself had devised. These representations were successful and on the grounds of its being a purely religious issue it was removed by Government from the jurisdiction of the civil courts. As soon as the plaintiffs found their plan to humiliate Shoghi Effendi had been forestalled, they were willing to settle the case by negotiation. That the authorities and the Bahá'í Community were equally pleased by this conclusion of the matter is shown in these letters written to the Guardian by members of the Prime Minister's staff — two men to whom the Faith owed much for their sympathetic efforts on its behalf at that time:

Jerusalem, 19th May,

Your Eminence,

18

As you are no doubt aware, the dispute between yourself as the World Head of the Bahá'í Faith and members of the family of the founder of the Faith has found its solution and there is no need, therefore, to take any administrative action in order to solve the problem.

May I express to you our gratitude for your wise and benevolent attitude taken in the dispute which enabled us to impose a just and, we hope, a lasting solution on the dissident group?

The Prime Minister assures you of his personal esteem and sends you his best wishes.

Yours  
S.  
Legal Adviser

sincerely,  
Eynath

The second letter was from Walter Eytan, Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and was written to Shoghi Effendi the following day. In it he says:

...Having done my best throughout to be of assistance to Your Eminence in the solution of these vexing problems, I heard with great satisfaction this morning that complete agreement had been reached. I sincerely trust that this puts an end to a period of anxiety for Your Eminence and the members of the Bahá'í Faith, and that you will now be able to proceed with your plans without further interference from any quarter.

In letters such as these, from the President down, it is significant to note that they address Shoghi Effendi as "His Eminence", a title which, though still far below what his position merited, was the one that had been introduced in the earliest days of his ministry, but never really used by any officials until the formation of the Jewish State.

The cordial nature of the relations established between the Guardian and the officials of the State of Israel encouraged Shoghi Effendi to ascertain if the President would care to visit the Bahá'í Shrine in Haifa; when word was received that he would accept such an invitation, Shoghi Effendi formally invited him to do so and arrangements were made for the morning of 26 April 1954, at which time, the Director of the President's Office wrote to Shoghi Effendi, the President would "be pleased to pay you an official visit". Accordingly the president and his wife arrived at the home of the Master, attended by two officials, partook of light refreshment and were presented by the Guardian with a Persian album, painted with miniatures and bound in silver, containing some photographs of the Shrines, as a memento of their visit. The Presidential party, with Shoghi Effendi and those who accompanied him, then proceeded to the gardens on Mt Carmel. It was the first time in the history of the Cause that the Head of an independent nation had ever made an official visit of this kind and constituted another milestone in the development of the World Centre of the Faith. The President and his companions showed the greatest respect to the Shrine of the Bab, removing their shoes as we did, before entering it, the men keeping their hats on out of reverence as Jews for a holy place; it was a very moving moment to see President Ben Zvi standing beside Shoghi Effendi, the former with his European hat, the latter with his simple black fez, before the threshold. After a few words of explanation from Shoghi Effendi we all withdrew and walked about the gardens for a few minutes before saying good-bye in front of the Oriental Pilgrim House where the President's car was awaiting him.

On 29 April the President wrote personally to the Guardian: "I should like to express my thanks for your kind hospitality and for the interesting time I spent with you visiting the beautiful Gardens and remarkable Shrine...I do appreciate the friendship which the Bahá'í Community has for Israel and it is my sincere hope that we may all live to see the strengthening of amity between all peoples on earth." On 5 May the Guardian replied to this letter in equally warm terms: "...It was a pleasure to meet Your Excellency and Mrs. Ben Zvi, and be able to show you one of our places of Bahá'í pilgrimage in Israel...If it suits your convenience, Mrs. Rabbani and I, accompanied by Mr. Ioas, would like to call upon Your Excellency and Mrs. Ben Zvi in Jerusalem..." The time for this return call was set for the afternoon of 26 May and we had tea and a pleasant conversation with the President and his wife, in her own way as much a personality as her husband and equally nice. In the interim between these two visits Shoghi Effendi had sent to the President some Bahá'í books which he had promised him and these had been acknowledged with the thanks of the President and the assurance that he would read them with great interest. Ever meticulous in all matters, Shoghi Effendi wrote on 3 June to the President: "I wish to thank you and Mrs. Ben Zvi for your kind hospitality. Mrs. Rabbani and I enjoyed our visit with you very much, and I feel sure that this opportunity we have had of visiting with you our Bahá'í Holy Places and calling upon you in the capital of Israel has served to reinforce the bonds of affection and esteem which unite the Bahá'ís to the people and Government of Israel. With kind regards to you and Mrs. Ben Zvi..." Thus ended another memorable chapter in the process of winning recognition for the Faith at its World Centre.

Although the major affairs of the World Centre had usually to be handled in Jerusalem with the highest officials, much of its work needed to be transacted with the help of the municipal officials in both Akka and Haifa — particularly the latter. It is an interesting fact that of the many dealings with Haifa municipal engineers which the Bahá'í Community had over the years the first was in the days of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself when a Dr Ciffrin had submitted to Him his design for a monumental staircase and cypress avenue leading from the old Templar Colony at the foot of Mt Carmel up to the Báb's Shrine. The Master had not only approved of this scheme but had granted land for its realization and headed the list of subscribers to the "Báb's Monumental Stairway", as the project was called, by contributing £100.

Aside from the struggle on Shoghi Effendi's part, carried on shrewdly and persistently, to win concessions from municipal officials as well as recognition of the unique status of the Bahá'í Faith in both Haifa and Akka — the twin cities harbouring its World Centre — he maintained a friendly and co-operative relationship with the Mayor of Haifa in respect to many municipal undertakings, not the least of which was the support he gave the authorities — either the Municipality, or in the early days, the District Commissioner — when there was some special need for financial help in charitable work.

Nothing could better describe Shoghi Effendi's attitude and policy in such matters than the letter he wrote, on 7 February 1923, so early in his ministry, to Colonel Symes: "I have just heard of the Charity Ball which Mrs. Symes is organizing to aid the poor of Haifa. Realizing how their cause was consistently upheld by my beloved Grandfather, and it being my earnest endeavour to follow in his footsteps, I beg to enclose the sum of £20 — as a contribution to the fund...I trust you have had a very enjoyable time in Egypt, and hoping to meet you and Mrs. Symes in the

near future..." The same sentiment is expressed with equal feeling two years later in another letter to Colonel Symes: "The perusal of your circular letter of February 16th, 1925 with reference to the establishment of the Haifa Charitable Fund has served to remind me of the keen interest 'Abdu'l-Bahá took in charitable institutions. Animated by the same sentiment and desirous to walk in the footsteps of my beloved Grandfather, I hasten to enclose herewith the sum of £20 — towards the relief of the sufferings of the poor in Haifa."

Whenever calamity overtook the people, Shoghi Effendi responded warmly to the need. In April 1926 he wrote to the Commissioner of the Northern District: "Fully aware of the intense suffering caused by recent disturbances, and mindful of the loving care bestowed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá on the suffering and needy, I take great pleasure in enclosing the sum of £30 — as my contribution towards the relief of the poor and shelterless...I shall be grateful if you will let me know from time to time if any such need arises, in whatever place and on behalf of whatever denomination." In 1927 we find him again responding to disaster by sending the Secretariat of the Government in Jerusalem £100 as his contribution to the Earthquake Relief Fund. Over the years, in large or in small amounts, he followed in the ways of the Master who had been called "the Father of the Poor".

That these contributions to various causes were warmly received is self-evident: the District Commissioner for the Northern District thanks Shoghi Effendi, in 1934, for his "most generous contribution towards the relief of distress in Tiberias" and also for his "message of sympathy which I will convey to District Commissioner of Tiberias". In 1950 we find the Chairman of the Haifa Municipal Commission, the Mayor, thanking Shoghi Effendi for the £500 "being your Eminence's generous contribution for the relief of the poor in Haifa, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Martyrdom of the Báb." Almost invariably, when forwarding such contributions, the Guardian would add that they were to "be distributed equally among the needy members of all communities, irrespective of their race or religion."

The general policy of the Faith in matters of charity was made abundantly clear by a letter he wrote to the Mayor of Haifa, on 7 May 1929, in which he acknowledges receiving his circular related to the prevention of mendicancy in the city of Haifa and states: "Fortunately, this is a problem which does not affect the Bahá'í Community, as under our laws begging is strictly prohibited. I appreciate, however, the importance and timeliness of the measure you are considering and take pleasure in enclosing a cheque to your order for £50 — in behalf of the Bahá'í Community in anticipation of any plan that the Municipality may devise for the alleviation of poverty and the help of the needy in Haifa. You may be assured that the Community will rigidly observe any regulations that may be put into effect."

In the years when the people of Palestine and, later, of Israel were undergoing great hardships, between 1940 and 1952 alone, the Guardian gave the Municipality of Haifa over ten thousand dollars for the poor of all denominations. In addition to such help given through government and municipal agencies he also responded to the appeals of many charities, gave individually to those he deemed worthy, and, even sometimes contributed money for some special purpose connected with the mosque in Haifa. Many times he gave contributions spontaneously, such as the £100 he donated to the Government Lunatic Asylum in Akka — the former Turkish barracks — when the room occupied by Bahá'u'lláh was turned over to the custody of the Bahá'ís, and

the sum he presented towards the construction of the Institute of Physics which the Weizmann National Memorial was undertaking.

But this was not the only way in which he demonstrated to the local authorities his good will. Whatever demands were made of him he usually found he was in a position to respond to them most cordially. An example of this is an exchange of correspondence with Aba Khoushy, the Mayor of Haifa, which took place in 59. A country-wide Symposium on Problems of Illumination was to take place at the Hebrew Technical College in Haifa and would coincide with the Jewish Feast of Hanukka, the Feast of Lights. His Worship in a letter to Shoghi Effendi informed him of this and wrote that: "I should be grateful if you too could share in our efforts to make this conference a success and would kindly issue instructions to have the beautiful Shrine of your Faith, on the Carmel slopes, illuminated festively during the week of Dec. 12-Dec. 19, 1952, inclusively." As usual, whenever he was approached courteously, Shoghi Effendi responded warmly. On 7 December he wrote to the Mayor:

Your Worship:

Your letter of November 30th has been received by me on my return from Bahjí, and I wish to assure you that the Bahá'í Community will be happy to co-operate in making the city of Haifa luminous and beautiful, in connection with the Symposium to be held at the Hebrew Technical College on Problems of Illumination, especially so as this Symposium will be held during Hanukka.

I will give instructions that the period of illumination of our Shrine should be extended during these days [the Shrine was always flood-lit every night at sunset for a short time], and wish also to extend through your Worship an invitation to the delegates and visitors attending the Symposium to enter the Shrine and gardens on one of the evenings when they will be touring our city, to enjoy the illumination. The necessary arrangements can be made to open the gates and Shrine for them, if we are informed in advance.

Yours  
Shoghi  
World Head of the Bahá'í Faith.

sincerely,  
Rabbani

Another significant example of the spirit in which Shoghi Effendi responded to worthy causes pressed upon his attention is the co-operation he gave the Akka District Commissioner when in 1943 he wrote to him that he could find no place to house a children's school and would he consider leasing eight rooms in the house of 'Abbúd (a large building and a place of Bahá'í pilgrimage) for this purpose? Shoghi Effendi permitted the school to use some of the rooms, but said he would not take any payment for them.

