

Chapter 15

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Original English



Chapter 15

The Prosecution of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Divine Plan

In making any attempt to give a coherent picture of what Shoghi Effendi called the first epoch in the evolution of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Divine Plan — an epoch which he stated began in 1937 and would end in 1963, and comprised “three successive” crusades — one must go back and study his writings chronologically, for in them the clear reflection of his mind and the emergence of the scheduled pattern of his plans can be discerned. Ever since the passing of his beloved Master the whole object of the Guardian’s existence was to fulfil His wishes and complete His works. The Divine Plan, conceived by Him, in one of the darkest periods in human history was, Shoghi Effendi stated, “‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s unique and grand design,” embodied in His Tablets to the Bahá’ís of the United States and Canada, with which the destinies of the followers of Bahá’u’lláh in the North American Continent would “for generations to come remain inextricably interwoven”; for twenty years it had been held in abeyance while the agencies of a slowly emerging Administrative Order were being created and perfected for “its efficient, systematic prosecution”. How much importance the Guardian attached to this fundamental concept, often stressed by him, we are prone to forget, so let us turn to his actual words. During the opening years of the first Seven Year Plan, in 1939, he wrote to the American community: “Through all the resources at their disposal, they are promoting the growth and consolidation of that pioneer movement for which the entire machinery of their Administrative Order has been primarily designed and erected.” Eighteen years later Shoghi Effendi’s view on this subject was the same, for he wrote to one of the European National Assemblies in August 1957, shortly before his passing: “Less substantial, however, has been the progress achieved in the all-important teaching field, and far inferior the acceleration in the vital process of individual conversion for which the entire machinery of the Administrative Order has been primarily and so laboriously erected.”

It was the Guardian who had “so laboriously erected” this “machinery”, with the help of willing and eager tools he found amongst the North American believers, who grasped his thought, obeyed his command and hastened to put into action his instructions. It was the Guardian alone who possessed the divine and indefeasible right to direct the battle of Bahá’u’lláh’s forces of light against the forces of darkness. “Soon”, He had written, “*will the present day Order be rolled up and a new one spread out in its stead*”. In was an Order which had upset the very equilibrium of the world as men knew it. Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had produced a scion not only capable of grasping Their vision, but of organizing both Their teachings and Their followers.



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If we view aright what happened in 1937 at the beginning of the first Seven Year Plan, we see that Shoghi Effendi, now in his fortieth year, stepped out as the general leading an army — the North American Bahá'ís — and marched off to the spiritual conquest of the Western Hemisphere. While other generals, famous in the eyes of the world, were leading vast armies to destruction all over the planet, fighting battles of unprecedented horror in Europe, Asia and Africa, this unknown general, unrecognized and unsung, was devising and prosecuting a campaign more vital and far-reaching than anything they could ever do. Their battles were inspired by national hates and ambitions, his by love and self-sacrifice. They fought for the preservation of dying concepts and values, for the past order of things. He fought for the future, with its radiant age of peace and unity, a world society and the Kingdom of God on earth. Their names and battles are slowly being forgotten, but Shoghi Effendi's name and fame is rising steadily, and his victories rise in greatness with him, never to be forgotten. The sun of his genius and achievements will shine for a thousand years as part of the light of the Bahá'í Dispensation.

In reviewing the overwhelming volume of material on the subject of the Guardian's Plans, we must never forget that although the first organized implementation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Spiritual Mandate to the American believers (and let us note that this term does not refer to the Bahá'ís of the United States alone but to the believers of North America) took place with the initiation of the first Seven Year Plan, a body of devoted American followers of the Faith, the majority of whom Shoghi Effendi pointed out were "women pioneers", had already arisen, in immediate response to the *Tablets of the Divine Plan* presented to the Eleventh Annual Bahá'í Convention in New York in 1919, and had proceeded to Australia, the northernmost capitals of Europe, most of its Central States, the Balkan Peninsula, the fringes of Africa and Latin America, some countries in Asia and the island of Tahiti in the Pacific Ocean. During thirty-six years Shoghi Effendi never forgot the services of these souls or ceased to name them. He made it clear, however, that such overseas teaching enterprises of the American Bahá'ís had been "tentative" and "intermittent". With the inauguration of the first Seven Year Plan a new epoch had begun.

When the Divine Plan will come to an end we do not know. The legend goes that where the rainbow touches earth there is a pot of gold, so the end of our glorious rainbow may well rest in the Golden Age of our Faith. The significance of the Divine Plan has been elaborated by the Guardian in innumerable passages. It was, he wrote, "the weightiest spiritual enterprise launched in recorded history"; "the most potent agency for the development of the World Administrative System"; "a primary factor in the birth and efflorescence of the World Order itself in both the East and the West." The American believers, "the privileged recipients of these epoch-making Tablets", "the vanguard of the dawn-breakers of Bahá'u'lláh's Order", were the ones in whose hands Providence had placed a key, the promulgation of the Divine Plan, with which they would unlock the door leading them to the fulfilment of their unimaginably glorious destiny. This Plan of the Master, as they faithfully prosecuted it through its unfolding phases, would, Shoghi Effendi assured them, lead, in the Golden Age of our Faith, to the fulfilment of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own promise to them: their elevation to the "*throne of an everlasting dominion*", when "*the whole earth*" would "*resound with the praises*" of their "*majesty and greatness*."

With Shoghi Effendi everything was clear: there was The Plan, and then there were plans and plans! There were, after the inauguration of the first Seven Year Plan, in the course of many years, and in various parts of the world, a Nineteen Month, Two Year, Three Year, Forty-five

Month, Four-and-a-Half Year, Five Year, Six Year and other plans; but whether given by him, or spontaneously initiated by the Bahá'ís themselves, he knew where to place them in the scheme of things. There was a God-given Mission, enshrined in a God-given Mandate, entrusted to the American believers; this Mission was their birthright, but they could only fulfil it by obeying the instructions given them in the Master's *Tablets of the Divine Plan* and winning every crusade they undertook: the other plans, Shoghi Effendi wrote in 1949, "are but supplements to the vast enterprise whose features have been delineated in those same Tablets and are to be regarded, by their very nature, as regional in scope, in contrast with the world-embracing character of the Mission entrusted to the community of the champion builders of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, and the torch-bearers of the civilization which that Order must eventually establish."

If Shoghi Effendi was the general, undoubtedly his chief of staff was the American Assembly; it got its orders direct from him and the rapport was intimate and complete. But he never forgot that the glory of an army is its soldiers, the "rank and file", as he forthrightly called them. He never ceased to appeal to them, to inspire them, to love them and to inform them that every North American believer shared a direct responsibility for the success of the Plan. Knowing how prone human nature is to be diverted from any purpose, he constantly reiterated the tasks undertaken, the responsibility assumed, the immediate need. When the different crusades approached their end and the success of various aspects of the work seemed to hang in the balance, his appeals rose in a veritable crescendo and swept the Bahá'ís to victory. In reading over thirty-six years of his communications to the American believers it almost seems as if he had lived amongst them. Certainly they lived with him, did they but know it, in his life, his thoughts, his prayers, his plans — and his worries. But let them be comforted, they brought him much joy, gave him much hope and never caused him to despair. May their record be unblemished.

Shoghi Effendi, very much like a volcano before it erupts, had a way of giving premonitory rumbles. In 1933 he cabled the American Convention that all eyes were on it, it had a great opportunity to release forces which would usher in an era whose splendour "must outshine Heroic Age our beloved Cause...Supreme Concourse waiting for them to seize it." He became more specific in his message to the Bahá'ís gathered at the Temple in 1935 to celebrate the completion of its dome: "New hour struck...calling for nation-wide systematic, sustained efforts teaching field..." Ten weeks later he is even more categorical, and indeed prophetic, for one seems to feel the first cold shadow of the coming war: "This new stage in the gradual unfoldment of the Formative Period of our Faith into which we have just entered — the phase of concentrated teaching activity — synchronizes with a period of deepening gloom, of universal impotence, of ever-increasing destitution and wide-spread disillusionment in the fortunes of a declining age." To the 1936 Convention he cabled that the opportunities of the present hour were unimaginably precious and urged them to ponder the "historic appeal voiced by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Tablets Divine Plan", and consult on how to ensure its "complete fulfillment", at a moment when humanity was "entering outer fringes most perilous stage its existence." At the end he gives up the pearl that has been growing in his own heart: "Would to God every state within American Republic every Republic American continent might ere termination this glorious century embrace light Faith Bahá'u'lláh establish structural basis His World Order." We were off! It was the opening salute of the Divine Plan!

The first Seven Year Plan had a “triple task”: one, to complete the exterior ornamentation of the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in the Western World; two, to establish one local Spiritual Assembly in every state of the United States and every province in Canada; three, to create one centre in each Latin American Republic “for whose entry into the fellowship of Bahá'u'lláh” Shoghi Effendi wrote “the Plan was primarily formulated.” Every nation in the Western Hemisphere was to be “woven into the fabric of Bahá'u'lláh's triumphant Order” and he pointed out to us that there were twenty independent Latin American Republics “constituting approximately one-third of the entire number of the world's sovereign states” and that the Plan was no less than an “arduous twofold campaign undertaken simultaneously in the homeland and in Latin America.”

A little over two years after the initiation of this historic teaching drive Europe went to war; another two years passed and the United States — and practically the whole planet — was at war. Its seven-year activity took place in the face of the greatest suffering and darkest threat the New Word had ever experienced. The degree to which Shoghi Effendi watched over, encouraged and guided this first great Plan of the Divine Plan is unbelievable. Messages streamed from him to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada. In 1937 he informed them that to carry out the dual enterprises of this Plan would shed a “lustre no less brilliant” on the closing years of the first Bahá'í Century, “than the immortal deeds which have signalized its birth, in the Heroic Age of our Faith.” In 1938 he told them the “deepening gloom” of the Old World invested their labours with a “significance and urgency” that could not be overestimated. The Latin American campaign was “one of the most glorious chapters in the international history of the Faith”, and upon its success depended future Plans. It marked, he cabled them the “inauguration long-deferred world mission constituting 'Abdu'l-Bahá's distinctive legacy Bahá'í Community North America.” It was the “opening scene of the First Act of that superb Drama whose theme is no less than the spiritual conquest of both the Eastern and Western Hemispheres.” With all this it was still to be viewed as “a mere beginning, as a trial of strength, a stepping-stone to a crusade of still greater magnitude...”

After two years of the Plan had run their course, when the exterior ornamentation of the Temple was satisfactorily progressing and a series of ardent appeals from him (as well as a contribution of nine hundred pounds which he had felt “irresistibly urged” and “proud” to contribute toward the permanent pioneer settlement of the nine still unsettled states and provinces in North America) had ensured that all the preliminary steps had been taken on the home front — Shoghi Effendi waved his arm and directed the march of his forces down the coasts and over the islands of Central America, following, as he cabled, in a “methodical advance along line traced pen 'Abdu'l-Bahá”. In spite of his own ever-growing burdens and anxieties he informed the friends he wished to keep personally in contact with pioneers in North, Central and South America. What those letters of his meant to the pioneers “holding”, as he said, “their lonely posts in widely scattered areas throughout the Americas”, only those who received them can truly judge, but I myself wonder if this, or later crusades would ever have been won without this communion he had with the believers. His love, encouragement and understanding kept them anchored to their posts. Not a few are still where they are because of letters signed “Your true brother, Shoghi”.

A year after the outbreak of the “world-encircling conflagration”, whose fires, Shoghi Effendi wrote, had first been lit in the Far East, ravaged Europe, enveloped Africa and now threatened

not only the World Centre but America — the “chief remaining Citadel” of the Faith as he termed it — there were only two Latin American Republics still to receive pioneers. The inhabitants of the “remaining citadel” had certainly discharged their duty of “carrying the sacred Fire to all the Republics of the Western Hemisphere” in a most notable manner. The believers in Persia were being persecuted; the Faith was dissolved in Russia and its confiscated Temple was in danger; in Western, Southeastern and Central Europe the Bahá’ís were repressed, and in Germany banned; in North Africa they were the object of fanatical religious attacks; the progress of the war had placed the World Centre itself in great danger. No wonder Shoghi Effendi wrote to the American believers that “The hopes and aspirations of a multitude of believers, in both the East and the West, young and old, whether free or suppressed,” hung on the “triumphant consummation” of their labours! No wonder he appealed to them to “dare greatly, toil unremittingly, sacrifice worthily, endure radiantly, unflinchingly till very end.” No wonder he assured them that: “The grandeur of their task is indeed commensurate with the mortal perils by which their generation is hemmed in. As the dusk creeps over a steadily sinking society the radiant outlines of their redemptive mission become sharper every day. The present world unrest, symptom of a world-wide malady, their world religion has already affirmed must needs culminate in that world catastrophe out of which the consciousness of world citizenship will be born, a consciousness that can alone provide an adequate basis for the organization of world unity, on which a lasting world peace must necessarily depend, the peace itself inaugurating in turn that world civilization which will mark the coming of age of the entire human race.” They had been, he said: “galvanized into action at the sight of a slowly disrupting civilization”. Had he not pointed out to them, in words that fired their imagination, the nature of their responsibilities in relation to the state of the world, they would never have been galvanized at all.

In looking back on those glorious and terrible years of the last war the success of the first Seven Year Plan seems truly miraculous. While humanity was being decimated in Europe and Asia, while the World Centre of the Faith was being threatened with unprecedented danger on four sides, while the United States and Canada were engaged in a world conflict, with its attendant anxieties, restrictions and furor, a handful of people, lacking in resources but rich in faith, lacking in prestige but rich in determination, succeeded in not only doubling the number of Bahá’í Assemblies in North America and ensuring the existence of at least one in every state of the Union and every province of Canada, but in completing the extremely costly exterior ornamentation of their Mother Temple sixteen months ahead of the scheduled time, and establishing not only a strong Bahá’í group in each of the twenty Latin Republics, but in addition fifteen Spiritual Assemblies throughout the entire area. In the last months of the Plan Shoghi Effendi fairly stormed the remaining unfinished tasks, with his valiant little army, too excited to feel the exhaustion of seven years’ constant struggle, hard at his heels. When the sun of the second Bahá’í Century rose, it rose on triumph. To his cohorts Shoghi Effendi said that he and the entire Bahá’í world owed them a debt of gratitude no one could “measure or describe”. Small wonder he wrote that such a community had “abundantly demonstrated its worthiness to shoulder the superhuman tasks with which it had been entrusted.”

For twenty years, under the guidance of Shoghi Effendi, to a design he provided, the Bahá’ís wove the tapestry of the three great Crusades of his ministry. Amidst the busy, multi-coloured scenes, depicting so much work in so many places, could be discerned three sumptuous golden wheels — the three great Centenaries, historic landmarks into which he drew the threads of his

plans and out of which they emerged to form still more beautiful and powerful patterns. The first of these Centenaries took place on 23 May⁸⁷. Providentially the vast majority of Bahá'í communities throughout the world had not been cut off from communication with the Guardian at the World Centre, nor, in spite of the dangers of an encroaching theatre of war, been swallowed up in its battles. Persia, Iraq, Egypt, India, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and the Western Hemisphere had been miraculously spared. These communities, each to the degree possible under the circumstances prevailing in its own land, proceeded to celebrate the glorious occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of the Bab, which was at once the inception of the Bahá'í cycle as well as the birthday of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

In spite of the fact that the Persian believers were not free to hold befitting nation-wide celebrations on the occasion of the first Centenary of the Faith which had dawned in their native land, this does not mean that worthy homage was not paid to the memory of the blessed Bab. The Guardian himself, full of tenderness for a community so perpetually afflicted, instructed its national body in detail regarding the manner in which this glorious event was to be commemorated; his special representative, Jenabi Valíyu'lláh Varqá, Trustee of the Ḥuqúq, was to place in the room where the Báb had declared His Mission in His home in Shiraz, a precious silk carpet, the offering of Shoghi Effendi himself; at two hours and eleven minutes after sunset, one hundred years since the Báb had revealed His Station to Mullá Ḥusayn in that very room, the members of the National Assembly and the delegates to the Annual Convention were to assemble; the National Assembly members were requested to prostrate themselves, at the threshold of that sacred spot, on Shoghi Effendi's behalf; the first surih of the Qayyúmu'l-Asmá' was then to be chanted. Following this, passages of the Guardian's Centennial Message to the Bahá'ís of the East were read, in which he eulogized the Báb and the significance of the events which had taken place in that holy spot a century before.

For the North American Bahá'í Community a second anniversary occurred at the same time, as it was fifty years since the establishment of the Faith in the Western World. Shoghi Effendi, with his usual foresight and method, made quite clear to the American Bahá'ís in a series of messages during 1943 how he expected them to appropriately commemorate such an occasion and why he wanted them to do it on such a scale: in "its scope and magnificence" it was to "fully compensate for the disabilities which hinder so many communities in Europe and elsewhere, and even in Bahá'u'lláh's native land, from paying a befitting tribute to their beloved Faith at so glorious an hour in its history." The celebrations the Americans would hold, he said, would not only crown their own labours but those of the entire body of their fellow-workers in both the East and the West.

A nation-wide publicity campaign, aimed at the proclamation of the Message of Bahá'u'lláh, was to precede the Centenary through which the public, by means of the press, radio and publications, was to be acquainted with the aims and purposes of the Faith as well as the achievements of its heroes, martyrs, teachers, pioneers and administrators, and the nature of its institutions was to be explained. Locally as well as on a national scale the believers were to celebrate and proclaim the joyous nature of this Festival, through lectures, conferences, banquets and contact with eminent leaders.

The climax of so much rejoicing would take place through the holding of an All-America Centennial Convention at which not only the delegates from the United States and Canada would gather, having for the first time in their history been elected at State and Provincial Conventions by votes cast by all believers rather than by communities which had local Assemblies, but also at least one representative from each of the Latin American countries. At the exact hour of the Bab's declaration a solemn thanksgiving dedication ceremony would be held in the Temple auditorium at which the only copy of the miniature portrait of the Báb ever to have left Shoghi Effendi's hands, and his special gift to this victorious and dearly-loved Community, would be viewed by that greatly blest gathering, and was to be followed by a public meeting consecrated to the memory of both the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Nothing, as he had foretold, had clouded the "triumphant termination of the first, most shining century of the Bahá'í Era". Similar, though less ostentatious, gatherings were being held in other countries. The close of these international festivities, Shoghi Effendi said, would mark the end of the first epoch of the Formative Age of the Faith which had lasted from 1921 to

The close of one century and the opening of another is a propitious moment to take stock of the Bahá'í world. Such a torrent of material presents itself to anyone trying to evaluate the labours of the Guardian that it is difficult indeed to know how to deal with his various achievements. He was not only a great creator of facts but an able and interested statistician and there was very little that he could not dramatize. But is not that the very essence of living — to derive interest from what superficially seems perfunctory, obligatory and therefore boring?

In 1944 Shoghi Effendi published, in Haifa, a small pamphlet, twenty-six pages long, which bore the title *The Bahá'í Faith, 1844-1944*, and under this, modestly, "Information Statistical and Comparative"; in 1950, with much more exhaustive material provided by him, the Bahá'í Publishing Committee in the United States published a similar, larger pamphlet, thirty-five pages long, with a map; on it they put: "Compiled by Shoghi Effendi Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith". In 1952, again with material provided by him and at his instigation, both the British and American National Assemblies published the same pamphlet, with the same heading, only this time twice as long and covering the period 1844-1952. Shoghi Effendi had now added a new sub-title: "Ten Year International Teaching and Consolidation Plan".

It is impossible to go into details on a subject as vast as this one. On the other hand to ignore it completely would be unjust to a field of work that absorbed, for over thirteen years, a great deal of Shoghi Effendi's attention and time. The fallibility and inefficiency of most people being what they are, the tale of these statistics alone represents an almost superhuman effort on Shoghi Effendi's part to obtain them. What must then have been the effort he exerted to produce the facts many of them represent? He constantly kept his statistics up to date; at the time of his passing he had the usual small notebook in his bedroom in which he kept the latest additions. I remember once his smilingly holding such a notebook up and telling me "Do you realize the whole Bahá'í world is in this?"

To understand the statistics better one must understand what was in Shoghi Effendi's mind behind the statistics. One cannot argue with facts; one can disagree with ideas, pooh-pooh claims, belittle historic happenings, but when one is shown in cold print that such and such a thing is worth five-and-a-half-million dollars, or that seven National Bahá'í Assemblies have been incorporated, or that the Bahá'í Marriage Ceremony is entirely legal in fifteen states, or one reads that names of the African tribes who are represented in the Faith, the languages in which its teachings have been translated, one is forced to accept that this Faith exists in a very concrete way. Facts were part of Shoghi Effendi's ammunition with which he could defend the Faith against its enemies and through which he could not only encourage the Bahá'ís but stimulate them to greater effort.

One of his most cherished lists, the first and foremost, was that which reflected the spread of this glorious Cause entrusted to his care by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1909. Under "Countries opened to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh" he had placed for the period of the Báb's Ministry: 2; Bahá'u'lláh's Ministry: 13; 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Ministry: 20. It is interesting to note how methodical his mind was, because in the 1944 pamphlet Bahá'u'lláh's Ministry had only 10. Then why, in the 1952 pamphlet, did Shoghi Effendi put 13? Pakistan had become a nation and two of the original Russian territories had been split into 4 republics of the Soviet Union — an addition of 3, so they went up to Bahá'u'lláh's period. Where else could they go? These statistics reflect in a most fascinating way the expansion of our Faith. I will continue the statistics, in so far as the material is available, up to the time of the Guardian's passing. From 1844-1909, 35 countries (for Bahá'í purposes this includes Sovereign States, Mandated Territories, Dependencies and Colonies) had been opened to the Faith. From 1909-13, 5 were added in 11 years; 1913-22, 38 were added in 12 years; 1922-28, 22 were added in 6 years; 1928-29, 6 were added in one year; 1929-30, 22 were added in one year; 1930-31, no increase in numbers; 1931-32, 100 were added in one year, an accomplishment, Shoghi Effendi wrote, which signified that "the most vital and spectacular objective of the Ten Year Plan" had "been virtually attained ere the termination of the first year of this decade-long stupendous enterprise." At this point, for Bahá'í purposes, the world began to run out of countries! Nevertheless from 1932-39, 26 more were added. When Shoghi Effendi became Guardian there were 35 countries, but when he passed away he had raised this number to 254 — 219 added by his vision, drive and determination working through and with a dedicated, spiritually inflamed world-wide group of believers.

Although no exact statistics are available for the number of centres where Bahá'ís resided throughout the world, "foci of the warming and healing light of an all-conquering Revelation", as Shoghi Effendi called them, it seems unlikely that during the first century of the Faith they numbered a thousand. A rough calculation indicates that by 1952 there were about 2,61. Shoghi Effendi himself announced the following numbers: 1953, 2,500; 1954, almost 2,900; 1955, well over 3,200; 1956, well nigh 3,700; 1957, 4,500, in less than a five-year period an addition of over 2,000.

The over-all picture this conveys is both clear and impressive. But which parts of the Bahá'í tree were growing the fastest? That is also reflected in the published statistics of the Guardian. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá made his historic visit to the United States and Canada there were probably about

40 places in the Western Hemisphere where Bahá'ís were to be found. By 1937 there were 300, an increase of 260 in 25 years. By 1944 this had swelled to 1,300 centres in North America, an increase of over 1,000 during the first Seven Year Plan. The last figure received from Shoghi Effendi in October 1957 was 1,112. In the thirty-six years of his ministry Shoghi Effendi, through his unceasing messages of inspiration and encouragement and through the operation of his successive plans, had added at least 1,500 centres in the United States and Canada alone. The list of local Spiritual Assemblies in North America was no less impressive: in 1931 there were 47; in 1944 there were 131, an increase of 84 in 13 years — most of them added during the great drive associated with the first Seven Year Plan. By 1952 there were 184 and in April 1957 the total had reached 204.

In 1944 Shoghi Effendi published the first statistics for Latin America, listing 57 centres and 15 Assemblies; by 1950 there were 70 centres and 35 Assemblies. At the time of his passing the centres had increased to 137 and the Assemblies to about 44. In the 1921-44 pamphlet he gave the figures for India (which included what was later Pakistan) and Burma as 66 centres and 31 Assemblies; by 1957 the figure was 140 centres and about 50 Assemblies. It had always been difficult to obtain proper statistics from Persia because of the constant recrudescence of persecution, but in 1952 Shoghi Effendi published the figures of 621 centres and 260 Assemblies. The Antipodes, particularly watched over by Shoghi Effendi, made remarkable progress throughout his ministry, in spite of its isolation from the rest of the Bahá'í world: in 1934 there were about 8 centres in Australia and New Zealand and 3 Assemblies; by 1950 there were 59 centres — an increase of about 50 in 16 years — and 10 Assemblies; by 1957 there were over 100 centres and 12 or 13 Assemblies. The British Isles had likewise shown a remarkable increase: in 1944 there were a few centres and 5 Assemblies; in 1957 over 110 centres and 20 Assemblies. The figures for Germany and Austria, listed by Shoghi Effendi for the first time in 1950, show 34 centres and 14 Assemblies (whereas before the war they were likely to have been in the neighbourhood of 15 and 5 respectively); in 1957 there were over 130 centres and 25 Assemblies.

With the second Seven Year Plan there appears a new list in the 1950 pamphlet, the Ten European Goal Countries with 34 centres and 14 Assemblies; by 1957 these had swelled to over 110 centres and 27 or 28 Assemblies. Cautiously the Guardian inserted a figure (unchanged from 1950-7) for Arabia: 10 centres — perhaps the most difficult to maintain in the entire Bahá'í world. Egypt and Sudan, long struggling against Muslim prejudice, were listed in 1952 as having 38 centres and 10 Assemblies. In 1956 Shoghi Effendi announced there were over 900 local Bahá'í Assemblies throughout the world. By 1957 he was able to inform the Bahá'ís this number had risen to over 1,000. It is very unlikely that at the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing in 1921 there were more than a handful throughout the East and the West. It was Shoghi Effendi who created them, on the pattern laid down by the Master Himself.

The Guardian devoted particular attention, in addition to creating the structural basis of the Administrative Order and assuring the rapid spread of the Faith, to ensuring that Bahá'í literature be made available, in different languages, to the people of the world. Many of the translations and publications were paid for by him; most frequently, in the years preceding her

death in 1939, Martha Root was his agent in this all-important work. In 1944 there were Bahá'í publications available in 41 languages; by 1950, 19 had been added; by 1952 there were 71, 11 added in 2 years; in 1955 there were 167, no less than 96 added in 3 years; by 1957 there were 237, an increase of over 70 in 2 years. It is interesting to note that right after the list of published languages there invariably followed a second list of "Languages in which Bahá'í literature is being translated".

He was not only eager to welcome as many different ethnic groups into the Faith as possible but constantly urged the Bahá'ís to reach people of different races so that within the communities that cardinal principle of unity in diversity might be exemplified. This was reflected in two of his statistics, the second one significantly emphasizing the great importance he attached to this aspect of our teachings; the headings of these statistics speak for themselves: "Races Represented in the Bahá'í World Community", which were listed by name. In 1944 there were 31 races; in 1955 there were about 40 races. "Minority Groups and Races with which contact has been established by Bahá'ís", likewise listed by name: in 1944 these were 9, but in 1952 they had risen to 15 — 12 of which were American Eskimo and Indian tribes. In 1952 a new caption was added, in spite of the insignificance of the figures involved: "African Tribes Represented in the Bahá'í Faith"; the names of 12 tribes were given — proudly. Periodically he continued to announce the increase in these figures: 1955, 90; 1956, 140; 1957, 197 — an addition of 185 in 5 years. In 1954 he informed the Bahá'í world there were over 500 African believers in Uganda alone (out of perhaps 800 Negro adherents of the Faith throughout the entire continent) and in 1957 said the number of African believers was now over 3,000. His keen interest in the racial questions of our day, his strong sense of the value of the different qualities with which God has endowed different peoples, made him eager to share what he considered to be substantial triumphs. In 1956 he announced there were 170 Bahá'í centres in the Pacific area and in 1957 informed us these had increased to 210 and that there were more than 2,000 believers of the brown race throughout that region.

The growth of the institutions and endowments of the Faith, a strong wall to protect its maturing Administrative Order, was another of the things to which Shoghi Effendi devoted particular attention. It is not a dream Bahá'u'lláh has come to the world to help us dream, but a reality He has given us the design to build. Incorporated bodies can hold property legally. It was and is essential that a growing Faith should own its own Temples, national and local headquarters, institutions, lands, schools and so on. The figures in this regard speak eloquently of the progress made throughout the Guardian's ministry: in 1944 there were 5 incorporated National Assemblies and 63 locally incorporated ones in various countries; in 1952 the figures were 9 and 105 respectively; by 1957 there were over 200 incorporations of local Bahá'í Assemblies — 137 being added in 13 years. Whereas in 1944, at the beginning of the second Bahá'í Century, the legal right to perform a Bahá'í marriage existed in a very few places, by 1957 this right was enjoyed by Bahá'ís in over 30 places and Bahá'í Holy Days were acknowledged as grounds for the suspension of work or school attendance in 45 places, the definition of a place being either a country, a state or a district. In 1952 the Bahá'ís owned only 8 national headquarters, but by 1957 they owned 48; national endowments had likewise multiplied to an unprecedented degree and that same year there were 50 of them in various capital cities of the world.

The financial assets of a growing Faith were likewise rapidly increasing. Its now multitudinous properties in different countries were reflected in a swelling roll of figures which Shoghi Effendi kept announcing as the years went by: the United States, in 1944, had holdings estimated at \$1,768,339; in 1950 \$1,783,958; in 1952 \$3,070,958, and by October 1957 the sum was nearing \$5,000,000. Persia, in 1952, had endowments estimated at \$500,000 whilst in 1957 the sum had increased to \$5,000,000. In 1947 Shoghi Effendi gave the figures for the Holy Land, at the World Centre of the Faith, as £35,000 Sterling (\$140,000); in 1952 \$500,000; in 1957 \$5,500,000. The estimated figure for other countries he gave as, in 1952 \$500,000 and in 1957 \$850,000. The totals of these various figures, at best conservative, were: 1952 \$4,500,000 and in 1957 over \$16,350,000.

The three statistical pamphlets published by Shoghi Effendi are not only very informative, but provide an insight into his mind because they reflect to what he attached importance. There are lists of dates of historical significance which, aside from the cardinal dates of Bahá'í history, give dates associated with such events as the construction of the first Maṣḥriqu'l-Adhikár of the West and the Shrine of the Báb, the verdict of the Muḥammadan court in Egypt pronouncing the Faith to be an independent religion, Martha Root's first interview with Queen Marie of Rumania, the Resolution of the Council of the League of Nations upholding the claim of the Bahá'í Community to the House of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdad, the inception of various Plans, and so on. There are no dates to indicate the Bahá'í Faith had a Guardian. The man who informed us we were never to commemorate any anniversary associated with himself does not appear on his own list. The best-known Writings of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are enumerated; the Bahá'í Calendar is reproduced; the names of the cities visited by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His three-year travels are given; a list of centres in Greenland to which Bahá'í literature had been sent is printed; the names of personages who have paid tribute to the Bahá'í Faith are listed, as well as other information; and a very strange little list indeed reappeared regularly in every new pamphlet: "Comparative Measurements of Famous Domed Structures" — St. Peter's in Rome, St Paul's in London, St Sophia in Constantinople, the Pantheon in Rome — all by themselves. A very thought-provoking list. Did he envisage the day when the Bahá'ís would build temples far surpassing these dimensions, to the glory of the Father?

With each release of statistical data the tally of National Spiritual Assemblies grew. To bring these "Pillars" of the future Universal House of Justice into existence was a task Shoghi Effendi conceived as one of his primary duties. Few of the Bahá'ís may remember the nine names enumerated in 1930: the National Spiritual Assemblies of the Bahá'ís of the Caucasus, of Egypt, of Great Britain, of Germany, of India and Burma, of Iraq, of Persia, of Turkistan and of the United States and Canada. Although the two in Russia and the one in Persia were of a transitional nature — a central Assembly assuming the functions of a future national body as we now know it, pending the time when a properly grounded election by national delegates could take place — they were nevertheless fulfilling the functions of National Assemblies. Owing to the suppression of all Bahá'í activity in Russia, the National Assemblies of the Caucasus and Turkistan completely disappeared. Therefore at the end of the first Bahá'í Century there were only eight national bodies, that of Australia and New Zealand having been added

The oldest National Assembly in the Bahá'í world, that of the United States and Canada, had existed at the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing under the name "Bahá'í Temple Unity"; in 1909 it

was incorporated and in that same year its “Executive Board” was formed. When the Guardian took the helm in 1921 he immediately set out to create uniformity in fundamental principles and from then on these future “Secondary Houses of Justice” were styled “National Spiritual Assemblies”. By 1923 the National Assemblies for the British, the German, the Indian and Burmese believers were already functioning and those of the Bahá’ís of Egypt and the Sudan, Persia, Iraq and Australia and New Zealand soon followed. Much as the Guardian longed to see new “Pillars” erected he had to be sure a sufficiently strong community — and especially a sufficiently strong base of local Assemblies — existed before he could permit a national body to be elected. In 1948 he launched Canada on her independent administrative destiny, followed in 1951 by two other National Assemblies, one for Central and one for South America. There was in Shoghi Effendi’s mind a very clear reason for this grouping of two or more countries under a single National Assembly, which he explained to an Indian Bahá’í pilgrim in 1929, who wrote down his words at the time: “He is against separation of Burma and India for he says we have very few workers and separation will dissipate our forces and energy while what we most need at the present time is consolidation of all our resources and forces...”

With the formation of these two giant Central and South American bodies, whose title was National Assembly but whose composition and function were regional in nature, a new phase in the administrative development of the Faith began. Shoghi Effendi was never intimidated by the magnitude or difficulty of a task, nor was he any respecter of current views or methods. For nine years he was to constitute nothing but these vast National “Regional” Assemblies — except in the case of the National Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Italy and Switzerland, elected in 1953 — which were truly immense in scope. The two Latin American ones comprised 20 countries and the four Africans ones, formed in 1956, represented 57 territories. This meant that nine people, often residing in countries over a thousand miles apart, had to consult and administer the affairs of scattered, mostly young and inexperienced Assemblies and communities, spread over hundreds of thousands of square miles. No doubt had Shoghi Effendi called in as advisers his fellow Bahá’ís the wisdom of such undertakings might have been questioned and they would have recommended either purely National or at least much smaller Regional Assemblies. Fortunately the Guardian consulted no one and with his clear and incisive mind sized up the relative advantages and disadvantages of the two policies and chose what appeared, superficially, to be the more unwieldy method. There were many factors involved in this choice: the main one was that in all these countries the need for a more centralized direction of the work was now urgent; it could no longer be efficiently administered from bases across oceans under the aegis of other National Assemblies prosecuting a later stage of the Divine Plan through their committees, however able and devoted these were. Also the primary object of teaching the Faith in new fields was to fit its newly won converts to assume responsibility for the work in their own areas. There was now a choice corps of experienced Bahá’í pioneers, administrators and teachers in Latin America and in Africa, but they were not sufficient in number for the work of 20 independent administrative bodies in Central and South America and far, far from sufficient to provide experienced Bahá’ís for 57 territories in Africa. The answer was these interim National Assemblies which were to be broken down into ever smaller units pending the day when each nation had a sufficiently strong network of local Assemblies, of more mature believers, deepened in the teachings they had so recently embraced, who could assume responsibility for the administration and advancement of the Cause in their own territories. The remarkable feats achieved by these Regional Assemblies, constantly urged on

and encouraged by Shoghi Effendi in the discharge of their historic tasks, fully justified his method.

In his selection of the countries he associated under one national body the Guardian amply demonstrated the fact that the Bahá'ís are far more than international, they are supra-national — above nation — in their beliefs and policy. No consideration of national prejudices, political animosities or religious differences influenced his choice of those who were to work together under one Assembly. For him such worldly considerations were not allowed to weigh, albeit he was a keen student of current affairs and never blind to facts. It was those Divine forces within the Faith that he utilized — a Faith which, as he so beautifully expressed it, “feeds itself upon... hidden springs of celestial strength” and “propagates itself by ways mysterious and utterly at variance with the standards accepted by the generality of mankind.”

It was not until 1957 that he resumed the formation of purely National Assemblies; in April of that year Alaska, Pakistan and New Zealand elected their own permanent Bahá'í bodies. It was an historic occasion in the evolution of the Administrative Order for no less than eleven new National Assemblies came into existence that year at one time, the others being Regional Assemblies for North East Asia, South East Asia, the Benelux Countries, Arabia, the Iberian Peninsula, Scandinavia and Finland, the Antilles, and the northern countries of South America which formed a new body. What had hitherto been one National Assembly for South America and one for Central America now became two smaller Regional ones in South America while Central America was partially pared away and its island republics joined in electing an Assembly of their own. Ere Shoghi Effendi's last great Crusade drew to a close every republic of Latin America had its own independent national body, as he himself had planned when, in his statistical pamphlet published on the eve of the Centenary of 1953, he had included within the “Ten Year International Bahá'í Teaching and Consolidation Plan” as one of its most thrilling and challenging provisions the task of more than quadrupling the existing National Assemblies through raising their number to over fifty.

It is not possible, in an appraisal of the work achieved by Shoghi Effendi as brief as the present one, to describe in detail the progress made in individual countries during his ministry. That will require a full-length history and much research into sources gradually being assembled at the World Centre. As he himself always saw his work in its broadest outlines, so we must here strive to follow the comet's path across the skies. The spiritual conquest of this Planet — the avowed purpose of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings — is primarily bound up with the prosecution of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan. As the American believers pursued, in the course of successive crusades, the destiny with which this Plan had endowed them, a tremendous force was released, ever-increasingly, throughout the Bahá'í world. If the North American Community is viewed as the Himalayas — the great watershed of the forces of expansion in the Cause of God — other communities must be seen as streams and rills that flow into the mighty rivers they produce and swell their power to irrigate all the lands of the earth.

The example set through the achievements of the first Seven Year Plan inspired other communities to dare greatly. The increasing awareness of the glorious possibilities of service opening before the Bahá'í world in the second century of its own era was constantly fanned into flame by the Guardian's messages to various National Assemblies. He frequently quoted Bahá'u'lláh's admonition “*Vie ye with each other in the service of God and of His Cause*” and

openly encouraged a competitive spirit in its noblest form. His use of statistics was one example of the way he did this, his own words another: "Spiritual competition", he cabled America in 1941, "galvanizing organized followers Bahá'u'lláh East West waxes keener as first Bahá'í Century speeds to its close." Still more illuminating was what followed for he acclaimed this as a sign of Bahá'í solidarity in the five continents of the globe — like the horses of a Roman chariot, each trying to get its neck forward but all pulling together. It would be lacking in respect to say he called for bids — but he never hesitated to tell his warriors there was a golden fleece to be won; who would get to it first? No doubt it was all divinely inspired, but it was also warm and human, vibrant and stimulating!

The news of the victories being won during the first Seven Year Plan, passed on by the Guardian in a steady flow of inspiring messages to the believers of Persia, was, Shoghi Effendi cabled in 1943, "thrilling Eastern communities Bahá'í world with delight admiration and wonder...Ninety-five Persian families emulating example American trail-blazers Faith" had left their homes and were on their way to hoist its banner in Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Sulaimaniya, Hejaz and Bahrein. India and Egypt were stirring and the Iraqi Bahá'ís were hastening their own plans to crown the end of the first century with local victories. The Bahá'ís of both the East and the West were writing the last glorious pages in their own chapters of the first century of their Faith.

Three months after the May 1944 celebrations were ended, the Guardian informed the North American Community: "A memorable chapter in the history of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the West has been closed. A new chapter is now opening, a chapter which, ere its termination, must eclipse the most shining victories won so heroically by those who have so fearlessly launched the first stage of the Great Plan conceived by 'Abdu'l-Bahá for the American believers." They stood at the threshold of "yet another phase in a series of crusades which must carry...the privileged recipients of those epoch-making Tablets beyond the Western Hemisphere to the uttermost ends of the earth, to implant the banner, and lay an unassailable basis for the administrative structure of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh." There are not so many ways of doing things on this planet. Right methods are right when applied to different fields. Shoghi Effendi was a spiritual general leading a spiritual army to win spiritual prizes — but the campaign method was immemorial: organize your forces, conceive your strategy, attack your goal, occupy the position, keep your communications open to your base, bring up reinforcements, establish garrisons in the conquered territory, muster your forces and start the next campaign. As the armies of brilliant leaders get more and more experience the lull between campaigns diminishes. This was equally true of Shoghi Effendi's Plans.

Having won his first great campaign he immediately turned to consolidating his victories: he informed the American National Assembly that the laboriously won local Assemblies must be preserved, groups raised to Assembly status, centres multiplied, the Faith proclaimed to the masses and the new believers deepened in their understanding of it. In addition, more translations of Bahá'í literature should be made and published for the benefit of the Latin American work; above all, in every republic where an Assembly had not yet been established one must now be formed.

Between the opening phase of the American believers' World Mission, which ended with the first Seven Year Plan, and the second stage of that Mission, there occurred what Shoghi Effendi called, on the occasion of the launching of the second Seven Year Plan, a "two year respite". It is

unlikely that the American Community had realized that their arduous labours between 1944 and 1946 — which stretched from Anchorage in the north to Magallanes in the south of the Western Hemisphere — had been a “respite” until the Guardian called it that. When a “war-ravaged, disillusioned and bankrupt society” paused in its bloody battles after six years and began, with the cessation of European hostilities in the summer of 1945, to lick its wounds, Shoghi Effendi told the American Bahá’ís that the prosecutors of the Divine Plan must “gird up their loins, muster their resources” and prepare themselves for the next step in their destiny. The appeals he made, during the months that preceded the launching of the second Seven Year Plan, to the minds and the feelings of the American believers were profound. He told these “ambassadors of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh” that the “sorrow-stricken, war-lacerated, sorely bewildered nations and peoples” of Europe were waiting in their turn for the healing influence of the Faith to be extended to them as it had been extended to the peoples throughout the Americas. News he received of the plight of the believers in Germany and Burma — two old and tried communities — greatly touched him and was so distressing that he hastened to appeal to “their fellow workers in lands which have providentially been spared the horrors of invasion and all the evils and miseries attendant upon it” to take immediate and collective action to mitigate their plight. He appealed particularly to the American Community, which “of all its sister communities in East and West, enjoyed the greatest immunity” during the war and had in addition been privileged to successfully prosecute so great a Plan, to do all in its power to help financially and by any other means at its disposal.

The official inception of the second Seven Year Plan, the “second collective enterprise undertaken in American Bahá’í history,” took place at the 1946 Convention. It would seem as if all the work so successfully undertaken since 1921, the building up of strong administrative institutions of the Faith, the expansion of the North American Community during seven years to include every state within the United States and every province in Canada — an expansion which raised the number of centres from 300 to 1,000 — the triumphant spiritual campaign in Latin America, had been designed to create in the Western Hemisphere a vast home front from which the New World could now launch a well-organized attack on the Old World — on Europe, its parent continent. Once again Shoghi Effendi mustered a small army; “Bahá’u’lláh’s spiritual battalions are moving into position,” he informed the friends. America, the child of the Old World, now a fully-grown young giant, was ready to return, vital and fresh, destined, as Shoghi Effendi wrote “through successive decades, to achieve the spiritual conquest of the continent unconquered by Islam, rightly regarded as the mother of Christendom, the fountain head of American culture, the mainspring of Western civilization...”

Again we see the design in Shoghi Effendi’s great tapestry drawn into another blazing wheel of glory — this time the second great Centenary of the Faith in 1953 which would, he informed us, commemorate the Year Nine marking the mystic birth of Bahá’u’lláh’s prophetic mission as He lay in the Sýáh-Chál of Tehran.

The objectives of this new Plan, of which Europe was the “preeminent” goal, and which came to be known as the European Campaign, were as follows: consolidation of work throughout the Americas; completion of the interior ornamentation of the Mother Temple of the West in time for the celebration of its fiftieth anniversary in 1953; erection of three pillars of the future

Universal House of Justice through the election of the Canadian, the Central and the South American National Assemblies; a systematic teaching campaign in Europe aimed at the establishment of Spiritual Assemblies in the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal), the Low Countries (Holland and Belgium), and Scandinavian states (Norway, Sweden and Denmark) and Italy. He ended his message by saying that he himself was pledging ten thousand dollars as his initial contribution for the “manifold purposes glorious Crusade surpassing every enterprise undertaken by followers Faith Bahá’u’lláh course first Bahá’í Century.”

Six weeks later a cable from Shoghi Effendi informed the American National Assembly that “nine competent pioneers” should be promptly dispatched to Europe to as many countries as feasible, that the Duchy of Luxembourg should be added to the Low Countries and Switzerland also included. With these two and the previous eight, the “Ten Goal Countries” came into existence in our Bahá’í vocabulary. Some time later, in view of the marked progress being made in the north of Europe, Finland was also added to the scope of the Plan. Although, in addition to Britain and Germany, there were still Bahá’ís living in France, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and perhaps other places, they were for the most part too isolated or too suppressed to undertake large-scale teaching activities. The opening of this systematic well-organized Plan in “war-torn, spiritually famished” Europe meant that the American Community now found itself “launched in both hemispheres on a second, incomparably more glorious stage, of the systematic Crusade designed to culminate, in the fullness of time, in the spiritual conquest of the entire planet.” It meant that the American Community was to be engaged in strenuous work in thirty countries, in addition to ensuring that proper foundations were laid for the election, in 1948, of the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, whose essential local Assemblies in various provinces were in most cases new and weak.

As this home front of believers, at best numbering a few thousand Bahá’ís, heroically struggled with the various leviathans they now had by their tails, the Guardian’s love and admiration for them steadily increased. Although he occasionally used the rhetorical form “we”, in one of his most touching messages at the very beginning of this new Plan his use of “we” seems a clear indication of how profoundly he had become identified with the band of his followers in America who had followed him so faithfully from the first instant they heard he was their Guardian: “We stand too close to the noble edifice our hands are rearing...for us to be in a position to evaluate the contribution which we, as the executors of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Mandate, as the champion-builders of Bahá’u’lláh’s Order, as the torch-bearers of a civilization of which that Order is the mainspring and precursor, are now being led...to make to the world triumph of our Faith...” Truly they were become his sisters and brothers!

It was no use, Shoghi Effendi said, trying to envisage, at so early a stage, where this new Plan would lead; the duty of the hour was sufficient; the future depended on present efforts. No opportunity must be missed, no obligation evaded, no task half-heartedly performed, no

decision procrastinated. All resources, spiritual and material, must be concentrated on the tasks that lay ahead; all must participate, however modest, restricted or inconspicuous their share might be, until every ounce of energy had been spent and, "tired but blissful", the promised harvest was brought in. The continent of Europe was "turbulent, politically convulsed, economically disrupted and spiritually depleted." But it was the arena where the American Community must now carry out the "first stage of its transatlantic missionary enterprise", "amidst a people so disillusioned, so varied in race, language, and outlook, so impoverished spiritually, so paralyzed with fear, so confused in thought, so abased in their moral standards, so rent by internal schisms..."

When these "trail-blazers" of the second Seven Year Plan began their mission there were only two European Bahá'í communities worthy of the name, those of the British Isles and Germany, both long-standing and both of which had had active National Assemblies before the war; the first had never ceased to function; the second, dissolved by the Nazi authorities in 1937 when all Bahá'í activity was officially suspended, was now reconstituted and heroically gathering its war-torn flock about it. With these the European Teaching Committee of the American National Assembly and the ever-swelling group of pioneers in the Ten Goal Countries closely co-operated. The progress was so rapid that by the second year of the new Plan there were already eight new local Assemblies functioning in these countries and, as the work continued to rapidly spread, the Guardian extended its objectives to include Finland.

With the same degree of burning interest with which he had guided the exploits of the first Seven Year Plan he now followed the course of the second one. In 1948 he informed the friends that the "primacy" of the American Bahá'í Community was "reasserted, fully vindicated, completely safeguarded"; that "intent on maintaining its lead among its sister communities" it had excited "feelings of admiration and envy in several communities, East and West". The victories won in Europe were all the more meritorious, Shoghi Effendi pointed out, because the environment and circumstances were more adverse and challenging than had been the case in Latin America. Though the aftermath of the war, from the standpoint of physical misery, gradually wore off, the fundamental difficulty of teaching the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh to the European people did not change. A few months before his passing, in a letter to one of the National Assemblies, Shoghi Effendi was as emphatic and clear regarding this problem as he had been in 1946: "In their constant concern to illuminate the hearts of their countrymen with the radiance of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, and in their daily contact with peoples intensely conservative by nature, steeped in tradition, bound, for the most part, by the ties of religious orthodoxy, sunk in materialism, and fully content with the standard they have achieved," the Bahá'ís must "of necessity find the work painfully slow, extremely arduous, and often highly discouraging... the seeds, however, they are now sowing...will," he assured them, "under the watchful care of Providence, and in consequence of the tribulations which a heedless generation is bound sooner or later to experience, germinate, at the appointed time, and yield a harvest of such importance as will fill them with astonishment."

In the middle of this great European undertaking, which had truly fired the imagination of the Bahá'ís all over the world, including the new communities of Latin America — who were even able to send some of their own pioneers to assist in this new Crusade — the hard-pressed

American Bahá'ís found themselves faced by a serious crisis. Owing to a sudden increase in costs the expense of completing their beloved Temple, through clothing its interior with designs little less elaborate than its exterior and of the same material, had risen heavily. Shoghi Effendi's army was in difficulties. He investigated the situation carefully and then immediately decided on the action necessary to save it. It is illuminating to see what he considered could be safely jettisoned and what was essential: the budgets allocated to the all-important European work, to the spread and maintenance of the precious Assemblies and centres created in Latin and North America, must not be curtailed; the holding of the American National Convention and the publication of *Bahá'í News* he considered imperative; but all other activities, such as proclamation, publications and summer schools, should either be "drastically curtailed or suspended during two years" (1949 and 1950). Like any great general conducting a campaign he safeguarded three things: his front lines of battle, his "essential base" (as he called it) of operations and his lines of communication. Other considerations, however, were to persuade the Guardian, in 1951, to not only prolong this period of intense economy in America but to enlarge it to embrace the whole Bahá'í world. The construction of the Shrine of the Báb — for the entire stonework of which he had recently signed a contract — as well as the formation of the International Bahá'í Council and the general expansion of the work in the Holy Land, led him to appeal to all National Spiritual Assemblies, local Assemblies and individual believers to curtail their budgets and through a great effort and sacrifice rally to the support of the World Centre. "Austerity period", he cabled, "previously affecting fortunes American Bahá'í Community unavoidably prolonged now extended entire Bahá'í world in recognition pressing needs paramount importance glorious international task." The American Bahá'ís had already, by 1950, raised half-a-million dollars for the interior ornamentation of their Temple, thus breaking the back of particularly heavy commitment.

During these difficult years the numerically much smaller Canadian Community — co-partner with the American Community in the execution of the Divine Plan — was so preoccupied with the Five Year Plan the Guardian had instructed it to initiate when the independent stage of its development was reached in 1948, that it was in no position to offer much assistance to the main body of believers in the United States, and the formation in 1951 of two more National Assemblies, one in Central and one in South America, made further demands on their tenacity, resources and courage. Yet with all their burdens their triumphs during the last years of the second Seven Year Plan continued to multiply. So pleased was Shoghi Effendi with the spirit of this truly heroic Community, every year justifying more clearly the great hopes for and trust in it 'Abdu'l-Bahá had had, that in the summer of 1950 the Guardian suggested that, at a time when the Centenary of the Martyrdom of the Báb "with all its poignant memories is upon us" it would be suitable for such a community to resolve that on the occasion of the Centenary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission — coinciding with the end of its second Seven Year Plan — it would place a "worthy, befitting, five-fold offering...on the altar of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh" through reinforcing the foundations of the institutions established in North America; rearing the two Pillars of the future Universal House of Justice in Latin America; maintaining the strength achieved in the Ten Goal Countries of Europe; completing the interior ornamentation of the Temple; and assisting in the erection of the superstructure of a still holier edifice at the World Centre of the Faith. Although it was only a "hard-pressed, adolescent community" Shoghi Effendi reminded it that the "untapped sources of celestial strength from which it can draw are measureless in their

potencies, and will unhesitatingly pour forth their energizing influences if the necessary daily effort be made and the required sacrifices be willingly accepted.”

The winning of so many victories by the Bahá'ís of the United States as well as Canada — to which had been added in the closing years of this Crusade services in the African Continent never contemplated in the original Plan — far exceeding in substance the misty prizes which had loomed, beckoning but vague, in the fog surrounding the world at the end of the war, now encouraged the Guardian to add a sixth offering of the altar of Bahá'u'lláh, one he termed the “fairest fruit” of the mighty European project. In 1952 he cabled that “ere termination American Community’s second Seven Year Plan” the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Italy and Switzerland should be formed, and added: “Advise European Teaching Committee upon consummation glorious enterprise issue formal invitation their spiritual offspring newly emerged National Assembly participate together with sister National Assemblies United States, British Isles, Germany Intercontinental Conference August same year capital city Sweden”. He explained he was planning to entrust this youngest Assembly of the Bahá'í world with a specific plan of its own as part of the Global Crusade to be embarked upon between the second and third Century celebrations. It had become an established procedure of the Guardian for these new National Bahá'í babies to be born with a plan in their mouths!

It may well be imagined how excited, how heartened, all the followers of Bahá'u'lláh were by news so thrilling as this. They saw what seemed to them little short of miracles taking place, and their loving “true brother”, in his humility, his praises and kindness, led them to believe such miracles were all theirs. That Italy should have, from a vacuum, succeeded in one decade in building up a foundation of local Assemblies strong enough, with its Swiss companion, to bear the weight of an independent National Assembly was a feat far beyond anyone’s fairest dreams.

In order to grasp, in however dim a way, why the third Seven Year Plan — which the Guardian had repeatedly referred to since the end of the first Bahá'í Century — became a Ten Year Plan instead, we must understand a fundamental teaching of our Faith. A just and loving God does not require of any soul what He will not give it the strength to accomplish. Privileges involve responsibilities, for peoples, nations, individuals. To the degree to which they arise to meet their responsibilities they are blessed and sustained; to the degree they fail they are automatically deprived and punished. Shoghi Effendi had written at the beginning of the first Seven Year Plan that “failure to exploit these golden opportunities would... signify the loss of the rarest privilege conferred by Providence upon the American Bahá'í Community.” *“The Kingdom of God”,* ‘Abdu'l-Bahá had said, *“is possessed of limitless potency. Audacious must be the army of life if the confirming aid of that Kingdom is to be repeatedly vouchsafed to it...”* It was in pursuance of the operation of this great law that the followers of Bahá'u'lláh who had been entrusted with the Divine Plan, rising to meet their challenge, pulling down from on high through their services an ever-greater measure of celestial aid, discharging their sacred responsibility in so noble a fashion, found destiny hastening to meet them, a step in advance. A victorious army, having swept all barriers before it, is often so exhilarated by its exploits it needs no respite. It is ready to march on, fired by its victories. This was the mood of the Bahá'í world as 1953 approached and it was about to enter the Holy Year. Their Commander-in-Chief was a general who needed very little encouragement to induce him to go on and who never rested. So it was inevitable that given the hour, the mood and the man the Bahá'ís should find themselves with no “three year

respite" but rather twelve completely evolved plans — one for each National Assembly — ready to be put into operation the moment the trumpet sounded the reveille in Riḍván

Wonderful as had been the celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the inception of the Bahá'í Faith, in 1944, by Bahá'í communities living in the shadow of the worst war the world had ever known, it was dwarfed by the events associated with the hundredth anniversary of the revelation Bahá'u'lláh received in the Síyáh-Ḥál of Tehran. Poignantly, in the months preceding the commemoration of that event, the Guardian recalled to the Bahá'í world the tidal wave of persecution and martyrdom which had swept so many disciples of the Báb, so many heroes, so many innocent women and even children, from the scene a century before and had culminated in casting the Supreme Manifestation of God into a loathsome subterranean dungeon immediately following the abortive attempt on the life of Náṣiri'd-Dín Ṣhah on 15 August* The Guardian chose as the commencement of the Holy Year — the celebration of the Anniversary of the "Year Nine" — the middle of October 1952. A veritable fever of anticipation swept over the believers East and West, now free in every part of the globe to give their hearts to unreserved rejoicing. Perhaps for the first time in their history the Bahá'ís had a throbbing sense of their true oneness as a world community. What had always been a matter of doctrine, taught and firmly believed in, was now sensed by every individual as a great and glorious reality. The plans for the future, set in motion by a series of dynamic messages from Shoghi Effendi, served to inflame this new awareness.

At the end of November 1951, in a cable addressing all National Assemblies of the Bahá'í world, Shoghi Effendi informed us that the long anticipated intercontinental stage in the administrative evolution of our Faith was now at hand. We had, he pointed out, passed through the phases of local, regional, national and international activity and were emerging, at such an auspicious moment, into a new kind of Bahá'í world, one in which we began to think in terms of the entire planet with its continents in relation to our teaching strategy. Shoghi Effendi took the Centenary — this great golden wheel in his tapestry — and fashioned it in such a way that two entirely different things were made to react on each other and at the same time blend into each other in one great creative centre of force. One was the past, the commemoration of such soul-shaking events as the martyrdoms, the imprisonment of Bahá'u'lláh, His mystic experience of His own station in the Síyáh-Ḥál His exile and all that these events signified for the progress of man in his journey towards his Creator; the other was the marshalling, this time of all the organized Bahá'í communities of the planet, in a vast Plan, the next step in the unfoldment of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan.

Moved by the spirits of those two Exalted Beings Who, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had promised in His *Will and Testament*, would infallibly guide him, his whole heart and attention focused on the propagation of that Faith of which he had been made Guardian — and Guardian is a very weak English equivalent for what the original Arabic "Valíyy-i-Amru'lláh" means, Defender of the Faith, Leader, Commander-in-Chief — Shoghi Effendi set about devising the next stage of the Master's Plan. It was beginning to take shape in his mind long before its detailed provisions were

released through the publication in 1952 of his pamphlet *The Bahá'í Faith 1844–1952*, with its supplement “Ten Year International Teaching and Consolidation Plan”, which was made public at the inception of the Holy Year. Previously he had requested different National Assemblies to provide him with the names of territories and major islands of the five continents where Bahá'í activity was in progress, thus supplementing his own exhaustive list, which included the countries mentioned by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Himself in the *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, and which he had carefully compiled with the aid of atlases and works of reference. I remember so vividly how he worked on his own map of the goals of the Ten Year Plan. He was tired out and run down after his long winter’s work in Haifa, with the Shrine, the gardens, the pilgrims, the interminable and ever-increasing correspondence. With difficulty I had extracted a quasi-promise that when he took a cure, at a well-known watering place, he would really rest and devote himself for that period at least to his health. The pleasant summer sun was shining outside, the long leafy alleys of trees, through which one went to drink from the various waters at specific times, were shady in the heat, it all beckoned to drowsy relaxation — but Shoghi Effendi spent the hours of daylight leaning over his map, filling in its details with infinite care. All my remonstrances and those of his doctor, my indignant reminder of his promise, had no effect. He was wholly absorbed in his task, forgetful of tired muscles, strained eyes, overworked brain.

The highlights of the Holy Year were four great Intercontinental Teaching Conferences which were announced in that same November 1951 cable and were to be held in four continents: the first in Africa, in Kampala, Uganda, in the spring of 1953; the second in Chicago, in the United States, during Riḍván; the third in Stockholm, Sweden, during the summer and the fourth in New Delhi, India, in the autumn. The pattern of these great Conferences — which were announced a year before the new Plan itself was disclosed — became clear as the hour approached for them to take place. All Hands of the Cause were invited to attend as many of them as possible; to each one the Guardian would send as his own special representative one of the Hands “honoured direct association newly-initiated enterprises World Centre”. In chronological order, these were Leroy Loas, Amatu’l-Bahá Ruḥíyyih Khánum, Ugo Giachery and Mason Remey; these emissaries would fulfil a four-fold mission: they would bear a reproduction of a miniature portrait of the Báb to show to the friends gathered on such an historic occasion; they would deliver the Guardian’s own message to the assembled attendants; they would elucidate the character and purposes of the Spiritual World Crusade; they would rally the participants to an energetic, sustained, enthusiastic prosecution of the colossal tasks that lay ahead.

Before going into more detail it would be well to recall that although, in his November 1951 message announcing these Conferences to be held during the Holy Year, Shoghi Effendi had given a faint hint of things to come when he stated they would initiate a new stage of intercontinental activity and would reflect a degree of Bahá'í solidarity of unprecedented scope and intensity, still, as far as the Bahá'í world knew, they were designed as great jubilee gatherings to commemorate the Year Nine, to celebrate the end of the victorious second Seven Year Plan, and many regional ones as well. Indeed, only a week before the cable announcing those Conferences reached the Bahá'í world the Guardian had, in another message, still been referring to a “third Seven Year Plan” so that there was in 1951 no association in the minds of the Bahá'ís of the commencement of a new crusade with these festival gatherings. The extraordinary success the Bahá'ís were meeting with all over the world, the enthusiasm of

National Assemblies such as America and Britain, who had been winning remarkable victories in Europe and in Africa respectively, swung the compass on a new course, a course that in reality started three years before the inauguration of the Ten Year Plan. So vast is the range covered by the provisions of this Plan, so numerous the communications from Shoghi Effendi on this subject — his lists, his announcements and his statistics, beginning in 1952 and carried on until his death in November 1957 — that to give more than a brief outline of them here is impossible. On the other hand this Crusade crowned his ministry and his life's work, was a source of deep happiness to him, and its unfolding victories a comfort to his often sad and overburdened heart. Therefore it must be dealt with, however inadequately.

No words can better sum up the very essence of this supreme Plan conceived of and organized by him than his own definition of it: "Let there be no mistake. The avowed, the primary aim of this Spiritual Crusade is none other than the conquest of the citadels of men's hearts. The theatre of its operations is the entire planet. Its duration a whole decade. Its commencement synchronizes with the Centenary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission. Its culmination will coincide with the Centenary of the Declaration of that same mission."

Although all believers were welcome to be present at the four great Conferences of the Holy Year, a special category was singled out and invited to attend by Shoghi Effendi, namely, representatives of those National Assemblies and communities who were intimately concerned with the work which was to go forward in each of the four continents. If we begin with the first Conference held in February, in Africa, and analyse what the most crucial phase of the entire Crusade involved there — the opening of new territories and the consolidation of the work in those already opened — we will get an idea of the shattering impact these historic gatherings had on Bahá'í history: 57 territories were to be the subject of concentrated teaching activities for which six national bodies would be responsible, namely, the National Spiritual Assemblies of the British, the American, the Persian, the Egyptian and Sudanese, the Iraqi and the Indian, Pakistani and Burmese believers, who were to open 33 new territories and consolidate the work already begun in 171. The tasks allotted the whole Western Hemisphere community, through its four National Assemblies, those of the United States, Canada, Central America and South America, were equally staggering: 56 territories, 27 to be opened and 29 to be consolidated, involving such widely separated and difficult goals as the Yukon and Keewatin in the north and the Falkland Islands in the south. The Asian goals were even more formidable: 84 territories in all, 41 to be opened and 43 to be consolidated, ranging from countries in the Himalayas to dots in the Pacific Ocean; these were divided among the nine National Assemblies of Persia; India, Pakistan and Burma; Iraq; Australia and New Zealand; the United States; Canada; Central America; south America and the British Isles. At the European Conference five National Assemblies received 52 territories as their share of the Plan, 30 to be opened and 22 to be consolidated. Seated amongst its elders, the National Assemblies of the United States, Canada, the British Isles, Germany and Austria, was the baby national body of the Bahá'í world — that of Italy and Switzerland, scarcely three months old — which was given by the Guardian territories all its own, 7 in number.

At these historic gatherings, held at such vast distances not only from each other but in most cases from widely dispersed local Bahá'í communities, more than 3,400 believers were present,

representing, Shoghi Effendi announced, not only all the principal races of mankind, but more than 80 countries. Each of the Conferences had some special distinction of its own. The first, the African one, attended by no less than ten Hands of the Cause, friends from 19 countries and representatives of over 30 tribes and races, being particularly blessed by having over 100 of the new African believers present as the personal guests of the Guardian himself, a mark of consideration on his part that clearly showed his deep attachment to the new African Bahá'ís. Indeed, in his highly significant message to that first Conference of the Holy Year he was at pains to quote the words of Bahá'u'lláh Who had compared the coloured people to the "*black pupil of the eye*" through which "*the light of the spirit shineth forth*". Shoghi Effendi not only praised the African race, he praised the African Continent, a continent that had "remained uncontaminated by the evils of a gross, a rampant and cancerous materialism undermining the fabric of human society alike in the East and the West, eating into the vitals of the conflicting peoples and races inhabiting the American, the European, and the Asiatic continents, and, alas, threatening to engulf in one common catastrophic convulsion the generality of mankind." should such a warning, given at such an historic juncture in the fortunes of Africa, not be remembered more insistently by the band of Bahá'u'lláh's followers labouring there to establish a spiritually based World Order?

The second, "without doubt," Shoghi Effendi wrote, "the most distinguished of the four Intercontinental Teaching Conferences commemorating the Centenary of the inception of the Mission of Bahá'u'lláh" and marking the launching of that "epochal, global, spiritual decade-long Crusade", took place in the middle of the Holy Year and constituted the central feature of that year's celebrations and the highest point of its festivities. This great all-America Conference was held in the heart of North America, in Chicago, the very city where sixty years before Bahá'u'lláh's name had first been publicly mentioned in the Western World during a session of the World Parliament of Religions held in connection with the World's Columbian Exposition which opened on 1 May¹²⁵. Its sessions were preceded by the consummation of a fifty-year-old enterprise — the dedication to public worship, on 2 May, of the Mother Temple of the West, which was, Shoghi Effendi assured us, not only "the holiest House of Worship ever to be reared to the glory of the Most Great Name" but that no House of Worship would "ever possess the immeasurable potentialities with which it has been endowed" and that the "role it is destined to play in hastening the emergence of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh" could not as yet be fathomed.

The unveiling of the model of the future Bahá'í Temple to be erected on Mt Carmel at the World Centre of the Faith was another event which Shoghi Effendi himself had planned to take place in conjunction with that Conference — a Conference which he said will "go down in history as the most momentous gathering held since the close of the Heroic Age of the Faith, and will be regarded as the most potent agency in paving the way for the launching of one of the most brilliant phases of the grandest crusade ever undertaken by the followers of Bahá'u'lláh since the inception of His Faith..."

The lion's share of this new crusade in prosecution of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan had been given by Shoghi Effendi to those he so lovingly said were not only "ever ready to bear the brunt of responsibility" but were, indeed, that Plan's "appointed" and "chief trustees". They had

performed in the past “unflagging and herculean labours”, now, through their two national bodies, that of the United States and of Canada, in competition with ten other National Assemblies, each of which had received a goodly portion of goals, this Community would indeed have to struggle hard to maintain its lead and win the new victories expected of it. There were 131 virgin territories throughout the world to be opened to the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh in ten years and 118 territories already opened but still requiring a great deal of consolidation. Of these 249 places, most of them large, independent nations, the United States and Canada received 69, or 28 per cent of the total; 48 new National Assemblies were to be formed before 1963, 36 of them by the United States alone. The first dependency ever to be erected in the vicinity of a Bahá’í Temple was likewise to be undertaken by this Community; in addition, it was to purchase two sites for future Houses of Worship, one in Toronto, Canada, and one in Panama City, Panama; translate and publish Bahá’í literature in 10 Western Hemisphere Indian languages, and achieve many other goals besides.

In the presence of the twelve Hands of the Cause attending this Conference — to which Bahá’ís from over 33 countries had come — well over 100 believers arose and offered themselves as pioneers to set in motion the accomplishment of the great tasks the Guardian had just made so dazzlingly clear in his message, in which he called upon the United States believers, the “chief executors”, the Canadian believers, their “allies”, and the Latin American believers, their “associates”, to “brace themselves and initiate...in other continents of the globe, an intercontinental campaign designed to carry a stage further the glorious work already inaugurated throughout the Western Hemisphere.” Pioneering demanded, Shoghi Effendi had written long ago, “first and foremost those qualities of renunciation, tenacity, dauntless and passionate fervour.” One saw in the faces of these new volunteers, old and young, single and families, black and white, those qualities reflected like a heavenly glow, and it was this first vanguard of shock troops, followed by an ever-swelling, determined little army, from all over the world, who stormed the citadels of those “unopened” territories and won in one year one hundred of them. These pioneers received from Shoghi Effendi the title “Knight of Bahá’u’lláh”, reserved for any believer, of an age to take part in such a decision, who first pioneered to a virgin territory or either arrived there or was on his way there before the close of the first year of the Crusade. In future years those who first reached as yet unopened territories would receive this same title. It is interesting to note a term used by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, which seems to foreshadow this beautiful title, where He speaks of the “Knights of the Lord”. All the fires the Guardian lit were from the sparks gathered so painstakingly from the writings of his forefathers.

The opening of the doors of the of the Mother Temple to public worship, the public meetings addressed by prominent Bahá’ís and non-Bahá’ís alike during the jubilee celebrations attracted thousands of people and received enthusiastic nation-wide publicity in the press, on television and over the radio. During the Holy Year the light of the Faith truly shone most brightly in the Great Republic of the West, the chosen Cradle of its Administrative Order. One of the most moving, never-to-be-forgotten moments of these glorious celebrations was when the Bahá’ís, over 2,500 in number, filed past the Guardian’s representative, Amatu’l-Bahá Ruḥíyyih Khánum, to be anointed with attar of rose Shoghi Effendi had entrusted to her for this purpose, on the occasion of the purely Bahá’í dedication ceremony in the Temple, followed by selections from sacred scriptures read in English and chanted in Persian and Arabic — a programme arranged by the Guardian himself — and crowned by a solemn act of visitation when they filed past the

portraits of both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh and were permitted to gaze for a fleeting and sacred moment at the faces of the twin Manifestations of God for this New Day in which mankind is living. Silently, deeply satisfied, deeply overwhelmed, they then left the House of Worship.

The third Intercontinental Bahá'í Teaching Conference, which convened in Stockholm during July, was honoured by having the largest attendance of Hands of the Cause of any of the others, fourteen being present, the five Persian Hands and one African Hand having just come from extensive travels in the Western Hemisphere, undertaken at the instruction of the Guardian, immediately following the launching of the Crusade in Chicago. It would not be inaccurate to characterize this third gathering as the "executive conference". Though numerically much smaller than the American one, circumstances permitted a hard core of the most dedicated and active National Assembly members, teachers, administrators and pioneers to be present from all over Europe, including 110 believers from the Ten Goal Countries. The attendants, from thirty countries, devoted themselves during six days not only to the solemn yet joyous recapitulation of those events which had transpired a century before and which the Holy Year commemorated, but to a studious analysis of the work their beloved Guardian had entrusted to the three European National Assemblies and that of the United States, the only other National body involved in the European work being that of Canada, which had been given Iceland as a consolidation goal.

In his message on this historic occasion Shoghi Effendi recalled not only the history of the Bahá'í Faith in relation to Europe — "a continent which, in the course of the last two thousand years, has exercised on the destiny of the human race a pervasive influence unequalled by that of any other continent of the globe" — but the effect both Christianity and Islam had had upon the unfoldment of its fortunes. In recapitulating the advances made and victories won since the end of the last World War the Guardian pointed out that these had been largely due to "the dynamic impact of a series of national Plans preparatory to the launching of a World Spiritual Crusade". Those Plans had been the second Seven Year Plan and a Two Year Plan launched by the British Bahá'ís, and a Five Year Plan prosecuted by the German and Austrian Bahá'í Communities. The result of these well-organized labours had been the establishment of local Assemblies in Eire, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales and in each of the capitals of the Ten Goal Countries, a large increase in the number of Assemblies, centres and believers throughout Europe, the election of yet another independent national body, and the acquisition of a national Bahá'í headquarters in Frankfurt. The hour was now ripe, Shoghi Effendi wrote, for them "to initiate befittingly and prosecute energetically the European campaign of a Global Crusade" which would not only broaden the foundations of the Faith in Europe but would "diffuse its light over the neighbouring islands" and would "God willing, carry its radiance to the Eastern territories of that continent, and beyond them as far as the heart of Asia". Europe, he stated, was entering upon "what may well be regarded as the opening phase of a great spiritual revival that bids fair to eclipse any period in its spiritual history." He went on to express the hope that "the elected representatives of the National Bahá'í Communities entrusted with the conduct of this momentous undertaking launched on the soil of this Continent" might "lend a tremendous impetus to the conversion, the reconciliation and the ultimate unification of the diverse and conflicting peoples, races and classes dwelling within the borders of a travailing, a sorely-agitated, and spiritually famished continent."

Words such as these fired the attendants to take immediate action and there were not only 63 offers from among those present to pioneer to European goals, but, what was much more unusual, various national bodies and committees, whose members were present in numbers, immediately took up these offers and before the Conference ended pioneers had been allocated to every goal given the European believers with the exception of those territories within the Soviet orbit. The thrilling objective of the erection of one of the two Bahá'í Temples called for in the original outline of the "Ten Year Teaching and Consolidation Plan" — the Mother Temple of Europe to be built in German — received substantial financial pledges, as did three other European projects involving large sums of money, namely, the purchase of the National Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds of the British Bahá'ís and the sites for two future Bahá'í Temples, one in Stockholm and one in Rome. Many of the new pioneers were deputized by zealous but less free individuals attending the Conference and touching sacrifices of personal belongings were made by those unable to contribute money. The convocation of such a Conference met with wide and favourable publicity and the public meeting held in conjunction with it attracted one of the largest audiences gathered under Bahá'í auspices that had yet been seen on the Continent.

Twelve months after the beginning of the Holy Year, ushered in during mid-October 1952, the great Asian Intercontinental Teaching Conference took place in New Delhi, India. Though the logical place for such a gathering would have been Persia, or failing this, Iraq, the temperature of the fanatical populations of these countries and the constant and unchanging animosity of the Muslim clergy made the choice of either place impossible. It was therefore highly befitting that the great sister country to the east — opened in the earliest days of Bahá'u'lláh's Ministry — should receive this honour. To it flocked hundreds of His followers from all over the world from places as far apart as Europe, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, many countries in the Western Hemisphere, and particularly Persia, as well as all five Asiatic Hands, who had already attended, at the request of the Guardian, the African, American and European Conferences. There were also present six other Hands of the Cause from the Holy Land, Europe, America, Africa and Australia. In his message to this last of the great Teaching Conferences Shoghi Effendi, after greeting its attendants "with high hopes and a joyful heart", pointed out the unique circumstances and significance of the work in Asia: in this "world girdling crusade" the "triple Campaign, embracing the Asiatic mainland, the Australian Continent and the islands of the Pacific Ocean" might "well be regarded as the most extensive, the most arduous and the most momentous of all the Campaigns". Its scope was "unparalleled in the history of the Faith in the Eastern Hemisphere"; it was to take place in a continent on whose soil "more than a century ago, so much sacred blood was shed", a continent enjoying an unrivalled position in the Bahá'í world, a continent where the overwhelming majority of Bahá'u'lláh's followers resided, a continent that was "the cradle of the principal religions of mankind; the home of so many of the oldest and mightiest civilizations which have flourished on this planet; the crossways of so many kindreds and races; the battleground of so many peoples and nations", above whose horizon in modern times the suns of two independent Revelations had successively risen, and within whose boundaries such holy places as the Qiblih of our Faith (Bahjī), the "Mother of the World" (Tehran) and the "Cynosure of an adoring world" (Baghdad) are embosomed. The Guardian ended his message with an expression of assurance as well as a sad foreboding of what might lie ahead: "May this Crusade, launched simultaneously on the Asiatic mainland, its neighbouring islands and the Antipodes...provide, as it unfolds, an effective antidote to the baneful forces of atheism, nationalism, secularism and materialism that are tearing at the vitals of this turbulent

continent, and may it re-enact those scenes of spiritual heroism which, more than any of the secular revolutions which have agitated its face, have left their everlasting imprint on the fortunes of the peoples and nations dwelling within its borders.”

No less enthusiasm for the tasks ahead — the most staggering of which was work in 84 territories, half of them virgin areas — filled the hearts of the Bahá’ís gathered in New Delhi than had characterized the reaction of their brothers and sisters attending the three previous Conferences. This enthusiasm was further heightened when a cable was received from the Guardian giving the glad-tidings that his own personal hope — expressed before the festivities of the Holy Year began — had been attained through the completion of the superstructure of the Báb’s Holy Sepulchre. The Bahá’ís rallied strongly to meet their given goals: offers to pioneer were received from over 70 people, 25 of whom proceeded to their posts shortly after the Conference ended; funds were lavishly contributed towards the purchase of the three sites for future Bahá’í Temples — Baghdad, Sydney and Delhi, 9 acres of land for the latter being acquired before the Conference rose; substantial donations were received for that most precious and longed-for Temple to be erected in Bahá’u’lláh’s native city, the capital of Persia, which was one of the two Temples originally scheduled to be built during the World Crusade; public meetings and a reception for over a thousand guests were held at which many important figures were present; India’s President, Dr Rajendra Prasad, as well as her famous Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, received delegations from the Conference and the publicity was wide and friendly. At the end of the Conference Shoghi Effendi instructed the Hands attending it to disperse on trips lasting some months, himself providing both assistance and directions as to their itineraries.

In addition to what might be called his routine work, already consuming daily an alarming amount of his time, for two years Shoghi Effendi had not only worked on and fully elaborated the details of a global crusade, as well as on the exhaustive plans for these great jubilee celebrations, but had also written *God Passes By* and a similar, but shorter, version of the same theme, in Persian. One might have thought that a lull in his creative output would ensue, but such was not the case. Cables and letters streamed from him at the end of each of the Conferences like missiles towards targets. For four years he never let the white hot heat he had engendered wane. A typical example of this is the tone in which, immediately after the American Conference ended, when the bemused Bahá’í world had scarcely begun to recover from the first glorious revelation of the new Plan, he cabled the Persian National Assembly: “Announce friends no less 128 believers offered pioneer services during celebrations Wilmette including offer pioneer leper colony. Appeal friends not allow themselves surpassed western brethren. Hundreds must arise. Enumerated goals at home abroad must promptly be fulfilled. Upon response progress protection victory entire community depends. Eagerly awaiting evidence action.” Such oft-repeated appeals had such an effect on a community which had lived its entire existence in a wretched cage of prejudice and persecution that the Persian believers, seeing, unbelievably, a door open before them, began to pour forth to the four corners of the world in ever-swelling numbers; without their assistance, their strong financial support and their constant readiness to sacrifice, the Crusade could never have been won on the scale that marked its triumphal conclusion in

Well aware of the fact that the believers in the West were few in number, Shoghi Effendi himself frequently assisted them in their projects. Immediately after the official inauguration of the Crusade at the Chicago Conference, he sent a contribution of £500 to the Central American National Assembly to help purchase its Temple site in Panama and £1,000 to the Italo-Swiss National Assembly for its Temple site in Rome; at the same time he put pressure on the United States, the British and the Indian National Assemblies to speed up their publication of Bahá'í literature in the languages allotted to them in the Ten Year Plan, sending a £1,000 donation himself to England, as he knew the financial burden their share of this extremely important work imposed was more than they could shoulder alone. Included in the provisions of the World Crusade were 91 new languages into which Bahá'í literature was to be translated, 40 in Asia, 31 in Africa, 10 in Europe and 10 in America, for which the Indian, Australian, British and American Communities were responsible. Throughout the years of the Crusade he frequently supported this work himself, indeed, throughout his entire ministry the question of languages had been one of his chief concerns. He chose them, urged their publication, kept inquiring when the finished product would be ready, paid, very often, for them to be printed, and sometimes for their translation as well, and not infrequently purchased a supply for himself in Haifa.

The combination of Shoghi Effendi's vision, his constant insistence on getting the work of the Cause done, and his not infrequent financial assistance, made possible by the *Huqúq* (Right of God) which was payable to him as Head of the Faith in accordance with the *Will and Testament* of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, provided the motive power behind many undertakings. He gave his contributions wisely and graciously, sometimes as an example to others, sometimes as a personal form of participation in some enterprise particularly close to his heart, sometimes because there was no other source to be drawn upon. A significant example of this was £50 he gave the Tasmanian Bahá'ís to carry out their first State Teaching Campaign. On innumerable occasions he paid for the travels of Bahá'í teachers, particularly following the passing of the Master when the believers in the West were faced with many tests and required the deepening in faith which he felt a visit from one of the old and tried Persian Bahá'ís could provide; later he provided the expenses of those Hands of the Cause who were not in a position to finance themselves on the trips he instructed them to take. When he removed the remains of the mother and brother of 'Abdu'l-Bahá from their lowly cemeteries in Akka and entombed them in state on Mt Carmel he contributed £1,000 to the Mother Temple of the West in their memory. On a number of occasions, throughout all the great Plans, he gave a sum of money and called for a specific number of believers to arise and with this sum fulfil a certain objective. To such pledges he would sometimes link touching and revealing statements, saying he was "deprived of personal participation", or that this was his "initial donation". He never failed to contribute lavishly to the victims of many disasters. In Persia, when Bahá'í villagers were persecuted and martyred, when the settlers in Russia were expelled and returned penniless to their land of origin, when earthquake or flood had left the friends homeless and destitute, Shoghi Effendi went to their assistance. He allocated a yearly contribution to the Persian National Assembly to assist in purchasing the historic sites associated with the Faith in that country, which constituted one of its specific tasks. He assisted in the purchase of various national Bahá'í headquarters and Temple sites, and frequently himself paid for the erection of the tombstones of prominent and much-loved believers as a mark of his personal esteem and affection.

The greatest single contribution of the Guardian's ministry, however, was his pledge of one-third of a million dollars towards the erection of the three Temples which became part of the World Crusades goals. How he reached this figure was typical of the way he did everything. I remember it all very clearly: he first provided the designs for the Temples, then got estimates from the National Assemblies entrusted with the task of building them — and tied them down, incidentally, to a ceiling price; he then, having ascertained the Temples would cost in the neighbourhood of a million dollars, and that almost \$150,000 was already available for them, estimated how much the Bahá'ís might be able to raise by the time, towards the end of the Crusade, their completion could be anticipated, and, having figured out about one-third was assured by this calculation, he proceeded to figure out what he felt he himself could give, knowing from past experience what the World Centre income might be and to what other plans he was committed; having allowed for contingencies he arrived at his figure of a third-of-a-million dollars. The third third he left to God, so to speak, knowing full well that if His followers exerted their utmost, by mysterious means forces would be released which would enable the believers to attain their goal.

But let us return to the newly inaugurated "fate-laden, soul-stirring, decade-long, world-embracing Spiritual Crusade" with its four objectives: development of the institutions at the World Centre of the Faith; consolidation of the home fronts of the twelve territories serving as the administrative bases of the twelve Plans which were component parts of The Plan; consolidation of all the territories already opened to the Faith; opening of the remaining chief virgin territories of the planet. Although the administration of the Crusade had been entrusted to the twelve National Assemblies, nevertheless every single believer, irrespective of his race, nation, class, colour, age or sex, was to lend his particular assistance to the accomplishment of this "gigantic enterprise". In a colourful passage of scintillating prose Shoghi Effendi lifted the curtain on the arena of the new Plan: Where? Why, everywhere — in the Arctic Circle, in the deserts, the jungles, the isles of the cold North Sea and the torrid climes of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. To whom? Why, to all peoples — to the tribes of Africa, the Eskimos of Canada and Greenland, the Lapps of the far north, the Polynesians, the Australian aborigines, the red Indians of the Americas. Under what circumstances? Not only in the wilderness, but in the cities, "immersed in crass materialism", where people breathed the fetid air of "aggressive racialism", bound by the chains of "haughty intellectualism", surrounded by "blind and militant nationalism", immersed in "narrow and intolerant ecclesiasticism". What strongholds must Bahá'u'lláh's soldiers storm? The strongholds of Hinduism, the monasteries of Buddhism, the jungles of the Amazon, the mountains of Tibet, the steppes of Russia, the wastes of Siberia, the interior of China, Mongolia, Japan, with their teeming multitudes — nor should they forget to sit with the leper and consort with the outcast in their penal colonies. "I direct my impassioned appeal," he wrote, "to obey, as befits His warriors, the summons of the Lord of Hosts and prepare for that Day of Days, when His victorious battalions will, to the accompaniment of hosannas from the invisible angels in the Abha Kingdom, celebrate the hour of final victory."

It is clear that the Guardian envisaged this Ten Year undertaking as no more and no less than a battle, the battle of the "worldwide, loyal, unbreachable army" of "Bahá'u'lláh's warriors", His "army of light", against the entrenched battalions of darkness holding the globe. Its "Supreme Commander" was 'Abdu'l-Bahá; behind Him stood His Father, the "King of Kings", His aid pledged "to every crusader battling for His Cause". "Invisible battalions" were mustered "rank

upon rank, ready to pour forth reinforcements from on high". And so the little band of God's heroes assembled, ready to go forth and "emblazon on their shields the emblems of new victories", ready to implant the "earthly symbols of Bahá'u'lláh's unearthly sovereignty" in every country of the world, ready to lay the unassailable administrative foundation of His Christ-promised Kingdom of God upon earth.

In retrospect we see that Shoghi Effendi divided his great World Crusade into four phases. The first was from Ridván 1953 to Ridván 1954, the second from 1954-6 and the third from 1956-8. The end of the fourth phase he linked with the completion of the Temples scheduled to be constructed during the Ten Year Plan, all three of which were practically entirely completed by 1966. The Guardian did not have the period of these phases fixed in his mind at the inception of the Plan; they were a result of the natural growth of the forces released by the Crusade and the nature of the victories won, though there can be no doubt that it was his mind that directed these forces, first towards one set of goals, then towards another, throughout all the campaigns waged by his one army with its twelve battalions.

Three weeks after the opening of the Crusade Shoghi Effendi cabled the Bahá'í world that the "paramount issue challenging" the prosecutors of the Plan was the need for "immediate, determined, sustained, universal" dispersal throughout the unopened territories. Shoghi Effendi, never lacking in a fitting sense of protocol, including what one might call divine protocol, said the Chief Executors of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan, by virtue of the primacy conferred on them in His Tablets, enjoyed the prerogative of sending their pioneers to goals allotted to their sister communities in the East or the West. He then appealed for 130 "Bahá'í warriors" to arise and fill the gaps of the unconquered territories of the globe during the first year of the Crusade. Four months later, before the Asian Intercontinental Teaching Conference had even been held, he was able to inform the Bahá'í world that over 300 believers had volunteered to pioneer, 150 from North America, over 50 from Europe, over 40 from Africa and over 40 from Asia. In less than five months 28 territories and islands had been opened. Always emboldened by success Shoghi Effendi told the friends that as the total countries in the world opened to the Faith had now surpassed 150 they should endeavour to make it 200 by the end of the Holy Year. The Bahá'ís almost succeeded in meeting this date, the 200 mark being reached three weeks after the close of the Holy Year. It was in September 1953 that Shoghi Effendi announced the first names of those whom he inscribed on the "Roll of Honour" which he planned, when completed, to place under the floor at the entrance of Bahá'u'lláh's Holy Tomb in Bahjí, a befitting place for His heroic "Knights"; both the names and the territories opened were listed on it and until the end of his life the Guardian continued to make these periodic announcements of pioneers. By 1963 the Roll included representatives of all races, from all continents, of both sexes and many countries. Nine months after the opening of the Crusade the Guardian could announce that almost ninety territories had been opened, three-quarters of the total number, exclusive of those within the Soviet Orbit, and in his Ridván Message of 1954 he was able to give the glad-tidings that the "Knights of the Lord of Hosts in pursuance of their sublime mission for the spiritual conquest of the planet" had opened 100 virgin territories. In so doing the opening phase of the Crusade had been "triumphantly concluded...exceeding our fondest expectations."

It was during this same Riḍván period that the Hands of the Cause in different continents, pursuant to detailed instructions which the Guardian had given in previous communications, appointed for each continent an Auxiliary Board of nine members who would act as their “deputies, assistants and advisers”, and that five Continental Funds were also initiated at his instigation to facilitate the work of this unfolding institution.

Having seized 100 new prizes the army of Bahá'u'lláh was now engaged in depth. Shoghi Effendi, his mind more or less at rest about the progress on the front lines, immediately set about digging in. The second phase of the Plan, now opening, was primarily concerned with consolidation. In his 1954 Riḍván Message the Guardian listed 13 points which were to be concentrated upon during the coming two years: prosecution of the all-important teaching work; preservation of all prizes won; maintenance of all local Assemblies; multiplication of groups and centres — all to hasten the emergence of the 48 National Assemblies scheduled to be formed during the Crusade; purchase of Temple sites; initiation of special funds for purchase of the specified National Ḥaḏíratu'l-Quds; speedy fulfilment of various language tasks; acquisition of historic Bahá'í sites in Persia; measures for the erection of the Tehran and Frankfurt Temples; establishment of the Wilmette Temple dependency; inauguration of national endowments; incorporation of local Assemblies; establishment of the New Publishing Trusts. He directed his “fervent plea” to accomplish such monumental labours as these to the 108 people constituting the 12 National Assemblies of the Bahá'í world, out of the teeming millions of human beings on the planet!

The miracle was that such an appeal, to what in the eyes of the sophisticated could not but appear to be pitifully weak instruments, should have had such an effect. All over the Bahá'í world the leaders and the rank and file redoubled their efforts and sweeping victories were won. In 1955 Shoghi Effendi informed the believers in his annual Riḍván Message, which was his main instrument for conveying news of the progress of the Faith, that the Plan was “forging ahead, gaining momentum with every passing day, tearing down barriers in all climes and amidst divers peoples and races, widening irresistibly the scope of its beneficent operations, and revealing ever more compelling signs of its inherent strength as it marches towards the spiritual conquest of the entire planet.”

In spite of his constant encouragement, however, there were times when Shoghi Effendi felt compelled to address the commanders of his battalions — the twelve National Assemblies — in sombre terms. One very significant example of this is the message he cabled them in May 1955 in which he says he is “impelled” at “this grave hour” to ask them to ponder anew the “full implications” and “essential requirements” of their “stewardship” of the Cause and says he entreats them not to “allow any vicissitudes present or future dampen their ardour” or “weaken their resolution”. He appealed to them all, but particularly those who were “untrammelled by disabilities shackles imposed their less privileged brethren” to accelerate the tempo of their work and multiply their exploits, thus offsetting the “transient setbacks” a steadily advancing but not yet “fully emancipated” Faith might suffer.

During August of that same year the Bahá'í world was subjected to one of its periodic crises — a crisis which took a heavy toll of the strength and forces of the Guardian and was one more factor hastening his premature death at a relatively young age. In a cabled message which he said should be transmitted to all Hands and National Assemblies, Shoghi Effendi stated that what

was still the largest community of believers was experiencing a “violent recrudescence of persecutions afflicting intermittently for over century members residing Bahá’u’lláh’s native land”: the National Headquarters in Tehran had been seized and its dome publicly demolished by one of Persia’s leading divines — in the presence and with the cheerful assistance of a general of the Iranian Army — followed by the occupation of similar local institutions throughout the provinces; the Parliament of the country made a declaration outlawing the Faith; the press and radio viciously attacked and calumniated its aims and purposes, and the Bahá’ís were subjected to a series of atrocities throughout the whole land; the Holy House of the Báb was twice desecrated and severely damaged; other Holy Places were occupied or destroyed; the shops and homes of Bahá’ís were looted and razed; bodies were dug up in Bahá’í cemeteries and mutilated; Bahá’í adults and children were beaten and women abducted and forced to marry Muslims; a family of seven, the oldest 80, the youngest 19, were hacked to pieces with spades by a mob 2,000 strong, to the accompaniment of music from drums and trumpets. Such horrors aroused the violent indignation of the entire Bahá’í world and, at the instigation of the Guardian, over a thousand messages poured into Persia to the authorities from places members of its Parliament had never even heard of. The United Nations was appealed to, as well as Presidents and prominent figures throughout the civilized part of the world. The Director of the Division of Human Rights assured the American National Assembly (the official representative of other Bahá’í bodies now accredited to the United Nations as a non-governmental body under the name “International Bahá’í Community”) that a summary of the situation was being furnished to both the Commission of Human Rights and the Persian Government, whilst the Secretary-General of the United Nations appointed a commission of United Nations officers, headed by the High Commissioner for Refugees, which had instructions to make representations to the Persian Government and seek assurances from it that the rights of the Bahá’í minority in Persia would be protected. What was not yet a fully emancipated Faith had nevertheless, after over a century of struggle, developed some powerful teeth and it bit back most effectively on this occasion, aided by a \$40,000 publicity campaign in the United States. Shoghi Effendi, in addition to directing such vigorous counteraction to such barbarous attacks on a peaceable and defenceless community, initiated an “Aid the Persecuted” Fund, to which he himself immediately contributed about \$18,000 and which was widely and warmly supported by indignant Bahá’í communities already struggling in the middle of a period of heavy financial commitments.

It was during this second phase of the World Crusade that the Bahá’ís accomplished such feats as purchasing 10 of the 11 Temple sites enumerated as goals of their Ten Year Plan, at a cost of over \$100,000, of acquiring 30 out of the 51 national endowments at an estimated \$100,000, and of buying 43 of the 49 national Bahá’í headquarters, for over half-a-million dollars, in various continents of the globe — the latter being a feat which Shoghi Effendi cryptically and significantly stated was “amply compensating for the seizure and occupation of the National Administrative Headquarters of the Faith and the demolition of its dome by the military authorities in the Persian capital.”

There were many brilliant victories during these early years of the Crusade: the Síyáh-Chál, scene of the first intimation of Bahá’u’lláh’s Prophetic Mission, was purchased; His banner was planted in Islam’s very heart through the establishment of a Spiritual Assembly in Mecca; the particularly welcome news reached the Guardian that there were Bahá’ís — remnants of the former

communities in the Caucasus and Turkistan — in some of the Soviet states listed at the inception of the Crusade as unopened, but which might now be regarded as open, however faint and feeble the solitary candles burning there; 98 islands throughout the world now had Bahá'ís; work on the erection of the International Archives building at the World Centre was begun.

It was in a period of victories such as these that Shoghi Effendi took the momentous decision to erect not two but three Houses of Worship during the Ten Year Plan. The significance given in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá to these Maṣḥriqu'l-Adhikár (dawning places of the mention of God) is very great: they are erected, Shoghi Effendi said, for “the worship of the one true God, and to the glory of His Manifestation for this Day.” They are strongly linked to both the spiritual life of the individual and the communal life of the believers. The Guardian called the American Temple the “symbolic Edifice” of the Administration, “its mighty bulwark, the symbol of its strength and the sign of its future glory”, the “harbinger of an as yet unborn civilization”, the “symbol and harbinger of the World Order”. Such “Mother” Temples, he said, were the great silent teachers of the Faith and occupied such a key position in its progress that he stated the American House of Worship incarnated the soul of the American Bahá'í Community in the Western Hemisphere. Although the first Temple was built according to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own instructions in Ishqabad during his lifetime, the Guardian assured us that the first Temple erected in the New World was the holiest for all time because the Master Himself had laid its foundation stone during His visit to North America and it had been one of the undertakings dearest to His heart. By 1921, when Shoghi Effendi became Guardian, its foundations had been laid but the building 'Abdu'l-Bahá had so longed to see erected before His passing was only a hideous black waterproofed cylinder, resembling a gas tank, sticking up above the ground.

The Guardian conceived it as one of his major duties to complete this sacred edifice as soon as possible. It took him thirty-two years to accomplish this task which he called the greatest enterprise ever launched by the western followers of the Faith and the most signal victory won during the Formative Period of the Bahá'í Dispensation. One of his first acts was to send £19 to its Temple Fund in 1922, and in 1926 he says he is “joyously pledging 95 dollars per month as my humble share”; throughout the years he frequently contributed towards its erection. Shoghi Effendi encouraged the Bahá'ís to transform the great circular space, which in future would be surrounded by the steps of the Temple, into a usable hall for Conventions and other gatherings, pending the construction, at a later period, of an auditorium for such purposes outside an edifice solely to be used for devotional services; by 1923 the Convention was held in what became known from then on as Foundation Hall; to embellish its walls he sent as his gift beautiful Persian rugs from the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh; until 1928, however, no progress was made in the erection of the Temple. To the Convention held that year he sent a strongly worded message pleading with the American believers to resume the construction of their great Temple and this influenced them to initiate what became known as the “Plan of Unified Action”, designed to raise money for the extremely costly work of the superstructure. In spite of this by 1929 the required sum had not been obtained and Shoghi Effendi, not himself at that time in a position to send a large amount, decided to sell the most precious thing the Faith possessed in the Holy Land. He cabled the Convention: “Am sacrificing the most valuable ornament Bahá'u'lláh's Shrine in order consecrate and reinforce collective endeavours American believers speedily to consummate plan unified action appeal for unprecedented self-sacrifice.” It was

typical of him that he first cabled the Persian donor of this priceless object: "Temple work America progressing three quarters sum required first storey actually subscribed. Strongly feel desirability sale silk carpet you donated. Wire views promptly regarding market and price. Appreciate your consent." Only when he received a warm answer and advice to sell in New York did he inform America of his decision. So deeply touched were the Bahá'ís by this offering of their Guardian that they raised almost \$300,000 before the Convention rose. Fearing that heavy debts might be incurred if the sum for the entire future work was not pledged in advance, Shoghi Effendi would not permit contracts to be signed. However, by the 1930 Convention the sum was pledged, the Guardian consented — and the Bahá'ís wanted to buy the precious carpet themselves, which in the meantime had reached the United States. His cabled replies were typical in every way: "Approve proceed construction entire Temple without external decorations provided believers are determined to consummate their sacrifice by adding decorations eventually. Feel we all should uphold design in its entirety as approved 'Abdu'l-Bahá." "Consecrated carpet need neither be sold nor returned. Dedicated as permanent ornament first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of West." The Convention, overwhelmed, cabled its "deep gratitude for matchless gift". The enthusiasm Shoghi Effendi engendered by such messages and acts as these was not produced by policy on his part, but rather by the deep unselfconscious instinct of a born leader with a singularly pure motive and heart.

By the time of the 1931 Convention Shoghi Effendi was able to cable: "Greatest Holy Leaf joins me...expression our heartfelt congratulations boundless joy profound gratitude practical completion superstructure glorious edifice..." In 1933 he, again associating the sister of 'Abdu'l-Bahá with this work, cabled: "beseech entire body American believers by love they bear departed Greatest Holy Leaf not allow slightest interruption progress Temple work so near her heart dim splendours their past achievements. Beg them ponder extreme urgency my entreaty." This message, sent in January, was followed in October by another cable: "Appeal hard pressed American believers heed this my last passionate entreaty not suffer slightest interruption Temple contributions dim magnificence their epoch-making enterprise...promise one years respite upon successful conclusion first stage ornamentation our glorious Temple." No wonder he put "out". He had struggled with the American Bahá'ís to erect this building "during" what he himself described as "one of the severest depressions experienced by the people of the United States in this century"; he had insisted, in the midst of this struggle, that only "unreserved" supporters of the Faith could contribute towards its construction, only those who were "fully conscious" of and "unreservedly submissive" to the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh; he had rallied his fellow-Bahá'ís, few in number, for the most part poor, living from day to day in the shadow of economic disaster, by assuring them that such a significant enterprise should be supported "not by the munificence of a few but by the joint contributions of the entire mass of the convinced followers of the Faith", pointing out that the spiritual power destined to radiate from the Temple would depend to a large extent on the "range and variety of the contributing believers, as well as upon the nature and degree of self-abnegation which their unsolicited offerings" would entail. He encouraged, comforted and drove them to victory. Proudly he reminded them that no one else had what they had — the dual blessing of an efficiently functioning Administrative Order and a Temple!

Year after year the messages went out and the fabulous Temple went up, until, at the second and last great Centenary to be celebrated during Shoghi Effendi's lifetime, I was able to read

those words: "On behalf of the Guardian of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, I have the great honour of dedicating this first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the Western World to public worship...I greet and welcome you on behalf of the Guardian of our Faith within these walls..."

Such a brief history of a work so dear to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's and Shoghi Effendi's hearts conveys an idea of the importance of these Temples in the life of Bahá'í communities. It is small wonder then that at the inception of the Crusade the Guardian turned his attention to the problem of erecting the first Bahá'í Temple in Bahá'u'lláh's native land. In 1942 Shoghi Effendi announced that the Persian Bahá'ís had purchased a three-and-a-half-million square metre area near Tehran as the site of their future Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. They had been stimulated to do this by the consistent efforts of the American Bahá'ís in erecting their own Temple — much as the American Bahá'ís had been stimulated in 1903 to undertake a Temple of their own because the oriental Bahá'ís were building one in Asia, in Ishqabad. The Guardian attached great importance to this historic and sacred Temple. It is significant for us to remember that he rejected all of the many designs submitted to him, in response to his own invitation, because he found them far too extreme, too much the reflection of the current glass of fashion, undignified and unsuitable for the purposes of a Faith which will give birth to a World Order and civilization during a thousand-year Dispensation. He decided on a conservative concept, worked out with his personal approval in Haifa, which he stated, "incorporates a dome reminiscent of that of the Báb's Holy Sepulchre". Already the enthusiastic Persian believers had started a five year plan to raise twelve million tumans for its construction and the Guardian himself had had its design unveiled at the meeting in Bahjí on the first day of Ridván,²⁸⁴. It was a project to which Shoghi Effendi attached the greatest importance and the outlawing of all Bahá'í activity in Persia in 1955 came as a severe blow to him for he realized that the situation there, far from having improved in the quarter of a century of his ministry, had again deteriorated to such a point that there was little hope of such a building being erected before the end of the Ten Year Plan. In spite of the fact that the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of Europe — the second Temple of the Plan — could still be built, he immediately struck back at the enemies of the Faith through a cable sent in November 1955: "Historic decision arrived at raise Mother Temple Africa in City Kampala situated its heart and constituting supreme consolation masses oppressed valiant brethren cradle Faith. Every continent globe except Australasia will thereby pride itself on derive direct spiritual benefit its own Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. Befitting recognition will moreover have been accorded marvelous expansion Faith amazing multiplication its administrative institutions throughout continent..." Thus the African believers received what he characterized as "the stupendous, the momentous and unique project of the construction of Africa's Mother Temple."

Whereas Tehran was to have the third great Temple of the Bahá'í world and Germany the fourth, in reality the European one became third in priority and Africa the fourth. The design for the African Temple was made under Shoghi Effendi's supervision in Haifa and met with his full approval. The situation as regards the German one was different: he himself had chosen a design and sent it to the National Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Germany and Austria, but there was already so much strong church-aroused opposition to the erection of a Bahá'í House of Worship that the National Assembly had informed him they felt the conservative nature of the design he had chosen would, in a land favouring at the moment extremely modern-style

buildings, complicate its erection, as a building permit might be refused on this pretext. Shoghi Effendi therefore permitted them to hold a competition and of the designs sent him he favoured the one which was later built.

There is no doubt in my mind that if Shoghi Effendi had asked the opinion of the Bahá'ís they would certainly have advised avoiding Germany; when he announced in 1953 that the European Temple would be built there it was only eight years since the terrible war had ended and with the exception of a few countries, where there were practically no believers at all, the Bahá'ís all over the world lived in lands which had suffered through or fought against Germany during the war. Unafraid, unhampered by worldly considerations, the Guardian pursued the spiritual destiny of the world-wide communion of the Greatest Name entrusted to his care. The standards of the world were never his index, only the standards enshrined in the teachings. Ever mindful of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to that country and the love He had for that community, Shoghi Effendi had fostered its unfoldment from the very first years of his own ministry; it was one of the communities he included in the first, heart-broken, hesitant letters he sent out to the miniature Bahá'í world of those days in 182. Writing of it in 1926 he had referred to, "The growing number of German Bahá'í Centres and adherents, the glorious words spoken by our Beloved regarding their destiny and dominant part in the future awakening of Europe..." and in 1927, in letters to Martha Root, he told her "Germany should become the pivotal centre of your activities as I attach great importance to the varied and rich opportunities offered by that awakening country..." "I feel you should devote more attention to Germany for I fully share with you the hopes you entertain for its future contribution to the spiritual regeneration of Europe." In 1947 he had referred to the "astounding resurgence" of the "war-devastated Community of Central Europe" and stated that within Germany's frontiers was to be found "the largest community of the adherents of the Faith on that continent — a community destined, as prophesied by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, to play a major role in the spiritual awakening and ultimate conversion of the European peoples and races to His Father's Faith." Frankfurt was in the heart of Germany, Germany was in the heart of Europe. It was the logical place for the European Temple.

Still thoroughly aroused by the persecution of the main body of the faithful who resided in Bahá'u'lláh's native land, Shoghi Effendi quietly set a new plan in motion. He had chosen a third Temple design and instructed the National Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand to make inquiries, confidentially, as to how much such a building would cost if erected in Sydney. When he received an estimate which he felt would not add too heavily to the financial burden the Crusade was already carrying, he made his thrilling announcement, in his Ridván Message of 1957, of the launching of an "ambitious three-fold enterprise, designed to compensate for the disabilities suffered by the sorely-tried Community of the followers of His Faith in the land of His birth, aiming at the erection, in localities as far apart as Frankfurt, Sydney and Kampala, of the Mother Temples of the European, the Australian and African continents, at a cost of approximately one million dollars, complementing the Temples already constructed in the Asiatic and American continents." This announcement meant that the loss to the Persian believers of their first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár would be compensated for by the erection in the Pacific of what the Guardian called "The Mother Temple of the Antipodes, and indeed of the whole Pacific area" and the construction in the heart of the African Continent of another House of

Worship which he said was “destined to enormously influence the onward march of the Cause of God the world over, to consolidate to a marked degree the rising institutions of a divinely appointed Order and noise abroad its fame in every continent of the globe.” The Guardian also announced in this Riḍván Message that the designs for all three of these “monumental edifices, each designed to serve as a house for the indwelling Spirit of God and a tabernacle for the glorification of His appointed Messenger in this day” would be shown to “the assembled delegates at the thirteen historic Bahá’í National Conventions being held for the first time during this year’s Riḍván Festival.”

It was during this second phase of the World Crusade that the American National Assembly purchased the land for its first Temple dependency. The Guardian had advised that Assembly that he did not consider a library — the first proposal — sufficiently demonstrative of the purpose and significance of the institution of the Maṣḥriqu’l-Adhkár in Bahá’í society and it was therefore decided to build a Home for the Aged. One of his last letters was to urge that Assembly to commence work on the Home, as it would impress on the public that one of the chief functions of our Faith is to serve humanity, regardless of creed, race or denomination, and be sure to attract attention and publicity.

