

Chapter 16

Rúhíyyih Rabbani

Original English



Chapter 16

A Unique Ministry

Well is it with him that seeketh the shelter of his shade that shadoweth all mankind.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The Guardian had fused in the alembic of his creative mind all the elements of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh into one great indivisible whole; he had created an organized community of His followers which was the receptacle of His teachings, His laws and His Administrative Order; the teachings of the twin Manifestations of God and the Perfect Exemplar had been woven into a shining cloak that would clothe and protect man for a thousand years, a cloak on which the fingers of Shoghi Effendi had picked out the patterns, knitted the seams, fashioned the brilliant protective clasps of his interpretations of the Sacred Texts, never to be sundered, never to be torn away until that day when a new Law-giver comes to the world and once again wraps His creature man in yet another divine garment.

The Master's grandson had been sublimed by the forces released in His Testament into the Guardian of the Faith; belonging to the sovereign caste of his divine Forefathers he was himself a sovereign. To the primacy conferred by ties of consanguinity had been added the powers of infallible guidance with which the operation of God's Covenant had invested him. Shoghi Effendi's divine and indefeasible right to assume the helm of the Cause of God had been fully vindicated through thirty-six years of unremitting, heart-breaking toil. It would be hard indeed to find a comparable figure in history who, in a little over a third of a century, set so many different operations in motion, who found the time to devote his attention to minute details on one hand and on the other to cover the range of an entire planet with his plans, his instructions, his guidance and his leadership. He had laid the foundations of that future society Bahá'u'lláh had fathered upon the mind of the Master, and which He in turn had gestated to a point of perfection, passing it upon His death into the safe hands of His successor.

Patiently, as a master jeweller works at his designs, picking out from his stock of gems some kingly stone, setting it amidst smaller but equally precious ones, so would Shoghi Effendi choose a theme from the Teachings, pluck it out, study it, polish its facets and set it amidst his brilliant commentaries, where it would flash and catch our eye as never before when it had lain buried beneath a heap of other jewels. It would be no exaggeration to say that we Bahá'ís now live in a room entirely surrounded by these glorious, blazing motifs Shoghi Effendi created. It is as if he



ORIGINAL

had caught the sunlight of this Revelation in a prism and enabled us to appreciate the number of colours and rays that make up the blinding light of Bahá'u'lláh's words.

Things we knew all our lives suddenly, startlingly, took on a new and added significance. We were challenged, rebuked, stimulated. We found ourselves arising to serve, to pioneer, to sacrifice. We grew under his aegis and the Faith grew with us into something vastly different from what had existed before. Let us take a few of these master jewels, these themes Shoghi Effendi set before us in such a brilliant manner. One day Bahá'u'lláh rested on Mt Carmel. He pointed out a spot to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and said buy this land and bring the body of the Báb and inter Him here. The Master brought the Precious Trust and placed it in the heart of the mountain and covered it with the building he erected with so many tears. The Guardian completed the sacred Edifice, and now the glorious Shrine of the Forerunner of the Faith rests in queenly splendour on Mt Carmel, the cynosure of all eyes.

The Master sent a handful of precious Tablets, written during dark and dangerous days, to America after the war and a pleasant ceremony was held called the "unveiling of the Divine Plan" at which pairs of children and young people (myself included) pulled strings and one of the Tablets duly appeared on the draped background of the platform. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had sent a king's ransom to the North American believers, who rejoiced but did not understand. Shoghi Effendi, never losing sight of this gleaming hoard that had been deposited on the other side of the world, set about working his way to it. It took him almost two decades, but at last, having painfully and feverishly erected the machinery of the Administrative Order, he was in a position to take up those jewels and set them. The North was conquered, the South was conquered, the East and the West alike began to glow and blaze in all their parts with the light of new Bahá'í centres and Assemblies, more than 4,200 throughout the world. Into the various territories of the globe — 251 in number — which Shoghi Effendi had ensured should either be awakened or reanimated by the breezes of the Divine Plan, he had spilled the river of the translations of the literature of the Faith in 230 languages. For twenty years, since he first set in motion the power 'Abdu'l-Bahá had concealed in those Tablets, Shoghi Effendi never ceased to wave forward an army of pioneers, battalion after battalion marching forth to conquer at his bidding the whole planet and implant, wherever it conquered, the Banner of Bahá'u'lláh.

Grasping the hidden import of Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet of Carmel the Guardian entombed the Greatest Holy Leaf near the Shrine of the Báb, brought her mother and brother to rest beside her, designated this spot as the heart of a world-wide administration, drew an arc above it on the mountain side which he associated with Bahá'u'lláh's words "*the seat of God's Throne*", built the first of the great edifices that will rise about that arc, and in innumerable passages pointed out the nature of the progress that must pour out from this great spiritual hub to all the peoples and nations of the world, a progress based on the teachings of a Faith that is "essentially supernatural, supranational, entirely non-political, non-partisan, and diametrically opposed to any policy or school of thought that seeks to exalt any particular race, class or nation"; a Faith whose "followers view mankind as one entity, and profoundly attached to its vital interests, will not hesitate to subordinate every particular interest, be it personal, regional or national, to the over-riding interests of the generality of mankind, knowing full well that in a world of interdependent peoples and nations the advantage of the part is best to be reached by the advantage of the whole"; a Faith the embryo of which, Shoghi Effendi explained, had developed

during the Heroic Age, whose child, the social Order contained in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, would grow during the Formative Age, whose adolescence would witness the establishment of the World Order, and whose maturity in the distant reaches of the Golden Age would flower in a world civilization, a global civilization without precedent, which would mark “the furthestmost limits in the organization of human society”, which would never decline, in which mankind would continue to progress indefinitely and ascend to ever greater heights of spiritual power.

He divided the events that had taken place, and were taking place in the Cause of God, into sections, relating each to the whole evolution of the Faith, creating a map in relief that enabled us to see at a glance where our present labours fitted in, how much the achievement of an immediate objective would pave the way for the next inevitable step we must take in our service to Bahá'u'lláh's Cause. The definitions and divisions he employed were not arbitrary, but implicit in the teachings and in the course of events transpiring within the Faith. The Prophetic Cycle — which began with Adam and culminated with Muḥammad — in the school of whose Prophets man had been educated and prepared for the age of his maturity, had given way to the Cycle of Fulfilment, inaugurated by Bahá'u'lláh. The unity of the planet, which science had made possible, would enable, nay, oblige man to create a new society in which a world at peace could devote itself exclusively to the material and spiritual unfoldment of man. Because of the very greatness of this transformation Bahá'u'lláh's shadow would be cast over the planet for five thousand centuries, the first ten of which would be governed by the laws, ordinances, teachings and principles He had laid-down.

This thousand-year-long Dispensation Shoghi Effendi divided into great Ages. The first, commencing with the declaration of the Báb and ending with the ascension of the Master, lasted seventy-seven years and was styled by the Guardian the Apostolic or Heroic Age of the Faith because of the nature of the events that transpired within it and the blood-bath that had characterized its inception and swept away 20,000 souls, including the Báb Himself. This Age was divided into three epochs by the Guardian, associated with the Ministry of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, respectively. The second Age, which Shoghi Effendi called the Formative Age, the Age of Transition, the Iron Age of the Faith, was that period during which its Administrative Order — the very hallmark of this Age — must evolve, reach perfection and effloresce into the establishment of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. The first epoch of this Age spanned the period from the ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1921 until the centenary of the inception of the Faith in 1944 and the events immediately following upon it, and the second epoch was consummated by the termination of the World Crusade in 1963, coinciding with the hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of Bahá'u'lláh. Although the Guardian never stated exactly how many epochs would characterize this Formative Age, he implied that others, equally vital, equally thrilling, would take place as the Faith steadily advanced towards what he called its Golden Age, which, on more than one occasion, he intimated would probably arise in the later centuries of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh.

Shoghi Effendi said the Cause of God would pass from obscurity and persecution into the light of recognition as a world religion; it would achieve full emancipation from the shackles of the past, become a state religion and eventually the Bahá'í state itself would emerge, a new and unique creation in the world's religious history. When the Formative Age passed and man entered the Golden Age, he would have entered that Age foretold in the Bible in Habakkuk, 2:14:

“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

The historic implementation of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Divine Plan by Shoghi Effendi was likewise divided into epochs by him and these in turn subdivided into specific phases, a device that enabled the Bahá’ís to follow closely the course of their own activities and to concentrate on specific goals. The first epoch of the Divine Plan passed through three phases, the first Seven Year Plan, the second Seven Year Plan and the Ten Year Teaching and Consolidation Plan which we came to term the World Crusade. This Crusade itself Shoghi Effendi divided into a series of phases: the first of these lasted one year, 1953-4; during it, Shoghi Effendi said, the vital objective of the Plan had been virtually attained through the addition of no less than 100 new countries enlisted under the Banner of Bahá’u’lláh; the second phase, from 1954 to 1956, was marked by a unique measure of consolidation as well as expansion, which not only paved the way for the election of the forty-eight new national bodies which was scheduled to take place before the Plan was consummated, but was characterized by unprecedented expenditures through the purchase of National Ḥaḏíratu’l-Quds and Temple sites as well as the formation of Bahá’í Publishing Trusts; “the third and what promises to be the most brilliant phase of a world spiritual Crusade” he wrote, would take place between 1956 and 1958, and was to be distinguished by an unparalleled multiplication of Bahá’í centres throughout the entire world as well as the formation of sixteen new National Assemblies. Before he passed away the Guardian indicated that the fourth phase of his mighty Plan, which would stretch from 1958 to 1963, must be distinguished not only by an unprecedented increase in the number of believers and centres all over the world but by progress in the erection of the three Temples which now formed part of the goals of the Ten Year Plan.

But for us, the end of this great leadership, that had given us such concepts as these, that had fulfilled in so brilliant a manner the work begun by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, that had so worthily implemented not only His own instructions but the supreme guidance of the Manifestation of God Himself, was at hand. No one could know, no one could bear to know, that when the Bahá’í world received the message dated October 1957, it would be the last message of Shoghi Effendi. It was a happy and victorious message, full of hope, full of new plans, a last priceless gift from the man who as he wrote it was in reality laying down his pen and turning away his face from the world and its sorrows for all time. Soon, Shoghi Effendi informed us, the Global Spiritual Crusade would reach its midway point. that point was to be marked by the convocation of a series of five Intercontinental Conferences to be held in January, March, May, July and September of 1958, in Africa, the Antipodes, America, Europe and Asia, respectively. Following a pattern similar to the one he employed at the time of the convocation of the first four Intercontinental Conferences held during the Holy Year at the inception of the Crusade, Shoghi Effendi specified the five bodies under whose auspices these great gatherings would be held and whose chairmen were to act as their convenors. The Central and East African Regional Assembly was made responsible for the First Conference (surely it is not by chance that Africa, twice in a period of five years, led the way in the series by holding the first Conference?); the National Assembly of Australia for the second; the National Assembly of the United States for the third; the National Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Germany and Austria for the fourth; and the Regional Assembly of South East Asia the final one. “They are to be convened”, Shoghi Effendi wrote, “...for the five-fold purpose of offering humble thanksgiving to the Divine Author of our Faith, Who has graciously enabled His

followers, during a period of deepening anxiety and amidst the confusion and uncertainties of a critical phase in the fortunes of mankind, to prosecute uninterruptedly the Ten Year Plan formulated for the execution of the Grand Design conceived by 'Abdu'l-Bahá; of reviewing and celebrating the series of signal victories won so rapidly in the course of each of the campaigns of this world-encircling Crusade; of deliberating on ways and means that will ensure its triumphant consummation; and of lending simultaneously a powerful impetus, the world over, to the vital process of individual conversion — the pre-eminent purpose underlying the Plan in all its ramifications — and to the construction and completion of the three Mother Temples to be built in the European, the African, and Australian continents."

Shoghi Effendi informed us that, "The phenomenal advances made since the inception of this globe-girdling Crusade, in the brief space of less than five years, eclipse...in both the number and quality of the feats achieved by its prosecutors, any previous collective enterprise undertaken... since the close of...the Heroic Age..." With evident joy, he recapitulated these feats and enumerated the victories won, characterizing them as "so marvellous a progress, embracing so vast a field, achieved in so short a time, by so small a band of heroic souls".

It was in this message that the Guardian appointed his last contingent of Hands of the Cause of God — eight more individuals to join this "august institution" — thus raising the total number of "high-ranking officers of a fast evolving World Administrative Order" to twenty-seven, an act which, in view of their recent assumption "of their sacred responsibility as protectors of the Faith", called for the formation of another Auxiliary Board, equal to the previous one in number, which would be "charged with the specific duty of watching over the security of the Faith". The five Hands who had been chosen by Shoghi Effendi to work at the World Centre were to attend these five Intercontinental Conferences as his special representatives. Two of them would place in the foundations of the Mother Temples being built in Kampala and Sydney "a portion of the blessed earth from the inmost Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh"; another portion of that sacred soil would be delivered in Frankfurt to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, pending the time when it could be placed in the foundations of the first European Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. A reproduction of the portrait of Bahá'u'lláh and a lock of His precious hair would not only be shown to the attendants at the European, Australian and African Conferences, but deposited with the national bodies in whose areas these great Houses of Worship were being erected, as a permanent and loving gift of their Guardian. The Guardian would send with the Hand who was to attend the Conference in Asia another reproduction of the portrait of Bahá'u'lláh for the assembled believers to view, but this was to be brought back for safe keeping to the Holy Land. At the Conference to be convened in Chicago Shoghi Effendi's representative would exhibit to the believers the portraits of Bahá'u'lláh and the Bab which he had previously entrusted to the care of the American National Assembly. These were the final gestures of love Shoghi Effendi was able to shower on the believers, that host of the faithful over whom he had watched, who had followed him so unfailingly, for so many history-making years.

When thousands of Bahá'ís from innumerable lands gathered during 1958, in fulfilment of Shoghi Effendi's plan and wish, at these five great Intercontinental Conferences, it was not only with awe that they gazed on the sacred portrait of the Founder of their Faith, but with grief-filled hearts and tear-filled eyes. Why had He, before Whose glory they bowed themselves, Whose teachings, they had espoused, into the depths of Whose deep and all-knowing eyes they were

now gazing, seen fit to remove His scion from their midst? They not only cried out for their Guardian, they asked where was the Guardianship itself? It was the supreme test of faith; God had given, and God had taken back, and *"He doth what He pleaseth. He chooseth; and none may question His choice."* When the Báb was martyred Bahá'u'lláh had remained; when Bahá'u'lláh ascended 'Abdu'l-Bahá had remained; when 'Abdu'l-Bahá passed away Shoghi Effendi had remained. But now it was as if a procession of Kings — albeit each different, vastly different in station from the other — had gone into a room of their own and closed the door. We Bahá'ís looked at the door and kept asking, like children whose parents have been killed in an earthquake and disappeared, why had it been closed?

Perhaps at no point in its history will the deepness of the root of belief that binds the Bahá'ís to their religion be again laid as bare as it was in the year after the passing of Shoghi Effendi. They bowed their heads in the agony of the grief that swept them, but they held. Had not the Guardian provided these five great rallying points at which the believers could come together in such large numbers, console each other and receive guidance from the Hands of the Cause who had arisen to complete the Guardian's Plan and ensure the election of the divinely guided Universal House of Justice, it is hard to imagine how greatly affected the body of the Faith might have been by the sudden and totally unexpected death of its beloved Head. The fact that the friends were actively engaged in a Plan, the fact that the attention of the Bahá'í world was now focused on its midway point, the fact that at these Conferences five specific themes were to be given special attention, and the fact that they repeatedly received messages of love, faith and encouragement from the Hands of the Cause — all exerted a binding and unifying influence upon the Bahá'ís of the world. The very calamity itself brought to their hearts, cleansed by the rushing freshets of their grief, a new fortitude and called forth a deeper love. They were not going to fail Shoghi Effendi. He had told them to consider ways and means of ensuring the triumphal conclusion of the Plan — very well, they would do so, they would see it crowned befittingly in 1963 with a success that would have thrilled his heart and brought from his pen one of those rushes of praise and gratitude so dearly prized by them.

No testimony to the truth and the strength of the Cause could have been greater than the triumphal conclusion of the Guardian's World Crusade which the believers achieved. It had been a hard, an overwhelming task to begin with. That the Bahá'ís achieved it, that for over five years they worked and sacrificed to a greater degree than ever before in their history without his leadership, without those appeals, those reports, those marvellous word-pictures he painted for them in his messages, without the knowledge that he was there at the helm, their so dearly-loved captain steering them to victory and safety, is little short of a miracle and testifies not only to how well he builded, but to those words of the Master: *"there is a mysterious power in the Cause, far, far above the ken of men and angels."*

Life and death are so closely allied that they are the two halves of one heartbeat and yet death never seems very real to us in the normal course of events — who therefore awaited Shoghi Effendi's death! He had been in very good health that last summer, better than for a long time, a fact that he not only mentioned himself but which his doctor commented upon at the time he examined him some weeks prior to his passing. No one dreamed that the time clock inside that heart was reaching the end of its allotted span. Many times people have asked me if I did not notice indications that the end was near. My answer is a hesitant no. If a terrible storm comes

suddenly into the midst of a perfect day one can later imagine one saw straws floating by on the wind and pretend they had been portents. I do remember a very few things that might have been significant, but certainly they meant nothing to me at the time. I could never have survived the slightest foreknowledge of the Guardian's death, and only survived it in the end because I could not abandon him and his precious work, which had killed him long before any one believed his life would end.

One of the goals of the Ten Year Plan associated with the World Centre, a goal the Guardian had allotted to himself, was what he termed the "codification of the laws and ordinances of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, the Mother Book of the Bahá'í Revelation." Any work involving a book of this magnitude, which Shoghi Effendi had stated was, together with the *Will and Testament* of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "the chief depository wherein are enshrined those priceless elements of that Divine Civilization, the establishment of which is the primary mission of the Bahá'í Faith", would certainly be unsuitable for any one but the Head of the Faith to undertake. Shoghi Effendi worked on this for about three weeks or so in the spring of 1957 prior to his departure from Haifa. As I often sat in the room with him while he worked, reading out loud and making notes, I realized from what he told me that he was not planning at that time a legal codification of the provisions in the Aqdas but rather a compilation, placing subject with subject, which would enable the Bahá'ís to comprehend the nature of the laws and ordinances given by Bahá'u'lláh to His followers. It was at this time that Shoghi Effendi remarked more than once that he did not feel he could ever finish this task he had undertaken. I attached no particular importance to this, as he sometimes fretted under the terrible load of his ever-increasing work, and attributed it to his great fatigue at the end of the long, exhausting, unbroken stretch of labour he had passed through during his months at home. After his death I remembered and wondered.

That last summer he went back to visit many of his favourite scenes in the mountains and I wondered about this too, when the blow fell, but at the time I was only happy to see him happy, forgetting, for a few fleeting moments, the burdens and sorrows of his life.

Before the time came to return to Haifa in November Shoghi Effendi went to London to purchase a few more things for the furnishing of the now completed Archives building and in anticipation of transferring after his arrival all the precious historical materials he had exhibited and stored in the six rooms in which they had previously been housed. While we were there the great epidemic of Asiatic influenza was sweeping Europe and we both fell ill with it. We had an excellent physician, whom the Guardian liked and trusted, and the attack was not a particularly severe one, though he did have quite high fever for a few days. The doctor insisted that Shoghi Effendi should not arrange to leave London until he had been without any abnormal temperature for a week and to this he consented. In spite of his fever he read a great deal in bed and attended to his mail and cables. His illness at no time incapacitated him in any way, though it left him weak and with almost no appetite. When one week had passed from the time he first felt the effects of his influenza he was busy working on his last beautiful map, the one he called "the half-way point of the Ten Year Crusade". He had requested me to have a large table put in his room on which he could spread his map and for hours he worked at it, checking with me various figures and data against the many notes he kept showing the status of the Crusade all over the world. When I remonstrated with him about standing for so many hours to do this work when he was still so exhausted and begged him to wait a few days until he was feeling stronger,

he said "No, I must finish it, it is worrying me. There is nothing left to do but check it. I have one or two names to add that I have found in this mail, and I will finish it today." While he was working he repeated once again the words I had so often heard him say during the last years of his life: "This work is killing me! How can I go on with this? I shall have to stop it. It is too much. Look at the number of places I have to write down. Look how exact I have to be!" He was tired when it was finally done and went back to his bed where he sat and read reports. So vast was the amount of material reaching him all the time from various parts of the Bahá'í world that if he did not keep abreast of it through reading many hours every day he risked never being able to catch up with it again.

But the strains and pressures of his life had been too many and early in the morning of 4 November he suffered a coronary thrombosis. Death must have come to him so gently and so suddenly that he died without even knowing he was ascending to another realm. When I went to his room in the morning to ask him how he was I did not recognize that he was dead. His eyes were half-open with no look of pain, alarm or surprise in them. He lay as if he had wakened up and was quietly thinking about something in a relaxed and comfortable position. How terribly he had suffered when he suddenly learned of the death of his grandfather! Now he had been called softly and quickly away to join Him. The suffering and shock were this time to be the portion of someone else.

It seemed to me, in the depths of my agony that black and terrible day, that I could not do to any Bahá'í what had been done to me. How could I cable the believers their Guardian had ascended? What of the old and the ill and the weak to whom this news would come as an insupportable blow, having the same effect on them which the news of the beloved Master's death had produced on Shoghi Effendi and on my own mother? It was because of this that I immediately cabled the members of the International Bahá'í Council in Haifa: "Beloved Guardian desperately ill Asiatic flu tell Leroy inform all National Assemblies inform believers supplicate prayers divine protection Faith." I knew that a few hours later I would have to follow this by a second cable telling them the full truth but I felt impelled to send this one first, in the hope of cushioning the terrible blow. Later in the day I again cabled Haifa giving the details of his death to be relayed from there to all National Assemblies throughout the world. Such news, I felt, should first come from the World Centre of the Faith:

Shoghi Effendi beloved of all hearts sacred trust given believers by Master passed away sudden heart attack in sleep following Asiatic flu. Urge believers remain steadfast cling institution Hands lovingly reared recently reinforced emphasized by beloved Guardian. Only oneness heart oneness purpose can befittingly testify loyalty all National Assemblies believers departed Guardian who sacrificed self utterly for service Faith.

Rúhíyyih

The following day, on 5 November, another cable was sent to all National Assemblies, this time direct from London:

Beloved all hearts precious Guardian Cause God passed peacefully away yesterday after Asiatic flu. Appeal Hands National Assemblies Auxiliary Boards shelter believers assist meet heart-rending supreme test. Funeral our beloved Guardian Saturday London Hands Assembly Board

members invited attend any press release should state meeting Hands shortly Haifa will make announcement to Bahá'í world regarding future plans. Urge hold memorial meetings Saturday.

Rúhíyyih

The sea of grief this news released upon the believers in all parts of the world was similar to that which had flooded the hearts of the Bahá'ís thirty-six years earlier when they lost their Master in circumstances equally sudden and devastating. The problems attending this event were equally serious. In accordance with the laws of the Aqdas — of which Shoghi Effendi had himself been the appointed defender — burial must take place not more than one hour's journey from the place of death. I knew there could be no question of breaking this law and taking his remains back to the Holy Land. With infinite pains arrangements were made to inter the beloved of our hearts in a cemetery near London, a peaceful and beautiful spot, surrounded by trees and filled with the songs of many birds. The funeral was set for 142. 30 A.M. on Saturday, 9 November. London became the lodestone of the entire Bahá'í world. Messages, telephone calls and believers began to pour into the National Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds, each bringing a fresh wave of grief and love to add to the surging sea of feeling that focused itself on that peaceful figure, still, and at last removed from all responsibility.

The first to rally round me in response to the shattering news I had conveyed to them were my compeers, the Hands of the Faith. I had turned to Hasan Balyuzi, who lived in London, immediately after the first terrible events following my entry into Shoghi Effendi's room were over. He joined me shortly and John Ferraby, who also lived there, came a little later. That night Ugo Giachery arrived from Rome and the next day Milly Collins flew from Haifa to be at my side, as she had so often been, in my hours of deepest need. Adelbert Mühlischlegel, a Hand who was fortunately also a physician, following a telephone conversation in which I had asked him if he would come and wash the sacred remains of the Guardian, had arrived from Germany with Hermann Grossmann. These fellow-Hands then shared the load with me and assured that everything that could possibly be done to show the respect, the gratitude and the love that so overwhelmed every sincere believer at that moment would be befittingly accomplished. As the days passed more and more Hands arrived from all the continents, an infinite comfort to me, to each other and to the believers. On the eve of the funeral of Shoghi Effendi we Hands met to choose selections for the service, the first of many meetings that were to follow as the years of Shoghi Effendi's Crusade rolled by in triumph after triumph, to be finally crowned with the victory that he had hoped for and planned.

At last the day of final farewell arrived and hundreds of believers followed the coffin of the Guardian in a funeral cortège of over sixty automobiles that wended its way towards the Great Northern London Cemetery. On their arrival they found a great crowd of believers already waiting there, practically the entire British Community having gathered in London to pay homage to the sacred Guardian whose remains, for some mysterious reason, God had chosen to entrust to the soil of their native land. As first the floral hearse piled high with glowing flowers and then the hearse containing the coffin of Shoghi Effendi drew up, the multitude stood in a stricken silence, heads bowed and many faces streaming with tears. The funeral service took place in the simple and dignified non-denominational chapel of the cemetery which was too

small to hold all the believers within its walls. The description I wrote, which was published in *The Passing of Shoghi Effendi* some months later, best describes what then took place: "The Great Guardian was carried in and laid on the soft green covering of the catafalque. The Chapel was crowded to the doors, and many had to remain outside. All stood while the wonderful prayer, ordained by Bahá'u'lláh for the dead, was chanted in Arabic. Six other prayers and excerpts from the Teachings were then read by friends with beautiful voices, some in English, some in Persian, and representative of Bahá'ís from Europe, Africa, America, Asia — Negro, Jew and Aryan.

"In solemn file the friends followed the casket as it was borne out, placed in the hearse again, and slowly driven the few hundred yards to the graveside."

"As all stood, silently waiting for the coffin to be lowered into the grave, Rúhíyyih Khánum felt the agony of the hearts around her penetrate into her own great grief. He was their Guardian. He was going forever from their eyes, suddenly snatched from them by the immutable decree of God, Whose Will no man dare question. They had not seen him, had not been able to draw near him. She decided to ask for it to be announced that before the coffin was placed in the grave, the friends who wished might pass by it and pay their respects. For over two hours the believers, eastern and western, filed by. For the most part they knelt and kissed the edge or the handle of the casket. Rarely indeed in history can such a demonstration of love and grief have been seen. Children bowed their little heads beside their mothers, old men wept, the iron reserve of the Anglo-Saxon — the tradition never to show feeling in public — melted before the white-hot sorrow in the heart. The morning had been sunny and fair; now a gentle shower started and sprinkled a few drops on the coffin, as if nature herself were suddenly moved to tears. Some placed little flasks of Persian attar-of-rose at the head; one hesitatingly laid a red rose on the casket, symbol no doubt of the owner's heart; one could not bear the few drops of rain above that blessed, hidden face, and timidly wiped them off as he knelt; others with convulsed fingers carried away a little of the earth near the casket. Tears, tears and kisses, and solemn inner vows were poured out at the head of the one who had always called himself their 'true brother'. When the last believers in this grief-stricken procession had filed by, Rúhíyyih Khánum approached the casket, kissed it and knelt in prayer for a moment. She then had the green pall spread over it, laid the blue-and-gold brocade from the inner-most Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh on top of it and arranged the still-fragrant jasmin flowers over all its length. Then the mortal remains of him whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá designated *'the most wondrous, unique and priceless pearl that doth gleam from out the Twin Surging Seas'* were slowly lowered into the vault, amid walls covered with evergreen boughs and studded with flowers, to rest upon the rug from the Holy Tomb at Bahjí."

With such homage, in such a spirit, did the Bahá'ís lay to rest the remains of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's blessed grandson.

All during the funeral upon his casket rested a great sheaf of red and white flowers which I had especially ordered and on which I placed a card that seemed to me to express the feelings of those who alone had a right to share in this fragrant shield reposing over his body: "From Rúhíyyih and all your loved ones and lovers all over the world whose hearts are broken." When the vault had been sealed this sheaf rested upon it and like the waves of a multicoloured sea the thousands upon thousands of flowers the Bahá'ís had brought or ordered from all parts of the

world lapped about it, completely covering the whole area around the grave with a thick mass of fragrant blossoms.

When the funeral was over the Bahá'í world was informed and the believers were requested to hold suitable memorial meetings:

Beloved Guardian laid rest London according laws Aqdas in beautiful spot after impressive ceremony held presence multitude believers representing over twenty-five countries east and west. Doctors assure sudden passing involved no suffering blessed countenance bore expression infinite beauty peace majesty. Eighteen Hands assembled funeral urge National Bodies request all believers hold memorial meetings eighteenth November commemorating dayspring divine guidance who was left us after thirty-six years utter self-sacrifice ceaseless labours constant vigilance.

Rúhíyyih

In 1958 his grave was built of the same dazzling white Carrara marble he had himself chosen for the monuments of his illustrious relatives in Haifa, a simple grave as he would have wished it to be. A single marble column, crowned by a corinthian capital is surmounted by a globe, the map of Africa facing forward — for had not the victories won in Africa brought him the greatest joy during that last year of his life? — and on this globe is a large gilded bronze eagle, a reproduction of a beautiful Japanese sculpture of an eagle which he greatly admired and which he had placed in his own room. No better emblem than this symbol of victory could have been found for the resting-place of him who had won so many victories as he led the hosts of Bahá'u'lláh's followers on their ceaseless conquests throughout the five continents of the world.

Having, with adamant fortitude in the face of every trial, accomplished “the toilsome task of fixing the pattern, of laying the foundations, of erecting the machinery, and of setting in operation the Administrative Order” to use the Guardian's own words; having effected the world-wide spread and establishment of the Cause of God through the implementation of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan; having, through that rare spirit of his so admirably compounded of audacity and sobriety, guided the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh to heights it had never before reached; having carried the work his Lord had entrusted to him as far forward as his failing strength would permit; bearing the scars of innumerable personal attacks made upon him during the course of his ministry, Shoghi Effendi departed from the scene of his labours. The man had been “called by sorrow and a strange desolation of hopes into quietness”. The Guardian, he who was named in the Master's Will the “*primal branch of the Divine and Sacred Lote-Tree*”, and who, through the provisions of that Will, had been so firmly planted in the soil of the believers' hearts after ‘Abdu'l-Bahá's passing, remained forever, and well indeed will it be with “*him that seeketh the shelter of his shade that shadoweth all mankind.*”

