

Ridvan 1981: Baha'i Era 138

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To the Bahá'ís of the World

Dearly-loved Friends,

The successes of the initial phase of the Seven Year Plan are heartening evidence of the Divine care with which the growth of the Cause of God is so lovingly invigorated and sheltered. This still infant Cause, harassed and buffeted over these two years by relentless enemies, experiencing in swift succession a number of sharply contrasting crises and victories, surrounded by the increasing turmoil of a disintegrating world, has raised its banner, reinforced its foundations, and extended the range of its administrative institutions.

The resurgence of bitter and barbaric persecution of the Faith in the land of its birth, the passing to the Abha Kingdom of five Hands of the Cause of God, the darkening of the horizons of the world as the sombre shadows of universal convulsions and chaos extinguish the lights of justice and order, are among the factors which have chiefly affected the conditions and fortunes of the worldwide army of God.

The Bahá'í community in the Cradle of the Faith, having witnessed the destruction of its holiest Shrine, the sequestration of its Holy Places, confiscation of its endowments and even personal properties, the martyrdom of many of its adherents, the imprisonment and holding without trial or news of the members of its National Spiritual Assembly and other leading figures of its community, the deprivation of the means of livelihood, vilification and slander of its cherished tenets, has stood staunch as the Dawn-Breakers of old and emerged spiritually united and steadfast, the pride and inspiration of the entire Bahá'í world. In all continents of the globe, their example and

hapless plight has led the friends to proclaim the Name of Bahá'u'lláh as never before, personally, locally, and through all the media of mass communication. The Bahá'í world community, acting through its representatives at the United Nations and through its National Spiritual Assemblies, has brought to the attentive of governments and world leaders in many spheres the tenets and character of the Faith of God. The world's parliaments, its federal councils, its humanitarian agencies have considered the Bahá'í Cause and in many instances have extended their support and expressed their sympathy.

In the midst of this time-and energy-consuming activity on behalf of our beloved Persian brethren, the community of the Most Great Name, far from lessening its pursuit of the objectives of the initial phase of the Seven Year Plan, has promoted them with increasing vigour. Added to the burning desire of the friends everywhere to show their love for their brethren in Persia by teaching the Cause with redoubled fervour, has been the further inspiration to teach derived from the loss of the beloved Hands of the Cause, an inspiration which has been fostered by the travels of those dear Hands still able to extend this loving service to the believers.

The broadening, during this opening phase of the Seven Year Plan, of the foundations of the Boards of Counsellors and the consolidation of the thirteen zonal Boards to five continental ones have greatly reinforced this vital institution of the Faith. It has been further developed by the setting of a specified term of office for Continental Counsellors, as was envisaged in the original appointments.

Progress on the Seat of the Universal House of Justice and on the Temples of India and Samoa has continued. Six new National Spiritual Assemblies will be formed during this Ridvan: two in Africa, that of South West Africa/Namibia with its seat in Windhoek and that of Bophuthatswana with its seat in Mmabatho; three in the Americas, Bermuda with its seat in Hamilton, the Leeward Islands with its seat in St. John's, Antigua, and the Windward Islands with its seat in Kingstown, St. Vincent; one in the Pacific, namely that of Tuvalu with its seat in Funafuti; and the National Spiritual Assembly of Uganda will be reconstituted. To those to be formed during the remainder of the Seven Year Plan, the following have been added: two in Africa, Equatorial Guinea with its seat in Malabo, Somalia with its seat in Mogadishu, and one in Asia, that of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands with its seat in Port Blair.

Increases in the total number of Local Spiritual Assemblies and localities have been registered during the opening phase, and Bahá'í communities in all parts of the world have demonstrated greater unity and maturity in their collective activities.

The second phase of the Seven Year Plan, now opening, will last for three years and will be followed by the final phase of two years, ending at Ridvan 1986. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the passing of our beloved Guardian will occur during the second year of the second phase of the Plan and that same year will also witness the fifth anniversary of the passing of the

Greatest Holy Leaf. The House of Justice plans to issue a compilation of letters to her and of statements about her by Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and the beloved Guardian, and of her own letters.

All National Spiritual Assemblies have been sent the goals assigned to their communities for the second phase, for the prosecution of which the Bahá'í world community now stands poised and ready. Among the major developments envisioned during this phase are:

Occupation by the Universal House of Justice of its permanent Seat on the slopes of Mount Carmel above the Arc;

Completion of the Temple in Samoa and continued progress on the work of the Temple in India;

Further development of the functions of the International Teaching Centre and the Boards of Counsellors, with special reference to the promotion of the spiritual, intellectual, and social life of the Bahá'í community;

The holding, during the first nine months of 1982, of five international conferences, in Lagos, Nigeria; Montreal, Canada; Quito, Ecuador; Dublin, Ireland; and Manila, the Philippines, this last one taking place at the mid-point of an axis, referred to by the beloved Guardian, whose poles are Japan and Australia;

Preparation of architect's plans for the first dependency of the European Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, namely, a Home for the Aged, and an increase in the number of national and local Haziratu'l-Quds; the latter, which will be particularly in rural areas, are to be acquired or built through the efforts of the local friends;

Acquisition of six new Temple sites, five in Africa and one in Australasia; and of five new national endowments, four in Africa and one in the Americas;

Formation of two Publishing Trusts, one in the Ivory Coast and one in Nigeria;

A great increase in the production of Bahá'í literature in an increasing number of languages, the ultimate aim being to enable every believer to have some portion of the Sacred Text available in his native tongue;

Completion of three more radio stations in South America;

Great attention to the development and consolidation of Local Spiritual Assemblies throughout the world;

Development of Bahá'í community life with special attention to the Bahá'í education of children and the spiritual enrichment of communities;

The settlement of 279 pioneers in 80 countries during the first year of the second phase.

Liberal and increased contributions to the various Funds of the Faith will be essential if the above-mentioned tasks are to be successfully pursued. Furthermore, the now observable emergence from obscurity of our beloved Faith

will impose the necessity of new undertakings involving large calls on the Funds. The growing awareness of the friends throughout the world in the past few years that the Funds of the Faith are indeed the life-blood of its activities is a heartening augury for the future. We are confident that this awareness will increase, that more National Spiritual Assemblies will make great strides towards financial independence, that national budgets will be met, and the Bahá'í International Fund will receive an ever-increasing outpouring of contributions enabling that Fund to keep pace with the ever-increasing international needs of the Faith.

Beloved friends, the world moves deeper into the heart of darkness as its old order is rolled up. Pursing our objectives with confidence, optimism, and an unshakable resolve, we must never forget that our service is a spiritual one. Mankind is dying for lack of true religion and this is what we have to offer to humanity. It is the love of God, manifest in the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh, which will feed the hungry souls of the world and eventually lead the peoples out of the present morass into the orderly, uplifting, and soul-inspiring task of establishing God's Kingdom on earth.

The Universal House of Justice

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