

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

2 September 1982

To the Friends gathered in the Asian-Australasian Bahá'í Conference in Canberra

Dearly loved Friends,

These are momentous times. The institutions of the old world order are crumbling and in disarray. Materialism, greed, corruption and conflict are infecting the social order with a grave malaise from which it is helpless to extricate itself. With every passing day it becomes more and more evident that no time must be lost in applying the remedy prescribed by Bahá'u'lláh, and it is to this task that Bahá'ís everywhere must bend their energies and commit their resources.

New conditions now present themselves, making it easier to accomplish our purpose. Galvanized by the fires of fierce opposition and nurtured by the blood of the martyrs, the forces of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh are, at long last, emerging from obscurity. Never before in history has the Faith been the subject of such universal attention and comment. Eminent statesmen, parliamentarians, journalists, writers, educators, commentators, clergymen and other leaders of thought have raised their voices and set their pens to expressions of horror and revulsion at the persecutions of our brethren in Iran on the one hand, and to paeans of praise and admiration of the noble principles which motivate the followers of the Most Great Name on the other.

The five international conferences of the Seven Year Plan were called to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the passing of the Greatest Holy Leaf, to discuss anew the present condition of the Faith in a turbulent world society, to examine the great opportunities for its future growth and development, and to focus attention on the unfulfilled goals of the Plan. We are certain that the contemplation of the gathered friends on the sterling qualities which distinguished the heroic life of the Greatest Holy Leaf will help them to persevere in their noble endeavors.

This particular Conference is unique in many ways. The geographical area of concern spans over half the globe, including within its purview all the vast continent of Asia as well as the water hemisphere which comprises all of Australasia. Within the continent of Asia is the "cradle of the principal religions of mankind ... above whose horizons, in modern times, the suns of two independent Revelations ... have successively arisen ... on whose Western extremity the Qiblih of the Bahá'í world has been definitely established ..." The first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the Bahá'í world was erected on this continent under the direction of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and now another is arising on the Indian subcontinent in the midst of the world's largest Bahá'í community. In Australasia the Mother Temple of the Antipodes, dedicated to the Glory of God just two decades ago, looks out across the vast Pacific Ocean in whose "midmost heart" still another Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is being built on the mountain slope above Apia in the country of the first reigning monarch to embrace the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

The population of Asia and Australasia is well over half the world population. The area includes Asiatic U.S.S.R. and mainland China, accounting for more than one thousand million souls who are, for the most part, untouched by the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. Obviously present conditions in these areas call for the exercise of the utmost wisdom and circumspection. Yet this vast segment of humanity cannot be ignored.

Canberra, where you are now meeting, is at the southern pole of the spiritual axis referred to in the beloved Guardian's last message to the Bahá'ís of Australia as "extending from the Antipodes to the northern islands of the Pacific Ocean." Referring to the National Spiritual Assemblies at the northern and southern poles of that axis, Shoghi Effendi went on to say:

A responsibility, at once weighty and inescapable, must rest on the communities which occupy so privileged a position in so vast and turbulent an area of the globe. However great the distance that separates them; however much they differ in race, language, custom, and religion; however active the political forces which tend to keep them apart and foster racial and political antagonisms, the close and continued association of these communities in their common, their peculiar and paramount task of raising up and of consolidating the embryonic World Order of Bahá'u'lláh in those regions of the globe, is a matter of vital and urgent importance, which should receive on the part of the elected representatives of their communities, a most earnest and prayerful consideration.

These guidelines, penned a quarter of a century ago, are as valid today as when they were written, and can be taken to heart by all Bahá'í communities on either side of the axis.

We are approaching the midway point of the Seven Year Plan. As we review our accomplishments with respect to the goals of that Plan, it is essential that we fortify ourselves for the tasks ahead, and that we rededicate ourselves to that Cause for which our beloved martyrs rendered their last full measure of devotion. We can do no less!

We shall be with you in spirit during your important deliberations. Our prayers ascend at the Holy Threshold for the success of your Conference and the International Conference being held concurrently in Montreal. We shall ardently supplicate that the blessings and confirmations of Bahá'u'lláh will descend upon you and surround you wherever you go in service to His Faith.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]