

Europe

by **Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi**

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[**Note:** All extracts are to individual believers unless noted otherwise.]

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1. General Statements

From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

1. How foolish are the people of the East to have incarcerated for well nigh fifty years the like of this glorious Personage! But for His chains and prison, Bahá'u'lláh by this time would have gained absolute ascendancy over the minds and thoughts of the peoples of Europe, would have made of Persia the Garden of Paradise, would have raised its sons in the esteem of mankind, nay He would have made it such that all peoples and governments would seek enlightenment from its people.

Consider and reflect upon the result of My few days stay in London and the profound effect it has had here and in the surrounding regions. Ponder then in your heart, what the coming of Bahá'u'lláh would have achieved! Had He appeared in Europe, its people would have seized their opportunity and His Cause, by virtue of the freedom of thought, would by this time have encompassed the earth. But alas! This Cause, though it first appeared in Persia, yet eventually it shall be seen how the peoples of Europe have wrested it from its hands! Take note of this and remember it in future. Ultimately you shall see how it has come to pass. And yet behold! how the Bahá'ís are still persecuted by the people of Persia!

(Enclosed with a letter dated 12 January 1923 written by Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)

2. Ere long shall ye see that even the darkest lands are bright, and the continents of Europe and Africa have turned into gardens of flowers, and forests of blossoming trees.

(Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá [rev. ed.], (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1982), pp. 255-56)

3. As to the patriotic prejudice, this is also due to absolute ignorance, for the surface of the earth is one native land. Everyone can live in any spot on the terrestrial globe. Therefore all the world is man's birthplace. These boundaries and outlets have been devised by man. In the creation, such boundaries and outlets were not assigned. Europe is one continent, Asia is one continent, Africa is one continent, Australia is one continent, but some of the souls, from personal motives and selfish interests, have divided each one of these continents and considered a certain part as their own country. God has set up no frontier between France and Germany; they are continuous. Yea, in the first centuries, selfish souls, for the promotion of their own interests, have assigned boundaries and outlets and have, day by day, attached more importance to these, until this led to intense enmity, bloodshed and rapacity in subsequent centuries. In the same way this will continue indefinitely, and if this conception of patriotism remains limited within a certain circle, it will be the primary cause of the world's destruction. No wise and just person will acknowledge these imaginary distinctions. Every limited area which we call our native country we regard as our motherland, whereas the terrestrial globe is the motherland of all, and not any restricted area. In short, for a few days we live on this earth and eventually we are buried in it, it is our eternal tomb. Is it worth while that we should engage in bloodshed and tear one another to pieces for this eternal tomb? Nay, far from it, neither is God pleased with such conduct nor would any sane man approve of it...

And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is that although material civilization is one of the means for the progress of the world of mankind, yet until it becomes combined with Divine civilization, the desired result, which is the felicity of mankind, will not be attained. Consider! These battleships that reduce a city to ruins within the space of an hour are the result of material civilization; likewise the Krupp guns, the Mauser rifles, dynamite, submarines, torpedo boats, armed aircraft and bombers – all these weapons of war are the malignant fruits of material civilization. Had material civilization been combined with Divine civilization, these fiery weapons would never have been invented. Nay, rather, human energy would have been wholly devoted to useful inventions and would have been concentrated on praiseworthy discoveries. Material civilization is like a lamp-glass. Divine civilization is the lamp itself and the glass without the light is dark. Material civilization is like the body. No matter how infinitely graceful, elegant and beautiful it may be, it is dead. Divine civilization is like the spirit, and the body gets its life from the spirit, otherwise it becomes a corpse. It has thus been made evident that the world of mankind is in need of the breaths of the Holy Spirit. Without the spirit the world of mankind is lifeless, and without this light the world of mankind is in utter darkness. For the world of nature is an animal world. Until man is born again from the world of nature, that is to say, becomes detached from the world of nature, he is essentially an animal, and it is the teachings of God which convert this animal into a human soul.

(From the Tablet to the Hague – translated from the Persian, published in Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, pp. 300-301, 303-4)

From the Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

4. Consider the prejudice of patriotism. This is one globe, one land, one country. God did not divide it into national boundaries. He created all the continents without national divisions. Why should we make such division ourselves? These are but imaginary lines and boundaries. Europe is a continent; it is not naturally divided; man has drawn the lines and established the limits of kingdoms and empires. Man declares a river to be a boundary line between two countries, calling this side French and the other side German, whereas the river was created for both and is a natural artery for all. Is it not imagination and ignorance which impels man to violate the divine intention and make the very bounties of God the cause of war, bloodshed and destruction? Therefore, all prejudices between man and man are falsehoods and violations of the will of God. God desires unity and love; He commands harmony and fellowship. Enmity is human disobedience; God Himself is love.

(The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912, 2nd. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 299-300)

5. Now I want to tell you about the law of God. According to the divine law, employees should not be paid merely by wages. Nay, rather they should be partners in every work. The question of socialization is very difficult. It will not be solved by strikes for wages. All the governments of the world must be united, and organize an assembly, the members of which shall be elected from the parliaments and the noble ones of the nations. These must plan with wisdom and power, so that neither the capitalists suffer enormous losses, nor the laborers become needy. In the utmost moderation they should make the law, then announce to the public that the rights of the working people are to be effectively preserved; also the rights of the capitalists are to be protected. When such a general law is adopted, by the will of both sides, should a strike occur, all the governments of the world should collectively resist it. Otherwise the work will lead to much destruction, especially in Europe. Terrible things will take place.

(J.E. Esslemont, Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, 5th rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1987), pp. 145-46)

6. Humanity is submerged in materialism; occupied in everything save the mention of God; speaking of everything save the heavenly kingdom ; hearing everything save the call of God. As far as knowledge of things divine is concerned, it is as though some of the people were interred in the earth, going more and more into the blind darkness, completely buried from the knowledge of things above.

I hope the few gathered here will make a great effort, working day and night, that some result may be accomplished. Perhaps Europe may become weary of the dull materiality of the world and seek refreshment in a share of the heavenly glory. Europe has made extra-ordinary material progress, but if the qualities partake of the dust, what lasting result can accrue? The ideal to strive for is that which is in the supreme horizon – that is eternal! The underground is for worms and moles. That which is a cause for joy is a nest on the highest branch.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá on Divine Philosophy (Boston: Tudor Press, 1918), p. 56)

7. People who know the truth say that the physical body of man is put into motion by the soul and in the same way man is the vital spark of this world. If man had not been put upon this earth the world would be dead. I do not speak of the physical man, but of the human attainments which are the adornment of existence. If man did not exist, this world would have no beauty, no eternity, no object. In the same way that the essence of man is the soul, the soul of this world is the subtle growth of spirituality, heavenly morals, divine favors and sacred powers. Were the physical world not accompanied by this spirit, it could not exist. A beautiful creature without a soul signifies nothing. A most sumptuous habitation set in darkness is non-existent. The most wonderfully wrought lamp, if it give no light, is useless. Europe, the most adorned of the continents, has progressed to the apex of refined material civilization. It is a beautifully formed body,—alas, that it has no soul! It is one of the most polished mirrors,—alas, that the sun of truth is not reflected in it! It is an orchard without fruit,—alas, it has no spiritual fragrance.

Arise! Put forth a supreme effort, secure some new and heavenly attraction—that this Europe may be set in motion, for it is lamentable that it should be deprived of the heavenly wisdom; lamentable that it knows nothing of the heavenly rays; that it has not the health of the Holy Spirit; that a being of such great beauty should have no soul; that so exquisite a flower should have no scent; that so magnificent a structure should have no light. Do not remain inactive for one moment, perchance you may shed light in this darkness.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá on Divine Philosophy, pp. 128-9)

From the Writings and Communications of Shoghi Effendi

8. You may find the progress painfully slow. But be always reminded of the Master's written promise that the peoples of Europe will eventually wrest the Cause from Persia...

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 11 March 1925 written on his behalf to an individual believer)

9. Will it be America, will it be one of the nations of Europe, that will seize the torch of Divine Guidance from Persia's fettered hands and with it set the western world aflame? May your

Convention, by its spirit, its resolutions and its accomplishments give to that country's urgent call a noble and decisive answer.

(3 June 1925 to the United States and Canada National Convention, published in Bahá'í Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932 [rev. ed.], (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980), p. 89)

10. For reasons which are only too obvious the Bahá'í philosophy of social and political organization cannot be fully reconciled with the political doctrines and conceptions that are current and much in vogue today. The wave of nationalism, so aggressive and so contagious in its effects, which has swept not only over Europe but over a large part of mankind is, indeed, the very negation of the gospel of peace and of brotherhood proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 11 February 1934 written on his behalf to an individual believer)

11. If Christianity wishes and expects to serve the world in the present crisis, writes a minister of the Presbyterian Church in America, it must "cut back through Christianity to Christ, back through the centuries-old religion about Jesus to the original religion of Jesus." Otherwise, he significantly adds, "the spirit of Christ will live in institutions other than our own."

So marked a decline in the strength and cohesion of the elements constituting Christian society has led, in its turn, as we might well anticipate, to the emergence of an increasing number of obscure cults, of strange and new worships, of ineffective philosophies, whose sophisticated doctrines have intensified the confusion of a troubled age. In their tenets and pursuits they may be said to reflect and bear witness to the revolt, the discontent, and the confused aspirations of the disillusioned masses that have deserted the cause of the Christian churches and seceded from their membership.

A parallel might almost be drawn between these confused and confusing systems of thought that are the direct outcome of the helplessness and confusion afflicting the Christian Faith and the great variety of popular cults, of fashionable and evasive philosophies which flourished in the opening centuries of the Christian Era, and which attempted to absorb and pervert the state religion of that Roman people. The pagan worshipers who constituted, at that time, the bulk of the population of the Western Roman Empire, found themselves surrounded, and in certain instances menaced, by the prevailing sect of the Neo-Platonists, by the followers of nature religions, by Gnostic philosophers, by Philonism, Mithraism, the adherents of the Alexandrian cult, and a multitude of kindred sects and beliefs, in much the same way as the defenders of the Christian Faith, the preponderating religion of the western world, are realizing, in the first century of the Bahá'í Era, how their influence is being undermined by a flood of conflicting beliefs, practices and tendencies which their own bankruptcy had helped to create. It was, however, this same Christian Religion, which has now fallen into such a state of impotence, that eventually proved itself capable of sweeping away the institutions of paganism and of swamping and suppressing the cults that had flourished in that age....

Beset on every side by the cumulative evidences of disintegration, of turmoil and of bankruptcy, serious-minded men and women, in almost every walk of life, are beginning to doubt whether society, as it is now organized, can, through its unaided efforts, extricate itself from the slough into which it is steadily sinking. Every system, short of the unification of the human race, has been tried, repeatedly tried, and been found wanting. Wars again and again have been fought, and conferences without number have met and deliberated. Treaties, pacts and covenants have been painstakingly negotiated, concluded and revised. Systems of government have been patiently tested, have been continually recast and superseded. Economic plans of reconstruction have been carefully devised, and meticulously executed. And yet crisis has succeeded crisis, and the rapidity with which a perilously unstable world is declining has been correspondingly accelerated....

(11 March 1936 to the Bahá'ís of the West, published in The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Selected Letters, rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 184-85, 190)

12. The exposition of these vitalizing truths of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, which He characterized as the "spirit of the age", He supplemented with grave and reiterated warnings of an impending conflagration which, if the statesmen of the world should fail to avert, would set ablaze the entire continent of Europe. He, moreover, predicted, in the course of these travels, the radical changes which would take place in that continent, foreshadowed the movement of the decentralization of

political power which would inevitably be set in motion, alluded to the troubles that would overtake Turkey, anticipated the persecution of the Jews on the European continent, and categorically asserted that the “banner of the unity of mankind would be hoisted, that the tabernacle of universal peace would be raised and the world become another world.”

(God Passes By, rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, [1944] 1987), p. 282)

13. The opening decade of the second Bahá'í century coincides with the launching of the second Seven Year Plan, destined alike to consolidate the exploits that have shed such lustre on the last years of the preceding century, and to carry the Plan a stage further across the ocean to the shores of the Old World, and to communicate, through the operation of its regenerative power, its healing influence to the peoples of the most afflicted, impoverished and agitated continent of the globe....

In conjunction with these aforementioned objectives, and, in a sense, more far-reaching in its repercussions and of greater urgency, is the task of extending the ramifications of the Divine Plan to a continent which not only stands in dire need of the ennobling, the reinvigorating, and spiritualizing influence of a world-redeeming Faith, but must serve as a stepping-stone to the spiritual conquest of the vast and numerous territories, lying as yet beyond the scope of the Plan, in both the Asiatic and African continents, and which must, in the course of successive epochs, be warmed and illuminated by the rays of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation as prescribed in the Tablets revealed by the Centre of His Covenant and the Authorized Interpreter of His teachings.

In the western extremity of that continent, in the Iberian Peninsula, the parent land and fountain-head of the culture of those Republics which have already been quickened by the first stirrings of the Plan conceived by 'Abdu'l-Bahá; in the extreme North, among the Scandinavian peoples, and further south, amidst their Flemish and French neighbours, whose conversion will considerably enrich the diversity of the races to be included within the orbit of its operation; in the extreme South, in the Italian Peninsula, the cradle of a far-famed civilization and the seat and stronghold of the most powerful Church in Christendom; in the very heart of that continent, amidst a freedom-loving, peace-pursuing, high-minded people, the prosecutors of the second Seven Year Plan must, preferably in the capitals of these countries, arise to establish, on an unassailable foundation, the structural basis of the nascent institutions of their Faith, which future promoters of the Divine Plan must, in the course of succeeding epochs, enlarge, and thereon erect the mightiest edifices of that Faith....

(15 June 1946 to the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, published in Messages to America: Selected Letters and Cablegrams Addressed to the Bahá'ís of North America 1932-1946 (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1947), pp. 93-95)

14. To the fourth, and by far the most momentous, the most arduous, the most challenging task to be carried out under the second Seven Year Plan—the systematic launching of a crusade in a mighty, a tormented, a spiritually famished continent, a continent drawn, in recent years through political developments as well as through improvement in the means of transportation, so close to the Great Republic of the West, and constituting a stepping-stone on the road leading to the redemption of the Old World—I must now direct the attention of my readers.

This as yet unfought and unbelievably potent crusade, embarked upon in the opening decade of the second century of the Bahá'í Era, signaling the commencement of the second epoch of the Formative Age of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh, and marking the first stage in the propulsion of a divinely conceived Plan across the borders of the Western Hemisphere, must, as its pace augments, reveal the first signs and tokens which, as anticipated by the Author of the Plan Himself, must accompany the carrying of His Father's Message across the ocean, at the hands of His “apostles”, from the shores of their homeland to the European continent. “The moment,” is His powerfully sustaining, gloriously inspiring promise, “this Divine Message is carried forward by the American believers from the shores of America, and is propagated through the continents of Europe, of Asia, of Africa and of Australasia, and as far as the islands of the Pacific, this community will find itself securely established upon the throne of an everlasting dominion. Then will all the peoples of the world witness that this community is spiritually illumined and divinely guided. Then will the whole earth resound with the praises of its majesty and greatness.”

The first stage in this transatlantic field of service which those crusading for the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in the Eastern Hemisphere are now entering is a step fraught with possibilities such as no mind can adequately envisage. Its challenge is overwhelming and its potentialities unfathomable. Its hazards, rigours and pitfalls are numerous, its field immense, the number of its promoters as yet utterly inadequate, the resources required for its effective prosecution barely tapped. The races, nations and classes, included within its orbit are numerous and highly diversified, and the prizes to be won by its victors incalculably great. The hatreds that inflame, the rivalries that agitate, the controversies that confuse, the miseries that afflict, these races, nations and classes are bitter and of long standing. The influence and fanaticism, whether ecclesiastical or political, of potentially hostile organizations, firmly entrenched within their ancestral strongholds, are formidable....

No opportunity, in view of the necessity of ensuring the harmonious development of the Faith, should be ignored, which its potential enemies, whether ecclesiastical or otherwise, may offer, to set forth, in a restrained and unprovocative language, its aims and tenets, to defend its interests, to proclaim its universality, to assert the supernatural, the supranational and non-political character of its institutions, and its acceptance of the Divine origin of the Faiths which have preceded it. Nor should any chance be missed of associating the Faith, as distinct from affiliating it, with all progressive, non-political, non-ecclesiastical institutions, whether social, educational, or charitable, whose objectives harmonize with some of its tenets, and amongst whose members and supporters individuals may be found who will eventually embrace its truth. Particular attention should, moreover, be paid to attendance at congresses and conferences, and to any contacts that can be made with colleges and universities which offer a fertile field for the scattering of the seeds of the Faith, and afford opportunities for broadcasting its message, and for winning fresh recruits to its strength....

Nor should any of the pioneers [in Europe], at this early stage in the upbuilding of Bahá'í national communities, overlook the fundamental prerequisite for any successful teaching enterprise, which is to adapt the presentation of the fundamental principles of their Faith to the cultural and religious backgrounds, the ideologies, and the temperament of the divers races and nations whom they are called upon to enlighten and attract. The susceptibilities of these races and nations, from both the northern and southern climes, springing from either the Germanic or Latin stock, belonging to either the Catholic or Protestant communion, some democratic, others totalitarian, in outlook, some socialistic, others capitalistic in their tendencies, differing widely in their customs and standards of living, should at all times be carefully considered, and under no circumstances neglected.

These pioneers, in their contact with the members of divers creeds, races and nations, covering a range which offers no parallel in either the North or South American continents, must neither antagonize them nor compromise with their own essential principles. They must be neither provocative nor supine, neither fanatical nor excessively liberal, in their exposition of the fundamental and distinguishing features of their Faith. They must be either wary or bold, they must act swiftly or mark time, they must use the direct or indirect method, they must be challenging or conciliatory, in strict accordance with the spiritual receptivity of the soul with whom they come in contact, whether he be a nobleman or a commoner, a northerner or a southerner, a layman or a priest, a capitalist or a socialist, a statesman or a prince, an artisan or a beggar. In their presentation of the Message of Bahá'u'lláh they must neither hesitate nor falter. They must be neither contemptuous of the poor nor timid before the great. In their exposition of its verities they must neither overstress nor whittle down the truth which they champion, whether their hearer belong to royalty, or be a prince of the Church, or a politician, or a tradesman, or a man of the street. To all alike, high or low, rich or poor, they must proffer, with open hands, with a radiant heart, with an eloquent tongue, with infinite patience, with uncompromising loyalty, with great wisdom, with unshakeable courage, the Cup of Salvation, at so critical an hour, to the confused, the hungry, the distraught and fear-stricken multitudes, in the north, in the west, in the south and in the heart, of that sorely tried continent.

The second century of the Bahá'í Era has dawned. The second stage of the Divine Plan has been launched. The second epoch of the Formative Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation has opened. The tragedy of a continent, so blessed, so rich in history, so harassed, is moving towards a climax. The

vanguard of the torchbearers of a world-redeeming civilization are landing on its shores and are settling in its capitals. An epoch has commenced, inaugurating the systematic conquest of the European continent by the organized body of the “apostles” of Bahá'u'lláh, destined to unfold its potentialities in the course of succeeding centuries, and bidding fair to eclipse the radiance of those past ages which have successively witnessed the introduction of the Christian Faith into that continent's northern climes, the efflorescence of Islamic culture that shed such radiance along its southern shores, and the rise of the Reformation in its very heart.

The stage is set. The hour is propitious. The signal is sounded. Bahá'u'lláh's spiritual battalions are moving into position. The initial clash between the forces of darkness and the army of light, as unnoticed as the landing two milleniums ago of the apostles of Christ on the southern shores of the European continent, is being registered by the denizens of the Abhá Kingdom. The Author of the Plan that has set so titanic an enterprise in motion is Himself mounted at the head of these battalions, and leads them on to capture the cities of men's hearts. A continent, twice blessed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá successive visits to its shores, and the scene of His first public appearance in the West; which has been the cradle of a civilization to some of whose beneficent features the pen of Bahá'u'lláh has paid significant tribute; on whose soil both the Greek and Roman civilizations were born and flourished; which has contributed so richly to the unfoldment of American civilization; the fountain-head of American culture; the mother of Christendom, and the scene of the greatest exploits of the followers of Jesus Christ; in some of whose outlying territories have been won some of the most resplendent victories which ushered in the Golden Age of Islam; which sustained, in its very heart, the violent impact of the onrushing hosts of that Faith, intent on the subjugation of its cities, but which refused to bend the knee to its invaders, and succeeded in the end in repulsing their assault—such a continent is now experiencing, at the hands of the little and as yet unnoticed band of pioneers sent forth by the enviable, the privileged, the dynamic American Bahá'í community, the first stirrings of that spiritual revolution which must culminate, in the Golden Age that is as yet unborn, in the permanent establishment of Bahá'u'lláh's Order throughout that continent.

(5 June 1947 to the Bahá'ís of the West, published in Citadel of Faith: Messages to America 1947-1957 (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980), pp. 20-21, 23, 25-27)

15. The gigantic task, now being so energetically and successfully carried out by the consecrated and firmly knit British Bahá'í community, constitutes a glorious landmark in recent Bahá'í history, and will, when viewed in proper perspective, deserve to be regarded as one of the most outstanding enterprises launched by the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in the opening years of the second Bahá'í century. Alike in its magnitude and significance, this momentous undertaking is unprecedented in the annals of the Faith in the British Isles, and deserves to rank as one of the most compelling evidences of the creative power of its Author, marking the rise and establishment of His institutions on the European continent. It is yet too early to assess the potentialities of this present Plan and those destined to follow it, or estimate their future benefits. The blessings they will confer, as the forces latent within them are progressively revealed, on the people dwelling within those Islands, and subsequently, as their sphere is enlarged and their implications are fully disclosed, on the diversified peoples and-races inhabiting the widely scattered dependencies of a far-flung empire, in both the East and the West, are unimaginably glorious.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 24 October 1947 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, published in Unfolding Destiny: The Messages from the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith to the Bahá'í Community of the British Isles (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1981), p. 208)

16. Two brief years separate them from the hour destined to witness the total triumph of their first organized, nation-wide collective enterprise. Every minute of this interval is infinitely precious. The gloom overhanging the entire planet is deepening ominously every day. The American followers of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, through the ever-swelling army of their pioneers and settlers, on the northern, the western and southern fringes of the European continent, as well as the newly resuscitated German and Austrian Bahá'í communities labouring in its very heart, have nobly arisen, and are doing their part in paving the way for the spiritual awakening and the ultimate redemption of the teeming millions of its war-torn, discordant, fear-stricken and spiritually famished inhabitants.

They who man the North-Western outpost of the Faith in Europe must, whilst pursuing their chartered course, play a distinctive part in this threefold crusade launched, almost simultaneously, from three directions, in conformity with specifically laid-out plans, at so critical an hour, in so vast a field, amidst such diversified and conflicting races and nations of what may well be regarded as the cradle of a civilization, and the mother of a Faith, whose fate now hangs so perilously in the balance.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 5 November 1948 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, published in Unfolding Destiny, pp. 221-22)

17. STAGE SET MOMENT PROPITIOUS FOR NO LESS SPECTACULAR EXERTION EFFORT CONCENTRATION ATTENTION EXPENDITURE ENERGY COURSE FINAL PHASE PLAN EUROPEAN CONTINENT AIMING THROUGH ABOVE BEYOND PRESCRIBED OBJECTIVES AT BROADENING CONSOLIDATION STRUCTURAL BASIS ALREADY LAID THROUGH PRESERVATION PRIZES RECENTLY WON CONVERSION LARGER GROUPS ASSEMBLIES EXPANSION RECENTLY INSTITUTED EXTENSION WORK INCREASED PARTICIPATION NATIVE BELIEVERS BOTH ADMINISTRATIVE TEACHING ACTIVITIES ACCELERATION TRANSLATION PUBLICATION BAHÁ'Í LITERATURE GRADUAL INSTITUTION REGIONAL SUMMER SCHOOLS PROMOTION CLOSER FELLOWSHIP MORE ACTIVE COLLABORATION DESPITE GREAT DISTANCES PAUCITY RESOURCES DIVERSITY RACE CUSTOMS LANGUAGE AMONG BUDDING COMMUNITIES SCATTERED NORTH WEST SOUTH HEART EUROPEAN CONTINENT WHICH POSTERITY WILL RECOGNIZE BEDROCK BAHÁ'U'LLÁH'S FAST EVOLVING ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER TORCH-BEARERS HIS EMBRYONIC WORLD ORDER HERALDS YET UNBORN WORLD CIVILIZATION AMIDST TURMOIL TRAVAILING AGE OVERSPREADING GLOOM PRESENT CHAOTIC SOCIAL POLITICAL ORDER.

(July 1949 to the Brussels Teaching Conference)

18. The achievements of the members of the European Teaching Committee, severally and collectively, at its headquarters as well as on the continent of Europe, merit, indeed, the highest praise and have set an inspiring example to any national committee, functioning under any National Assembly, in any part of the Bahá'í world. I feel truly proud of, and eternally grateful for, its superb accomplishments, its vigilance, its vigorous conduct of the European campaign, its courage and perseverance, and devotion to its task. Its high endeavours have been crowned with success, and its primary objective attained long before its appointed time. The rapidity with which progress has been maintained and the end achieved constitutes a record in Bahá'í annals, and has served to enrich the record of service associated with the American Bahá'í community. The response of the pioneers, the zeal and determination displayed by both settlers and itinerant teachers, the admirable initiative, the inflexible resolve and the strenuous efforts exerted by the native believers and the newly formed groups and Assemblies, are indeed equally commendable, and will no doubt be blessed abundantly by the Master, Whose Plan they are promoting at so critical and momentous a stage in its evolution, in the very cradle of western civilization, and amidst peoples and races so diversified in character, so sorely-trying by tribulation, so sadly depleted in spiritual resources, yet intellectually and materially so well-equipped to rear, establish and consolidate the rising World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. Their task, however, is still in its initial stage of development. The foundation their hands have laid must be jealously preserved, continually broadened and steadily consolidated in preparation for the noble and majestic superstructure which must be reared upon it in the course of subsequent stages in the evolution of that Plan.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 14 July 1949 written on his behalf to the European Teaching Committee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

19. Nor should it be forgotten that in the hour of adversity and in the very midst of confusion, peril and uncertainty, some of the most superb exploits, noising abroad the fame of this community have been achieved. The construction of the superstructure of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár during one of the severest depressions experienced by the people of the United States in this century; the inauguration of the first Seven Year Plan on the eve of, and during the anxious years preceding the second World Conflagration, its vigorous prosecution during its darkest days and its triumph before its conclusion; the launching of the European campaign on the morrow of the most devastating conflict that rocked the continent of Europe to its foundation—these stand out as shining evidences of the unflinching

protection, guidance and sustaining power vouchsafed its members, so readily and so abundantly, in the hour of their greatest need and danger.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 5 July 1950 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, published in Citadel of Faith, pp. 85-86)

20. I feel particularly gratified by the substantial participation in this epoch-making Conference of the members of a race dwelling in a continent which for the most part has retained its primitive simplicity and remained uncontaminated by the evils of a gross, a rampant and cancerous materialism under-mining the fabric of human society alike in the East and in 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....

(February 1953 to the African Intercontinental Teaching Conference)

21. The hour is now ripe for these Communities whether new or old, local or national, already functioning on the Northern, the Western and the Southern fringes of that continent, as well as those situated in its very heart, to initiate befittingly and prosecute energetically the European Campaign of a global Crusade which will not only contribute, to an unprecedented degree, to the broadening and the consolidation of the foundations of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh on the continent of Europe, but will also diffuse its light over the neighbouring islands, and will, God willing, carry its radiance to the Eastern territories of that continent, and beyond them as far as the heart of Asia. . .

A continent [Europe], occupying such a central and strategic position on the entire planet; so rich and eventful in its history; so diversified in its culture; from whose soil sprang both the Hellenic and Roman civilizations; the mainspring of a civilization to some of whose features Bahá'u'lláh Himself paid tribute; on whose southern shores Christendom first established its home; along whose eastern marches the mighty forces of the Cross and the Crescent so frequently clashed; on whose south-western extremity a fast-evolving Islamic culture yielded its fairest fruit; in whose heart the light of the Reformation shone so brightly, shedding its rays as far as the outlying regions of the globe; the well-spring of American culture; whose northern and western fringes were first warmed and illuminated, less than a century ago, by the dawning light of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh; in whose heart a Community so rich in promise was subsequently established; whose soil was later sanctified by the twice-repeated visit of the appointed Centre of His Covenant; which witnessed, in consequence of the rise and establishment of the Administrative Order of His Faith, the erection of two of the foremost pillars of the future Universal House of Justice; which, in recent years, sustained the dynamic impact of a series of national Plans preparatory to the launching of a World Spiritual Crusade—such a continent has at last at this critical hour—his great turning-point in its fortunes—entered 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.

May the elected representatives of the National Bahá'í Communities entrusted with the conduct of this momentous undertaking launched on the soil of this continent, aided by the Hands of the Cause and their Auxiliary Board, reinforced by the local communities, the groups and isolated believers sharing in this massive and collective enterprise, and supported by the subsidiary agencies to be appointed for its efficient prosecution, be graciously assisted by the Lord of Hosts to contribute, in the years immediately ahead, through their concerted efforts and collective achievements, in both the teaching and administrative spheres of Bahá'í activity, to the success of this glorious Crusade, and lend a tremendous impetus to the conversion, the reconciliation and the ultimate unification of the divers and conflicting peoples, races, and classes dwelling within the borders of a travailing, a sorely-agitated, and spiritually-famished continent.

May all the privileged participators, enlisting under the banner of Bahá'u'lláh for the promotion of so pre-eminent and meritorious a Cause, be they from the Eastern or Western Hemisphere, of either sex, white or coloured, young or old, neophyte or veteran, whether serving in their capacity as expounders of the teachings, or administrators, of His Faith, as settlers or itinerant teachers, distinguish themselves by such deeds of heroism as will rival, nay outshine, the feats accomplished, nineteen hundred years ago, by that little band of God-intoxicated disciples who, fearlessly

preaching the Gospel of a newly-arisen Messiah, contributed so decisively to the illumination, the regeneration and the advancement of the entire European continent.

(July 1953 to the European Intercontinental Teaching Conference, published in Unfolding Destiny, pp. 317, 319-20)

22. Parallel with this, and pervading all departments of life—an evil which the nation, and indeed all those within the capitalist system, though to a lesser degree, share with that state and its satellites regarded as the sworn enemies of that system—is the crass materialism, which lays excessive and ever-increasing emphasis on material well-being, forgetful of those things of the spirit on which alone a sure and stable foundation can be laid for human society. It is this same cancerous materialism, born originally in Europe, carried to excess in the North American continent, contaminating the Asiatic peoples and nations, spreading its ominous tentacles to the borders of Africa, and now invading its very heart, which Bahá'u'lláh in unequivocal and emphatic language denounced in His Writings, comparing it to a devouring flame and regarding it as the chief factor in precipitating the dire ordeals and world-shaking crises that must necessarily involve the burning of cities and the spread of terror and consternation in the hearts of men. Indeed a foretaste of the devastation which this consuming fire will wreak upon the world, and with which it will lay waste the cities of the nations participating in this tragic world-engulfing contest, has been afforded by the last World War, marking the second stage in the global havoc which humanity, forgetful of its God and heedless of the clear warnings uttered by His appointed Messenger for this day, must, alas, inevitably experience. It is this same all-pervasive, pernicious materialism against which the voice of the Centre of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant was raised, with pathetic persistence, from platform and pulpit, in His addresses to the heedless multitudes, which, on the morrow of His fateful visit to both Europe and America, found themselves suddenly swept into the vortex of a tempest which in its range and severity was unsurpassed in the world's history.

Collateral with this ominous laxity in morals, and this progressive stress laid on man's material pursuits and well-being is the darkening of the political horizon, as witnessed by the widening of the gulf separating the protagonists of two antagonistic schools of thought which, however divergent in their ideologies, are to be commonly condemned by the upholders of the standard of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh for their materialistic philosophies and their neglect of those spiritual values and eternal verities on which alone a stable and flourishing civilization can be ultimately established. The multiplication, the diversity and the increasing destructive power of armaments to which both sides, in this world contest, caught in a whirlpool of fear, suspicion and hatred, are rapidly contributing; the outbreak of two successive bloody conflicts, entangling still further the American nation in the affairs of a distracted world, entailing a considerable loss in blood and treasure, swelling the national budget, and progressively depreciating the currency of the state; the confusion, the vacillation, the suspicions besetting the European and Asiatic nations in their attitude to the American nation; the overwhelming accretion of strength to the arch-enemy of the system championed by the American Union in consequence of the re-alignment of the Powers in the Asiatic continent and particularly in the Far East—these have, moreover, contributed their share, in recent years, to the deterioration of a situation which, if not remedied, is bound to involve the American nation in a catastrophe of undreamed-of dimensions and of untold consequences to the social structure, the standard and conception of the American people and government.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 20 June 1954 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

23. I hail the formation of the historic Regional Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Scandinavia and Finland—an event which posterity will acclaim as a landmark of far-reaching significance in the history of the evolution of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh and the rise of its divinely appointed Administrative Order in the northern regions of the steadily awakening European continent. This great turning-point in the rising fortunes of the institutions of this irresistibly advancing Order is, no doubt, attributable to the warm and whole-hearted response of the Scandinavian and Finnish believers to the Message of the New Day, carried to them by the champion-builders of this Order labouring so valiantly in the Great Republic of the West, as well as to their own staunchness of faith, fidelity, constancy and exemplary devotion.

This new phase in the unfoldment of their beloved Faith, during this crucial period through which a turbulent, a spiritually famished, and morally decadent continent is passing, heralding as it does the advent of the day when each of these Communities will emerge as an independent national entity, must be signalized by an upsurge of activity, a demonstration of Bahá'í solidarity, of devotion and of self-sacrifice unparalleled in the annals of the Faith in those regions. . .

An attempt must also be made to introduce the Faith, however tentatively, into each of the three neighbouring Baltic States, destined, in the course of time, to play a memorable part in the establishment of the Faith in North-East Europe....

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 4 July 1957 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of Scandinavia and Finland)

24. I fully share the joy and exultation that has filled the hearts of the valiant promoters of the Faith throughout the Benelux countries at this latest and most remarkable evidence of the onward march of their beloved Faith in so important an area of the European continent. This memorable milestone in the evolution of the institutions of Bahá'u'lláh's embryonic Order, now firmly established in each of the sovereign states of Holland, of Belgium and of Luxembourg, augurs well for its future unfoldment and ultimate fruition in those countries.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 5 July 1957 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Benelux Countries)

25. That the members of these sister communities, now linked by ties of spiritual comradeship, at this earliest stage in the unfoldment of their separate Missions, and destined to exert, as they mature, and pursue independently the path of service to their beloved Cause, a profound and abiding influence, by virtue of the position they occupy, and the fame acquired by their countries as seats of mighty institutions, both religious and secular, on the fortunes of the Faith in Europe and beyond its confines, that the members of these communities may meet befittingly the challenge of the present hour, and arise as one man to accomplish each of the goals set before them, is a prayer that I never fail to utter and a wish which I cherish with all my heart.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 12 August 1957 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of Italy and Switzerland)

From Letters Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi¹

26. He is always very glad to hear of the good news of the progress of the Cause, especially in Vienna. That is a very important centre from which the Cause could spread to Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Those regions, being occupied by people of diverse nationality and religious belief, are always a hotbed of dissension and strife. They need the teachings of the Cause to pacify them and create among them the spirit of love and comradeship...

(12 October 1928)

27. The prevailing distress in America and Europe should awaken the youth to the futility of concentrating their whole life on purely material pursuits. They should learn the lesson that spiritual considerations should be the dominating factors of our life, that our guiding purpose should be to enhance our moral life and seek what is eternal and abiding.

Should the different nations continue to go wrong and be guided by the selfish desire of personal aggrandizement, you will be the group that will suffer most. Our present policies bear their fruits only in the future and it is the youth of the present that are the men and women of the future.

(2 November 1931)

28. He feels deeply thankful and gratified for the wonderful work you and Miss Jack have been doing in Bulgaria. He sincerely hopes that as a result of your work a centre will be created there which in turn will spread the Message through the Balkans. Those countries are in great need of the Divine Message because they have been divided into warring factions that have endangered the life of Europe. Through constant war those countries have come to the verge of ruin. They need the

1 All extracts are to individual believers unless noted otherwise.

Message of Bahá'u'lláh to bring peace and change the prevailing hatred between the factions into a mutual understanding based upon the love of God and human brotherhood.

(11 November 1931)

29. The Bahá'í world should direct its attention towards Europe more than to any other land, because it is a hotbed of strife and rancour. The political hatreds that exist there will if not subdued not only consume its inhabitants, but will ravage the whole world and bring devastation to the whole surface of the globe.

(25 March 1933)

30. Dr. and Mrs. ... are now here and give a glowing report of what is being accomplished in Bulgaria and the other countries of Eastern Europe. Shoghi Effendi hopes that these seeds, which these few American ladies are sowing so lovingly, will receive showers of divine blessings and gradually start to germinate. Those countries, more than anywhere else in Europe, should feel the disastrous and ravaging effects of war and conscientiously strive to achieve peace by an orientation of their human interests to what is spiritual and uplifting. In his moments of prayer at the Blessed Shrines, the Guardian will think of you, and of the other sincere souls who are introducing the Faith in those new countries, and ask for you all divine guidance and assistance.

(30 April 1933)

31. He has great hopes for the rapid development of an Assembly in Holland; the Dutch people are a fine race, tolerant, intelligent and kindly, and a centre in Holland would greatly reinforce the Cause in Europe. Now that the new Dutch Bahá'ís are going to be active there in spreading the teachings, you will have the benefit of their help, and through your united labours should soon be able to establish a group of interested people.

(20 November 1946)

32. Regarding your question about the Esperantists: for many years they have been one of our closest contacts in Europe, and many of them have become believers. They are working for one of our greatest principles, and we certainly should associate with them. In Germany the Bahá'ís published an Esperanto magazine, and Martha Root represented the Cause at Esperanto congresses. We cannot say we are sure this language will be the international one, but we are anxious to see it spread as it fosters unity and understanding. By all means foster your contact with them. Whether Esperanto will be chosen as the international language or not we cannot say, but we can say we hope it will spread because it nearly fulfils such a noble purpose.

(5 April 1947)

33. All over Europe the pioneers are being remarkably successful as a result of their dedication and devotion to their purpose. These foundations they are laying are of the greatest importance, as the tact, love, unity and forbearance they show forth will form an object lesson for their spiritual fledglings, and lay the pattern of Bahá'í Community life in each city where they labour. He feels your Rome Assembly in particular, situated as it is in such a stronghold of Christianity, is bound to be very carefully observed by the Church, and consequently must be ever conscious of the dignity of its position and the very sacred trust given into its hands in rearing the first Institution of Bahá'u'lláh's Faith in Italy.

(2 June 1948)

34. The success of the European work is almost startling, and shows that alas, suffering is the plough which seems to best and quickest turn up the soil of men's spirits and make them fertile. Before the war it is doubtful if such rapid results could have been achieved. All the more reason for our consecrated and feverish labours now!

(14 July 1949 to the European Teaching Committee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

35. He urges you to tell the American friends about the work and the new Bahá'ís in Europe. These new believers, with the well-balanced minds of the Europeans, are a fine type, and in return for what they have been given by their American brethren, have much to contribute of maturity and wisdom.

(21 July 1949)

36. Real study is a thing Europeans can do perhaps easier than the average American, as the tempo of life there is not so rushed.
(30 January 1950)
37. Like the United States and Canada, Latin America is the New World; it has the freshness of youth, the vigour and hope that youth possesses, and far from such ancient civilizations as those of Europe and Asia, with their interminable problems and grievances, it can undertake service to Bahá'u'lláh under more auspicious circumstances.
(11 July 1951 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Meso-America and the Antilles)
38. Now that three new Regional Assemblies in Europe have been formed, he feels sure this marks the opening of a new and much more vital phase in the progress of the Faith in that continent. The fact that the affairs of the believers in these European Communities are going to be administered on the spot, and for the most part by native Europeans, who understand both the problems and the psychology of the people, is a tremendous advantage, and one which, perforce, was denied to the European Teaching Committee.
(4 July 1957 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Scandinavia and Finland)

2. Germany

From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

39. Thou hadst written concerning the growth in stature of the Cause of God in thy country. There is no doubt that the Faith of God will progress from day to day in that land, for it will be aided by the strengthening power of the Holy Spirit and the confirmation of the Word of God. Nor is there any doubt that members of the Christian clergy will rise up against it in implacable hostility, wishing to injure and oppress you, and seeking to assail you with doubts; for the spread of the Cause of God will lead to the waning of their fortunes—as the fortunes of the Pharisees had waned before them—and entail the loss of the dignity and standing that they now enjoy amongst men.
Reflect upon the time of Jesus and the deeds wrought by the Jewish divines and Pharisees. Such deeds will, in this day, be repeated at the hands of these Christian clergymen. Be not perturbed, however; be firm and constant, for it is certain that a company of souls shall, with infinite love, arise to enter into the Kingdom of God. These souls shall recompense you for the vexations, the humiliations, and disdain to which you are subjected by the clergy: to the injuries inflicted by these latter they shall respond with acts of kindness, until eventually, as the experience of former times hath shown, the children of the Kingdom shall gain the ascendancy, and victory shall be theirs. Rest ye confident of this.
(From a Tablet to an individual believer - translated from the Persian, published in "Crisis and Victory", compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (Oakham: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988), section 50, pp. 24-25)
40. I shall never forget the days I passed in Stuttgart in thy company, for the whole time was given to the diffusion of the reviving breaths of the Holy Spirit. Those wonderful meetings were charged with the surging spirit of divine confirmation which radiated from the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. The light of the Kingdom was shining forth from the Realm of Glory, His invisible assistance was unceasingly vouchsafed, the hearts were filled with gladness, the spirits rejoiced through the revelation of heavenly glad-tidings, and each of the beloved friends was radiant like a candle. Therefore those days shall never be forgotten. Now I fervently hope that following my departure the fire of the love of God may burst into flame more intensely than ever, and that thou mayest raise a heavenly melody at every meeting. I am well pleased with and deeply grateful to the loved ones of God in Stuttgart. They are blessed souls indeed. I will never forget them. Remembrance of them is always a source of joy to me. Convey on my behalf warmest Abhá greetings to all the friends there.
(From a Tablet to an individual believer - translated from the Persian)

41. The Bahá'í friends in Stuttgart are truly spiritual and radiant, they are highly devoted and sincere. I am well pleased with them. They will undoubtedly be overshadowed by the confirmations of the Abhá Kingdom, and the effulgent light of the Sun of Truth will shed its radiance upon that region. Therefore it behoveth you to manifest the utmost affection and kindness toward one another, to love each other with heart and soul, to make the utmost endeavour to come to the assistance of each other, and to firmly adhere to the Covenant of God and His Testament, inasmuch as the spirit that animateth this age is the power of the Covenant and Testament of God. It is like a throbbing artery in the body of the world. Ye should always mention this important theme at every one of your meetings and conferences, and ye should exhort everyone to remain firm and steadfast in the Covenant. Know ye that if a person should evince the least sign of hesitation in the Covenant, his downfall would be imminent, even if he were reckoned among the most distinguished individuals, for in the end the harmful consequences of Covenant-breaking will become apparent. Therefore ye must exercise the utmost care concerning this matter.... I shall fervently pray to the Abhá Kingdom at all times, entreating divine assistance and blessings for the beloved friends in Stuttgart.

(From a Tablet to an individual believer - translated from the Persian)

42. There are clear signs which indicate that the effulgent light of the Sun of Truth will shine forth with the utmost intensity not only in the Stuttgart region but throughout the whole of Germany, that the reviving breath of the Holy Spirit will exert great influence there and the pervasive grace of the Word of God will be widely diffused. Let me give you this glad-tiding: Ye shall attain great heights in the Kingdom of God, and the portals of the Kingdom are wide open before the people of Germany. Let us see who will outshine the others. It is my earnest hope that all who are called in Germany may be among the chosen. Therefore, ye should never rest, but strive day and night to guide the people, to give sight to the blind, to quicken the dead and bestow eternal life.

(From a Tablet to the Bahá'ís of Stuttgart - translated from the Persian)

43. There is much spiritual receptivity in Germany. Many souls evince a special disposition to receive the outpourings of heavenly grace. They have the capacity to become the recipients of divine teachings. Hence some individuals are attracted to the principle of the oneness of mankind and treat all the peoples and kindreds of the earth in a spirit of concord and fellowship. I cherish the hope that they may become wholly detached from religious, racial, national, economic and political prejudices, so that they may regard the world of humanity as one family, since they are endued with perceptive eyes and attentive ears. Therefore 'Abdu'l-Bahá doth cherish infinite affection toward these souls. Although that country is at present sunk in despondency and lethargy, I fain would hope that the reviving breeze of His loving-kindness may blow, bestowing a new life upon all souls. In brief, it behoveth you to exert your utmost to manifest exceeding love and fellowship toward all the peoples of the earth as well as the followers of all religions.

(From a Tablet to the Bahá'ís of Germany - translated from the Persian)

44. The land of Germany is even as the globe of a lamp, and the loved ones of God there are like the brilliant light thereof. That country therefore will undoubtedly be illumined.

(From a Tablet to individual believers - translated from the Persian)

45. Your letter hath been received and I have implored fervently that that blessed community in Germany may grow and flourish day by day, and that through your endeavours Germany may be reborn and may receive the outpourings of grace from the realms on high, so that the whole country may gain peace and tranquillity in the years ahead, inasmuch as future events in Europe are fraught with tribulations. Perchance the friends there may ameliorate the situation, thus causing peace and amity to prevail.

(From a Tablet to individual believers - translated from the Persian)

46. I cherish the greatest affection for the loved ones of God in Germany and fervently beseech for them divine confirmation and blessing. The Call of the Kingdom proclaimed in that country will surely produce tremendous results in the future.

(From a Tablet to individual believers - translated from the Persian)

47. The Cause of God will make great progress in Germany. It will surpass all other regions.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

48. The love I cherish for the German friends is so intense that were a flame of this love to touch them, they would be set ablaze completely...

Now is the time of construction. Every kind of stone may be used in the structure of the edifice. But ye German friends should serve as the corner-stone of the building. Ye should proclaim the fundamental principles of the Cause of God to all peoples and kindreds.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

49. It is not known as yet what a vast measure of celestial grace hath been bestowed upon Stuttgart. Later it shall be made manifest. Similarly when the clouds pour forth vernal showers and the sun shineth resplendent, no one can then realize the meaning of this favour. However, when the blossoms spring forth, everything will become apparent.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

From Letters and a Cable Written by Shoghi Effendi²

50. Your only consolation lies in the ever-living words of our departed Master, who confidently declared that the days are not far distant when Germany will shake off her present humiliation, and will emerge, mighty, united and glorious, not only to take her destined place in the councils of nations, but to raise high the triumphant banner of the Cause in the very heart of Europe.

(From a letter dated 4 December 1923 to the Bahá'ís of Germany, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance: The Messages from the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith to the Bahá'ís of Germany and Austria", vol. 1 (Hofheim-Langenhain: Bahá'í-Verlag, 1982, pp. 14-15)

51. O spiritual brothers and sisters: Think for a while of the signs of greatness, of supremacy and victory which have appeared in this first century of the Bahá'í Dispensation within the two continents of Europe and America, and indeed across the whole earth. These have come about solely from the powerful effect of the bitter cruelty tasted as if it were purest honey all these long years by those who are overwhelmed in tribulation at the hands of the malevolent in that sorely afflicted land.

It is the shedding of the sacred blood of the martyrs in Persia which has turned the lofty heart of Her Majesty the Queen [Queen Mary of Romania] toward this new-spring plant of God, and caused her, through her successive and stirring messages, to awaken and alert a whole world.

It is the shedding of the sacred blood of the martyrs in Persia which has enabled the knights of the arena of servitude unto God to win the honour of raising and completing, in the heart of America, the noble and exalted structure of the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in the Western world, so that great multitudes from different races, religions, sects and classes were fascinated by and enamoured of that manifest sign, that safe haven, that entrancing Temple of the Cause of the Lord of the worlds.

It is the shedding of the sacred blood of the martyrs in Persia which has guided and assisted the standard-bearers of this oppressed community in the remotest West, to establish distinguished administrative institutions, to found Bahá'í endowments, to obtain official recognition from the high authorities, to put into effect divine laws and ordinances and to formulate a constitution for National Spiritual Assemblies...

It is the shedding of the sacred blood of the martyrs in Persia which, in Germany, has raised up those who have held fast to the strong handle of faith, with such constancy and firmness that, mountain-solid in face of the bitter blasts of tests and the fiery storms of delirious outcries from the foes—which except in America had never blown so fiercely across the West—they withstood every mischief-maker and their feet never stumbled on the narrow path. Nay rather, their fervour, their boldness, their endurance, their help to one another, only increased, and they toiled more than ever to extend in their country the scope of the Cause of God and the range of Bahá'í publications, and to consolidate the institutions of the Faith.

(From a letter dated 21 April 1932 to the Bahá'ís of the East - translated from the Persian)

2 All extracts are in the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi appended to letters written on his behalf, unless otherwise noted.

52. I was so pleased to receive your letter. I long to hear more fully and more frequently from you. You are a tower of strength and a pillar of His Faith in that land. Germany has a glorious future under the banner of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. Its mission is to champion the Cause of God in Europe and establish it firmly in the heart of that continent. The tests and trials which have beset the Faith in that land were necessary and providential. It is for the German believers, who have weathered the storm, to arise and promote the Cause, to proclaim the non-political character of their Faith, to establish its nascent institutions and prove by their words and acts their freedom from every taint of particularism and prejudice....

(16 May 1933 to an individual believer, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 1, pp. 47-48)

53. In the heart of the European continent a community which, as predicted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, is destined, by virtue of its spiritual potentialities and geographical situation, to radiate the splendor of the light of the Faith on the countries that surround it, has been momentarily eclipsed through the restrictions which a regime that has sorely misapprehended its purpose and function has chosen to impose upon it. Its voice, alas, is now silenced, its institutions dissolved, its literature banned, its archives confiscated, and its meetings suspended.

(From a letter dated 25 December 1938 to the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, published as "The Advent of Divine Justice" (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1984), p. 3)

54. Particularly in the heart of the European continent, where the present turmoil, suffering and destitution are mysteriously paving the way for the revival of a Faith which the Beloved Himself has unequivocally prophesied, where a once flourishing community is struggling to fulfil the high hopes entertained for it by Him, and where the prosecutors of the Divine Plan are to lend their direct and systematic assistance when launching the second stage of their world mission, must the American believers contribute the major share in the work of rehabilitation which the followers of Bahá'u'lláh must arise to perform.

(21 December 1945 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Messages to America", p. 84)

55. PRAYING ABUNDANT BLESSINGS EAGER RECEIVE REPORTS PROGRESS COMMUNITY DESTINED DEVELOP AS PROPHESED BY 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ INTO MOST POWERFUL CENTRE SPIRITUAL ILLUMINATION ENTIRE EUROPEAN CONTINENT DEEPEST LOVE.

(24 April 1946 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)

56. It is such a joy, mingled with feelings of deep thankfulness to Bahá'u'lláh, to be able to resume direct correspondence with the elected national representatives of a community that has achieved so much in the past for our Faith, that has been so dearly loved by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and is destined to spread, as He foretold, the light of God's sacred Revelation not only in the heart of Europe but throughout that dark, war-devastated, spiritually famished continent. Now that the shackles imposed upon that community have been removed, and its chief and central administrative institution is again vigorously functioning, a consecrated, sustained and systematic effort must be made, not only by its members, but by the rank and file of its supporters throughout that land, to expand, multiply and consolidate the community's nascent institutions, widen, considerably and rapidly, the range of its literature, establish, firmly and definitely, in however rudimentary a form, its national headquarters in Frankfurt, situated in the heart of that country, reinforce and develop the work assigned to its national committees, revitalize its summer schools and other subsidiary institutions, maintain and develop its contact, through correspondence, with national and local administrative bodies throughout the Bahá'í world, devise effective measures for the proclamation, boldly and determinedly, of the Message to the masses, fortify and enrich its corporate life and lay an unassailable foundation for its future development. The task is immense, the opportunities are priceless and manifold, the hour is critical and challenging, the promises given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá are clear, unmistakable, and soul-refreshing, His assistance ready and unfailing. All that is required, in thanksgiving for the protection vouchsafed to this community by Bahá'u'lláh, is to arise with courage, high resolve and clear vision, to carry out the immediate task in its entirety, and thus prepare the way for the opening of a new and still more glorious chapter in the history of the evolution of the Faith in that land. I pray from all my heart for the speedy and complete realization

of the high hopes I cherish for that dearly-beloved, long-suffering, richly blessed community.

(22 November 1946 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, published in "the Light of Divine guidance", vol. 1, pp. 113-14)

57. The Plan now being prosecuted with such diligence, fidelity, unity and enthusiasm by the long-oppressed, great-hearted, indefatigable, much admired German Bahá'í community, despite the exhaustion following a prolonged ordeal, is entering upon its concluding phase. This first collective enterprise, embarked upon by a community which, by virtue of its size, its experience, its past achievements, occupies a pre-eminent position in the European continent, and is destined, in view of its capacity, its fortitude, its resilience and tenacity of purpose, to play an outstanding role in both contemporary and future Bahá'í history, must, through a concerted and supreme effort on the part of its members, be brought to a triumphant conclusion.

Its successful termination will be but a signal for a series of enterprises, each more glorious than the one preceding it, which will carry the fame of this community, already tested in the crucible of afflictive trials, and richly endowed by the tender favours of its Founder, Who blessed with His Presence its leading centre, to regions far beyond the confines of its homeland and as far as the Eastern fringes of the Asiatic continent.

In such a glorious venture, and in the course of so vast, so momentous and sacred an enterprise, it will, if it discharges manfully its present task, be seconded in its noble exertions by the concerted efforts of all the budding communities in the European continent, and will play a notable role, in collaboration with the trustees of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan labouring throughout the American continents, and with its sister communities toiling in Africa, South-East Asia, and Australasia, in achieving the spiritual conquest of the entire planet.

Much depends, however, on the manner in which it discharges the responsibilities of the present hour. The administrative base from which it must spread out into Eastern and Southern Europe, and beyond these spheres into the heart of Northern Asia, as far as the China Sea, must first be thoroughly consolidated. The valiant battalions that are to carry the banner of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh to distant climes, amidst alien races, and throughout the length and breadth of immense territories and in inhospitable surroundings, must, to begin with, increase in number, acquire added experience, and deepen in their faith and understanding. The literature with which the bearers of God's redeeming Message must be equipped when launching out beyond the frontiers of their native land must, preparatory to their arduous crusade, be multiplied and adapted to the mentality of those diversified peoples and races inhabiting so vast a section of the globe.

The Bahá'í Administrative Headquarters now being completed in the heart and centre of this community's homeland must be speedily consolidated and further extended. The Assemblies and groups which, as a result of the operation of the present Plan, must be brought into being, must be safeguarded and strengthened. The spiritual life of its participating members must, while this process of administrative consolidation is being accelerated, be continually enriched, their vision broadened, their understanding deepened, their unity reinforced, their enthusiasm enkindled through the institutions of summer schools, conventions, regional conferences, youth rallies and study classes. The unity and solidarity of the members of this community must be vigilantly safeguarded and constantly reinforced. The ties binding it to its neighbouring sister-community in Austria must be greatly strengthened, and the administrative agencies operating in both communities must be closely correlated and the co-operation between them continually fostered.

Then, and only then, will this community be empowered to launch befittingly its first campaign, across the borders of its native land, and manifest, as it projects itself beyond its national frontiers and diffuses over regions, both far and near, the illuminating radiance of Bahá'u'lláh's redemptive Revelation, the potencies with which its Divine Founder, the Centre of the Covenant, endowed it in the course of the last decade of His Ministry.

As the Centenary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission approaches, as the Plan formulated by this community draws to a close, a supreme effort, unprecedented in its scope and intensity, must be exerted collectively by its members young and old, an effort that will arouse the admiration of the entire world, that will proclaim its worthiness and capacity to shoulder so immense a task in the

future, and which will carry to a triumphant conclusion this initial undertaking embarked upon by the German and Austrian followers of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the heart of the European continent.

(30 October 1951 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 1, pp. 178-80)

58. The total success of the Plan, now demanding the concentrated attention of the entire German Bahá'í community, is indeed indispensable for the adequate discharge of the still greater tasks that lie ahead of its members, and which, in themselves, will constitute the prelude to the unfoldment of the glorious Mission awaiting them, as soon as the present obstacles are removed, in both Eastern Europe and the heart of the Asiatic continent. The extent of their future undertakings in both continents; their contribution to the Global Crusade to be launched throughout the whole planet; their particular and, in many ways, unique reinforcement of the work, connected with future Bahá'í research and scholarship, in view of the characteristic qualities of painstaking thoroughness, scientific exactitude and dispassionate criticism distinguishing the race to which they belong—these are too vast and complex to be assessed at the present time.

They, no doubt, stand, emerging as they have done, from two successive world ordeals that have served to purify, vitalize, and weld them together, on the threshold of an era of glorious achievements, both at home and abroad. Their present Plan is but the initial chapter in the history of their collective achievements in the service of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh—a service, anticipated in such glowing terms by the One through Whose creative power this community was brought into being, Who nursed it in its infancy, and Who, through His personal visit, communicated to it, in a direct and effective manner, the impulse destined to sustain its growth, guide its steps and lead it to ultimate victory.

The participation of the Bahá'í community, in both Germany and Austria, individually as well as officially, in the forthcoming Stockholm intercontinental Conference—to which I trust its members will contribute a notable share, in view of the part they are destined to play in the future awakening of the European continent—will, no doubt, launch them upon the initial stage of their glorious Mission beyond the confines of their respective countries. Theirs will be the twofold and highly challenging task of consolidating, steadily and rapidly, the administrative foundations of the Structure which is being painstakingly established by them in the heart of the European continent, and of implanting the banner of the rising Order of their Faith in the neighbouring sovereign states and dependencies of that continent and even beyond its borders as far as the heart of Asia.

(30 May 1952 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 1, pp. 185-86)

59. The German and Austrian Bahá'í Communities, on whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá lavished His favours, for whose future He cherished such high hopes, occupying such a central position in a continent endowed with such great potentialities, must, by reason of their unique and predominant position, their past history, their virility, tenacity and splendid accomplishments, assume a preponderating role in the conduct of a Crusade in which all Bahá'í communities dwelling on the European mainland, both young and old, are called upon to participate to the utmost of their capacity with all the resources at their disposal.

They stand, moreover, at this crucial hour in their destiny, on the threshold of a new era in their history—the era that must witness the initiation of their mission beyond the borders of their homeland, and one which must culminate in their carrying the banner of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh across the eastern frontiers of Europe, and as far as the territories lying in the heart of the Asiatic continent.

(21 June 1953 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria)

60. The greatest, the most pressing and sacred enterprise, challenging the spirit and resources of all the members of both of these communities—the purchase of the land for the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of Europe and the prompt initiation of measures for its construction—demands, during this present phase of the Crusade, the utmost concentration of effort, the most sublime sacrifice on the part of the German and Austrian believers—an effort and sacrifice in which their brethren, in both the East

and the West, will gladly participate, as a token of their appreciation of the historic significance of this mighty institution destined to be firmly established and radiate its beneficent influence in the very heart of that continent.

...

The rise of this symbol and harbinger of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, as yet in the embryonic stage of its development, amidst the confusion, the anxieties, the rivalries and the recurrent crises that mark the decline of a moribund civilization, will, no doubt, lend a tremendous impetus to the onward march of the Faith in all the continents of the globe, and will, more than any other single act, direct the attention of the spiritually impoverished, the economically afflicted, the socially disturbed, and the morally disoriented masses of a sorely tried continent to its nascent institutions.

(25 June 1954 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 1, p. 219)

61. Another matter of vital importance, and destined to exert a lasting influence on the immediate destinies of the Germany Bahá'í Community, is the adoption of the necessary measures for the introduction of the Faith into neighbouring territories, such as the translation of Bahá'í literature into Russian and into the languages in use in the Baltic States, and the exploration of every avenue designed to enable German Bahá'í pioneers to launch this vast, this historic and meritorious campaign beyond the eastern confines of their native land.

(21 June 1956 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 1, p. 268)

From a Letter Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi

62. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá has so often remarked Germany will one day be destined to lead all the nations and peoples of Europe spiritually, that from its very heart the Bahá'ís will spread all over the European continent, proclaiming with one voice the glad-tidings of this New Day.

(15 March 1934 to an individual believer)

3. France

From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

63. Paris hath great natural vitality and ardour. In the realms of nature and politics she hath always been a city of ferment. And yet—the fire of the love of God hath still not blazed up as it should have and could, for the power of nature is still triumphant over the power of religion. However, since the people of Paris are full of ardour, I hope they will show forth a mighty passion in heavenly pleasures. Then will the Sun of Truth shine down and make that realm a garden of infallible delight. Should the sea of the Covenant and Testament surge forth in that region, the people will surely be filled with ardour. Without the power of the Covenant, the horizons of the world will be stilled...

(From a Tablet to an individual believer - translated from the Persian)

64. Paris hath capacity! Should the fire of the love of God touch Paris's heart, blessed souls will rise up and she will be of all spots brightest and best. Strive with all thy heart that a few important souls may be attracted—souls profound in science and learning, of lofty aspirations, not bound by that which perisheth nor seeking the body's ease, like candles in every company, forthright and faithful at the midmost centre of the world!...

Let Paris become precious. Let the standard of supreme guidance be hoisted therein. Let a tumult break out in the town. Let the morning-star of the oneness of the world of man shine forth. Let the call of God rise up, and the song of the Kingdom be in the ears of the spiritual. For this I am

waiting! How long ere some soul entereth this arena and seizeth this distinction for himself? Such then is my hope.

(From a Tablet to an individual believer - translated from the Persian)

65. Paris hath acquired capacity through the endeavours of the friends of God. Were all to do as thou hast done and exert their efforts to exalt the Word of God and propagate the divine fragrances, in a little while that city would be celebrated in every corner of the world and that clime would become a garden of delight....

(From a Tablet to an individual believer - translated from the Persian)

From Letters Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi to Individual Believers

66. The Paris Bahá'ís, representing as they do the oldest Community of the Cause in Europe, occupy an important position, and he is most anxious for the growth and spread of the Faith there and throughout France.

(1 July 1946)

67. The work in France is beginning to reflect the general and great impetus to the teaching work which the present Plan is responsible for in Europe. It is only right and fitting that the first country to have had a Centre in Europe should take her place at the forefront, and he hopes France will gradually do this.

(30 November 1948)

68. France could certainly profit greatly, as you say, from the visits of more travelling teachers, and he hopes that as the urgent phase in the building up of the Ten Goal Countries passes, more attention can be given to assisting the French believers. No doubt a great deal could be achieved in France with relatively little effort, and he longs for the day when the oldest Bahá'í Community in Europe can play a more important part in the affairs of the Cause in that Continent.

(31 October 1949)