

Messages from Shoghi Effendi
to the Benelux countries

Dear Co-worker

... your splendid work
in scope of your national
activities & consolidate its
history & splendid work
already accomplished,
your true brother,
Shoghi

Dedicated to those dearly loved co-workers of whom
the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, wrote:
“Future generations will extol your labours
and derive inspiration from the example you have set.”

Dear Co-worker

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to the Benelux countries



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Preface

The Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith set foot on Benelux soil at least once. Together with Rúhíyyih Khánum, probably after World War II, he made a short stopover at Schiphol Airport and from there dashed off by taxi to the Rijksmuseum in nearby Amsterdam to see *De Nachtwacht* ('The Night Watch'), Rembrandt's famous painting.

As far as we know, the Guardian did not meet any believers on that occasion. In fact he never journeyed to officially meet with the Bahá'ís. He chose instead as an important means of guiding the worldwide Bahá'í Community an extensive correspondence, ranging from short cables to extensive monographs, well over 17,500 in total. The present book offers, for the first time, a compilation of his letters which were sent to Bahá'ís living in Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

The plan to compile these letters originated in Belgium during the Bahá'í Summer School of 2004, when Mr. 'Alí Nakhjavání, a former member of the Universal House of Justice, suggested the idea to an attending Dutch Bahá'í. A few months later, the National Spiritual Assembly of Belgium presented the delegates to the 2005 Belgian National Convention with a small compilation. When the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís

of the Netherlands received a copy of this booklet, it was impressed and took up Mr. Nakhjavání's idea.

A task force was formed with members from the three National communities. It was charged to collect as many of Shoghi Effendi's letters to the Benelux as possible and to give honour to those early pioneers to the Benelux and the first native Bahá'ís for their memorable services. It is our hope that this book will connect us with those days, when, in accordance with Shoghi Effendi's instructions, the foundation was laid for all our present Bahá'í work.

We feel honoured that the introductions were written by Mr. Hénuzet, one of the last living native Bahá'ís from that period and an active "co-worker" to this day, and by Mr. Nakhjavání who gave the impulse for this book. This compilation is the result of a special spirit of love, with wonderful assistance from the World Centre, the United States Archivist, and from individual friends both within and outside the Benelux. We are grateful to all those who contributed.

We hope that this book will be an inspiration for the Bahá'ís living in the countries of the Benelux today. In 2001 the Universal House of Justice announced that the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh had entered the fifth epoch of its Formative Age, a "milestone [that] falls within the patterns established by Shoghi Effendi for marking measures of time in the history of the Cause". Under the inspiring guidance of the Universal House of Justice and the International Teaching Centre, the Bahá'í World has since then been engaged in a series of Five Year Plans aimed at the promotion of "entry by troops", leading to the centenary of the Formative Age.

It is inspiring to read now what Shoghi Effendi wrote to the very first Regional Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the Benelux (elected by delegates of four Local Spiritual Assemblies) in a letter of July 5th 1957 about our three "newly emerged, wholly dedicated, steadily unfolding, highly promising communities": *"The spirit, ... that so powerfully animates them in the discharge of their sacred and inescapable duties is such as to ensure, if they persevere along the path they now tread, their complete and total victory."*

On November 4th 1957 the Bahá'í World suffered an indescribable loss when our beloved Guardian suddenly passed away. How much we wish that Shoghi Effendi could have witnessed the formation only five years later of the National Spiritual Assemblies of our three ever-growing Bahá'í Communities that together comprise 45 Local Spiritual Assemblies at this time.

May we finish this preface with the moving words of Shoghi Effendi concluding that letter of July 5th 1957: *“That they may prove themselves worthy of their high calling; that they may rise to such heights as to excite the unqualified admiration of their brethren not only in the European continent but throughout both the Eastern and Western Hemispheres; that they may, through the range and quality of their concerted exertions, draw forth a measure of Divine bounty adequate to meet the pressing needs and manifold requirements of their glorious mission is my ardent and constant prayer for them all as I lay my head on the threshold of His Most Holy Shrine. Shoghi”*

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Belgium

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Luxembourg

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of The Netherlands



Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith

The mail

'Alí and Violette Nakhjavání

After arriving in Haifa following the passing of the beloved Master, Shoghi Effendi set himself the task of translating into English the text of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and of writing, in collaboration with Lady Blomfield, an account of the events leading to the Master's passing and of the funeral ceremony that followed. It was early in 1922 when he started corresponding with the friends in the East and West. For two years, from 1922 to 1924, for the most part he wrote his letters himself to the institutions and the friends.

As his work increased he developed the method of asking secretaries to write letters on his behalf, conveying his instructions and thoughts in response to reports received or questions asked. For sixteen years he regularly used three secretaries from among members of his family for correspondence with the friends in the West. These were two of his cousins, Rúhí Afnán and Suhayl Afnán, and one of his brothers, Ḥusayn Rabbání. He always opened all correspondence addressed to himself, and when time permitted he would instruct his secretary on how to answer the points raised in each incoming letter. After reading and approving a drafted response, he would often append a few words of his own followed by his signature.

In one of the letters written on his behalf we read the following postscript in his own hand: "Whatever letters are sent on my behalf from Haifa are all read and approved by me before mailing. There is no exception whatever to this rule." (*Principles of Bahá'í Administration: A Compilation*. London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976, p. 89)

Gradually the regular English-speaking secretaries, namely, his two cousins and finally his brother, all broke the Covenant and disqualified themselves from membership in the community. It was then, in 1940, that Shoghi Effendi called on Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum to serve as his secretary for the West. From what Violette heard several times from Rúhíyyih Khánum, Shoghi Effendi had told her that she was the best of all his secretaries and that he was very pleased with the manner in which she was able to faithfully convey his thoughts, wishes and instructions. Rúhíyyih Khánum did relate that in some cases the Guardian felt her drafts were too wordy, and he would instruct her to write more briefly and concisely.

There is an anecdote that Rúhíyyih Khánum quite often recounted. She said that her writing was never up to calligraphic standards, and when Shoghi Effendi was reviewing her drafted letters, he would often find that he needed to 'cross her "t"s and dot her "i"s. Rúhíyyih Khánum carried out her responsibilities until the end of Shoghi Effendi's earthly life.

Short history

'Alí and Violette Nakhjavání

The Benelux countries, namely, the Central Organization for a Durable Peace, which was based in The Hague, feature early in the history of the Bahá'í Faith. It was on 17 December 1919 that 'Abdu'l-Bahá sent a detailed Tablet to that Organization outlining the basic Teachings of the Faith as they bear upon the establishment of universal peace. The Hand of the Cause of God 'Alí-Muḥammad Ibn-i-Aṣḍaq and Mr. Aḥmad Yazdání, a devoted Bahá'í Esperantist, were asked by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to carry this Tablet to the Organization's Offices in The Hague.


After 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing, the beloved Guardian closely followed and encouraged the development of the Faith in Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg, directed travelling teachers to visit those countries, took an interest in and even helped financially with the publication of Bahá'í literature in the local languages, and corresponded with visiting Bahá'ís as well as early native believers, stimulating and inspiring them to promote the interests of the Faith in these countries. Outstanding among the travelling teachers that visited Belgium in 1936 were Mrs. May Maxwell and her daughter, Mary Maxwell, who later became Amatu'l-Bahá Rúḥíyyih Khánum. Mrs. Maxwell's visit was in response to the beloved

Guardian's wish that she should visit Belgium and stimulate the teaching work in that country.

It was in April 1946 that the beloved Guardian called on the American and Canadian believers to direct their efforts and their human and other resources to the Continent of Europe, the "cradle of world-famed civilizations", as he described that Continent. He included this goal as one of the main objectives of the second Seven Year Plan of the National Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada.

As a result of these activities, the beloved Guardian determined that the foundations which had been laid since 1946 were adequate enough to justify the formation of an interim Regional National Spiritual Assembly for the three Benelux countries at Ridván 1957.

Five years later, at Ridván 1962, the number of Local Spiritual Assemblies and new believers had reached a point when it was possible to establish independent National Assemblies for each of the three Benelux countries. The story of these developments can be traced and better understood through the perusal of the letters of the beloved Guardian in this compilation.



Short history

Louis Hénuzet

The period from 1946 to 1957 corresponds to the growth of Bahá'í communities within those countries of Western Europe where this had not yet taken place. From the birth of the Faith up until 1946, structured communities had been built in Great Britain, France and Germany. Due to its interdiction under the Nazi regime in Germany, this latter community had to reform after World War II. In other countries, such as Belgium and the Netherlands, the Faith had only touched a few individuals who had encountered it on their travels or in the context of conferences organized by the Esperantist League at which Bahá'ís participated.

In 1946 Shoghi Effendi launched the second Seven Year Plan, one of the main objectives of which was to introduce the Faith into ten European "goal" countries. These were the three Scandinavian countries, the three Benelux states, the two nations of the Iberian Peninsula, and Switzerland and Italy. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States of America, under whose aegis the achievement of this goal had been placed, decided to form a European Teaching Committee, which would dispatch pioneers into each of these goal countries.

The first Local Spiritual Assemblies were rapidly formed in the capital cities of these European countries. By Ridván 1949 there were Assemblies in Amsterdam, Brussels and Luxembourg. These very young communities all felt the need to collaborate and decided initially to pool their efforts by exchanging public speakers.

This collaboration received a new impulse in December 1951 with the formation by the European Teaching Committee of a Teaching Committee for the Benelux, composed of Rita van Bleyswijk Sombeek and Theo Beets for the Netherlands, Léa Nijs and Louis Hénuzet for Belgium, and Suzette Hipp and Claude Lévy for Luxembourg. The tasks assigned to this committee were the organisation of an annual teaching conference and the exchange of public speakers, as well as the creation of publicity materials for public talks.

The first annual conference took place at the Brussels Bahá'í Centre from 11 to 14 April 1952. Each country presented a report of its efforts to create other local communities where already a centre or group of believers existed. In Belgium, such centres could be found in Antwerp, Ostend, Courtrai and Liège. However, it was decided, following the guidance of the European Teaching Committee, to concentrate on a single city. Antwerp was chosen.

A second conference was convened for 1 and 2 November 1952 in Antwerp at the "Hôtel de Londres". This was the occasion for studying Shoghi Effendi's message of 23 August 1952 announcing the formation of Regional Assemblies as a prelude to the formation of National Assemblies. And, of course, included among these Regional Assemblies was one for the Benelux. I can clearly remember the enthusiasm of the participants at that conference. Certainly our communities were still weak and numerically small, but we possessed the certitude that everything would consolidate in time to permit the election of this Regional Assembly by the planned deadline of April 1957.

From 1952 to 1957 cooperation between the three Benelux nations was intense. In 1954 the conference was held from 6 to 8 June near Arnhem

in the Netherlands, and it was followed by a Summer School from 9 to 13 June. These enriching experiences were henceforth to be renewed every year in one or other of the three countries, most notably on the Belgian coast.

However, as the efforts so unconditionally expended for the formation of the other Local Assemblies were nevertheless unsuccessful, the four Local Assemblies elected in April 1956 (The Hague, Amsterdam, Brussels and Luxemburg) were finally deemed sufficient to form the Regional Assembly of the Benelux. The Regional Convention was held at the recently acquired National Bahá'í Centre at 54, Rue Stanley in Brussels, in the presence of Mr. Borrah Kavelin, representing the National Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States of America. Bob van Lith and Jan Sijssling from the Netherlands, Claude Lévy from Luxemburg, and Jean and Léa Nijs, Roger Swinnen, Fernand Radar, Elsa Dekoninck and Louis Hénuzet from Belgium were elected.

And this Regional Assembly of the Benelux would continue to guide the destiny of our three countries until the election of independent National Spiritual Assemblies in April 1962.

Messages

1 Louise Drake Wright, 14 April 1932

Dear Miss Wright:¹

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to drop you these few lines to acknowledge the receipt of your cable asking his advice concerning your teaching tour. He believes that the most advisable thing is to concentrate upon northern

1. Louise Drake Wright (1867-1949) was an American believer who first heard of the Bahá'í Faith in Italy in 1907. She and her sister lived in England when 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited there in 1911. She met Him 'almost daily' during his stay there in London. Following her pilgrimage to the Holy Land and her meeting with the Guardian in November and December 1929, Wright went to Germany to visit the Bahá'ís there. In January 1932, an inspiring letter from Shoghi Effendi reached her in Brookline, Massachusetts: 'I trust that your health is sufficiently restored to enable you to resume with enthusiasm and vigour your services to the Cause in Europe', and so Wright sailed for France, arriving in April. She immediately proceeded to Geneva in Switzerland where, since 1925, the International Bahá'í Bureau had acted as an intermediary between Haifa and other Bahá'í centres. There this letter of the Guardian reached her.

Germany and Holland. He has already asked Miss Jack² to stay in Sofia and Mr. Benke³ is going to join her. Mrs. Gregory⁴ and Martha⁵ are to devote most of their time to Central Europe especially Hungary, Austria and Poland. This makes Eastern and Central Europe well provided for.

Shoghi Effendi therefore believes that you could render greater services if you visit the centers in Germany especially the northern part and also include Holland.

As far as we can learn through the correspondence we receive, the greatest amount and most lasting work has been achieved by those teachers who instead of covering much ground stay for at least a few weeks in the same city and try to confirm those whom they interest. Mere meeting the people and speaking to them about the general aspects of the Cause does not generally produce a lasting result. So if you chose some of the towns in Northern Germany and Holland and stay at least [a] few weeks in each place you could achieve more. Holland is a totally new country to the Cause so it will be true pioneer service. We do not know how receptive the people are but through the grace of God some real opening could be made.

2. Marion Jack (1866-1954) was a Canadian Bahá'í. She became a believer in Paris in 1900, brought the Faith to Alaska in 1919, and settled in Sofia (Bulgaria) as a pioneer in 1932, remaining there the rest of her life.

3. George Adam Benke (1878-1932) was a Russian immigrant in Germany. He accepted the Bahá'í Faith in 1920, moved from Leipzig to Sofia (Bulgaria), and died there in November 1932. Shoghi Effendi called him the first European martyr.

4. Louisa Gregory (*née* Mathew) (1866-1956) was a British Bahá'í, the first to visit Romania in 1925. She was the wife of Hand of the Cause Louis C. Gregory.

5. Martha Louise Root (1872-1939) was an American journalist and writer who became a Bahá'í in 1909. Posthumously, Shoghi Effendi named her a Hand of the Cause. See also letter 5 April 1947 (24).

6. Gerrit Jan Bertelink (1908-1990) became a Bahá'í in the 1920's. He had a Protestant background and worked as a reporter for a regional newspaper in the east of the Netherlands.

We have only one Bahá'í there and his name is: Herr G.I. Bertelink⁶, Hoogstraat 3, Enschede, Holland. Perhaps you could use his help; otherwise you will have to rely on your own resources and divine help.

Anyhow Shoghi Effendi hopes you will succeed and create a new and prosperous center in Holland. Assuring you of his prayers and best wishes I remain.

Yours ever sincerely, Rúhí Afnán

2 **Louise Drake Wright, 30 July 1932**

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

It was with a great sense of appreciation and joy that Shoghi Effendi received your letter of July 5th, 1932 which he read with deep care and interest, and he has directed me to address you these lines expressing his heartfelt thanks for your manifold services to our beloved Faith.

The detailed narrative of your most interesting experiences throughout your visits to the different European countries, the many contacts you made with both Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís and especially with some distinguished University professors such as Dr. Fisher⁷ of the department of Oriental studies in the University of Leipzig, filled our Guardian's heart with thanks and joy and confirmed his hopes for the future of your pioneering work in the many countries you visited.⁸

I need not assure you how appreciative the Guardian is of all the precious efforts you are making for the spread of the Bahá'í teachings. He cherishes the brightest hopes for the future of your work. Your literary and intellectual power, your devotion and invincible faith as well as your perseverance

7. August Fischer (1865-1949) was a German orientalist and author of a well-known lexicon of Arabic.

8. After a journey through Germany (April-June), during which she visited Bahá'í communities in Leipzig, Berlin, Rostock, Warnemünde and Hamburg, Wright stayed in Amsterdam from 27 June to 11 August 1932.

and constancy, all these qualities of your heart and mind make you assuredly equal to the noble and most delicate task you have set yourself to achieve.

However meagre the immediate results of your efforts may be, however sceptical nay cynical the attitude of the public may seem to appear, you should always be confident that wherever you may go and to whomsoever you may speak the Hand of Divine Guidance is with you and will always lead you in the right path.⁹

Shoghi Effendi will be always delighted to hear of your news and he wishes you to keep him in touch with your activities. And be assured that he will be always glad to give you any advice or help you may need. In his moments of meditation and prayer he will always remember you and ask the Almighty that He may cheer and comfort you and give you the necessary strength for the fulfilment of your most precious task.

Yours in His Service, H. Rabbání

Dear and valued co-worker:

Your message of sympathy cabled in connection with the passing of our beloved Khánúm¹⁰ has touched me and relieved the burden of grief that weighs so heavily on my heart. Our loss is irreparable, our grief immense. The example of her saintly life will inspire us to follow in her footsteps. Your pioneer services in Holland are highly meritorious in the sight of God and I wish you to persevere in your noble task and not to allow either grief or the apathy of the people to deflect you from your high purpose. Your true brother, Shoghi

9. Wright had found it difficult to come into contact with the Dutch and not only because of language problems. 'The people here are all Holland for the Hollanders, led by the Queen who is intrusive in her leaning in this direction... They feel no need of any others. They feel far superior to all surrounding countries', she wrote at the end of her stay.

10. Bahíyyih Khánúm. See also letter 15 August 1932.

Dear Bahá'í co-worker,

Your letters dated July 19th and 25th, 1932 addressed to Shoghi Effendi were duly received and read with deep interest. He has directed me to address you these few lines expressing his warmest thanks and his lively appreciation of your kind words of condolence and sympathy in connection with the sudden passing of the Greatest Holy Leaf¹¹. Your beautiful and touching words greatly alleviated the burden of his sorrow and comforted his aching heart.

At this terrible hour, when hearts are filled with grief and minds are turned towards God imploring His grace, our Guardian's sole comfort is to see you as ever active in the service of the Cause.

In this great calamity which has affected all the friends both in East and West, his loss has been the greatest and the most cruel. But his heart is overflowing with thanks to God for the guidance and help which His blessings confer to all those who, scattered in every part of the globe, are striving to promote and consolidate the interests of the Faith.

He has, already, cabled to you regarding your teaching work in Holland and has urged you to concentrate on those few people who are truly interested in the teachings of the Cause and to make of them sincere Bahá'ís. It is no use delivering the Message to the public in a general way. You should strive to take hold of some persons who have a genuine interest in the Faith and to deepen their knowledge and make them ready for teaching.

Assuring you once more of Shoghi Effendi's warmest thanks and of his continued prayers on your behalf.

Yours in His service, H. Rabbání

11. Bahíyyih Khánúm (1846-1932), who was also known as the Greatest Holy Leaf, was Bahá'u'lláh's oldest daughter and the sister of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. She passed away in Haifa on 15 July. In her diary Wright wrote: 'I have heard the sad news that the

Dear and precious co-worker:

Your services in Europe, and particularly in Holland, are deeply appreciated. I trust that through your constant efforts a center will be established in that country and will start to function vigorously and prove a prelude to still greater achievements in the future. I am urging Mrs. Greeven in Bremen to hasten the translation of Dr. Esslemont's book into Dutch, as I feel it to be an essential preliminary to an intensive teaching campaign in that land¹². May the Beloved assist you to render memorable services and to establish His Faith in the hearts of its inhabitants. Your true and grateful brother, Shoghi

4 **Louise Drake Wright, 11 March 1933**

Dear Miss Wright:

Shoghi Effendi was very glad to receive your two letters dated September 30th, 1932 and February 19th, 1933 together with the enclosed.

As regards the election of new members on the National Assembly, Shoghi Effendi finds no other practical method that is in conformity with the spirit of the Teachings, except through better acquaintance of the friends during the annual convention and summer schools. It is the duty of the individual friends to come to know one another and find out who

Greatest Holy Leaf has ascended to her Father in heaven. This is indeed a most sorrowful blow to our beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi. And when I remember her dear Kindness to me both times I visited Haifa I am all gratitude that I was privileged to go there before she left this earth. She said she would always be with me and would always pray for me. How little I knew what an eternal blessing this is. May I repay in doing all I can for our Faith.'

12. Inez Greeven (*née* Marshall) (1889-1983) was a New York Bahá'í living in Bremen (Germany) at the time. She was instrumental in the publication of the Dutch translation of *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, an introductory handbook on the history and teachings of the Bahá'í Faith, written by the Scottish physician John Ebenezer Esslemont (1874-1925). See also letters 11 March, 28 March, and 12 April 1933.

are the persons best fitted to become members of that body. This is a slow process but surely the best one and gives the greatest amount of freedom of choice to the electors. It is the duty of the friends individually to become more intelligent voters and vote only after studying the situation conscientiously.

As regards the chart representing creation, we should always remember that no matter how useful such charts may be for beginners, the real authority lies in the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh and the Master. They have to say the last word. It is by them that we should be guided, rather than by charts that help the beginners.

The Guardian was very glad to hear that you are contemplating a second visit to Holland.¹³ According to the reports we have received from Mrs. Greeven, Captain Liebau¹⁴ has completed the translation of Dr. Esslemont's book. Should it go immediately to the printers, as Shoghi Effendi hopes it will, it will be a source of great assistance to you.¹⁵

In Eastern Europe the Cause is making wonderful head-way. We earnestly hope Northern Europe will do the same. They are very enlightened and should appreciate the importance of peace and a spiritual regeneration of man.

In his moments of prayer at the blessed Shrines, the Guardian will think of you and Mrs. Nelson¹⁶ as well as the other friends in Boston and ask for you all divine guidance and help.

Yours ever sincerely, Rúhí Afnán

13. Wright received this letter only days before leaving Boston for, what she called, 'a second attempt to promote knowledge of the Bahá'í Revelation in the Netherlands'.

14. Jacob (Jaap) Asmus Liebau (1886-1969), from Rotterdam, was a captain of the Holland-America Line. He learned of the Bahá'í Faith in New York in 1919, translated several Bahá'í books into Dutch, and formally became a believer in May 1952.

15. The Dutch translation of *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* was not yet available when Wright settled in Amsterdam once more on 27 March 1933. Her second stay in Holland lasted until 18 July 1933.

16. Caroline Nelson (*née* Wright) was Wright's sister. She too was a Bahá'í.

Dear co-worker:

The problems which confront the believers at the present time, whether social, spiritual, economic or administrative will be gradually solved as the number and the resources of the friends multiply and their capacity for service and for the application of Bahá'í principles develops. They should be patient, confident and active in utilizing every possible opportunity that presents itself within the limits now necessarily imposed upon them. May the Almighty aid them to fulfil their highest hopes. Your true brother, Shoghi

5 Inez Greeven, 28 March 1933

Dear Mrs. Greeven:¹⁷

I am directed by the Guardian to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated March 20th, 1933.

He feels deeply thankful and gratified for your readiness to act promptly and print the book. As Miss Louise Drake Wright of Boston is shortly coming to Holland to resume the teaching work she started there last year, the sooner the book is ready for circulation the more it will help her in her work. The Guardian sincerely hopes that no unnecessary delay will be permitted.

When the book is out of the press please send one hundred copies to Haifa to the address of Shoghi Effendi, fifty to America to the address of the Publishing Committee, fifty to the National Assembly of Germany, fifty to the Bahá'í Bureau in Geneva¹⁸ and the remainder, please keep yourself for future demands. Perhaps, on her coming to Holland, Miss Wright will desire to have some for her work there.

17. See footnote 12.

18. Since 1925 the International Bahá'í Bureau in Geneva had acted as an intermediary between Haifa and the European Bahá'í centres.

Please extend Shoghi Effendi's greetings to Mr. Greeven¹⁹ and express his deep appreciation for the services he is so kindly rendering.

Assuring you both of the Guardian's prayers and best wishes, I remain, yours ever sincerely, Rúhí Afnán.

P. S. The Guardian fully approves of your suggestion to place copies of the book in the bookshops of Rotterdam. We have just heard that Miss Wright has reached Amsterdam. Her address is still unknown. Rúhí

Dear and precious co-worker:

I wish to assure you again of my genuine and lively appreciation of the prompt response on your part to my request - a response which I know involves self-sacrifice, and will, I am sure, attract the blessings of our beloved Master. Your name will thereby be forever associated with the birth and history of the Cause in Holland, a further evidence of the predominating share which the American believers are assuming in the international spread of the Cause. Your true and grateful brother, Shoghi²⁰

6 Louise Drake Wright, 12 April 1933

Dear Miss Wright:

Shoghi Effendi was delighted to receive your letter of March 31st, 1933 and obtain the news of your safe arrival to Holland. He sincerely hopes that you will pick up the threads of the work you did there last year and gradually confirm in the teachings those you had interested.

19. Max Greeven (1869-1961) was an American Bahá'í who was originally from Germany. He was the husband of Inez Greeven and worked as the European representative of a Houston based cotton firm. See also letter 10 November 1938.

20. A few days after receiving this letter Marshall dashed from Bremen to Rotterdam for one day to consult Doeke Zijlstra of the *Nijgh & van Ditmar* publishing company, as she found 'things moved too slowly by letter'. In April she wrote to Wright: 'The

You may be interested to know that Mr. and Mrs. Max Greeven will soon be in Rotterdam, if they are not there already, to attend to the publication of Dr. Esslemont's book into Dutch.²¹ As they are expecting to get in touch with Captain Liebau who is now in Holland, you can therefore reach them through him.

There is also a young man by the name of Grosfeld, who is Dutch and has been living in the Dutch East Indies, who is coming back to reside in Holland.²² He is travelling through the United States to meet the friends there.

With all you people centered in Holland some really lasting and wonderful work should be accomplished. But, naturally, much will depend upon you, who will act as the teacher and will stay in the country for some time. They can be very helpful to create for you new contacts, and introduce you to circles where they are known, and in which you could not otherwise enter, or obtain access to. The introductions that you possess are also very valuable and helpful.

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to assure you of his prayers and best wishes for a successful campaign. He trusts that God will guide you and enable you to create a strong and permanent center in that country. He will be eagerly awaiting the news of your activities and the progress of your work.

With best wishes, yours ever sincerely, Rúhí Afnán

book should be off the press in about three weeks time. I cabled Shoghi Effendi yesterday and today he answered: "Delighted, loving appreciation". He feels now that you have something to lean on, and I fear you will need a prop! ... Capt. Liebau has promised to translate, during his present voyage to Amer. the pamphlet: "What is the Bahá'í Movement?" and I shall have 1000 copies of that printed to help you. I think we need some small, free literature – don't you?"

21. The book came out in May 1933.

22. Wim E. M. Grosfeld (1893-1960) learned of the Bahá'í Faith in 1925 in Port Said (Egypt) on his journey to the Dutch East Indies (now the Republic of Indonesia). He broke his journey for a visit to the Guardian in Haifa. In early 1933 he left the Dutch East Indies. See also letter 9 February 1934.

Dear and precious co-worker:

Your two letters dated April 6th and 7th have just arrived and I am delighted to learn of the splendid start you have made. I wish you could induce Mr. [...] to undertake and finish as soon as he can the translation of the Iqán²³, which has already been published into four languages, the latest being the Chinese version. The book constitutes an essential preliminary to an intensive and intelligent campaign of teaching in Holland. I wish he could complete the translation before the end of the present year! If he cannot undertake it in person, I trust his collaborators may enable him to complete it. The "New Era" is being translated into fifteen additional languages! May the Beloved bless richly your historic work. Rest assured, I will continue to pray for you. Your true brother, Shoghi

7 Louise Drake Wright, 7 May 1933

Dear Miss Wright:

The Guardian received your letter which you had left undated, and read it with a sense of deep pleasure and satisfaction. He sincerely hopes that God will reinforce your sacrificial efforts and enable you to sow some good seeds in that country, for it is sure that the land is ready and the people are far more restless to obtain something new, to help them out of their present troubles, than they were a few years ago. The Guardian will surely pray for you, while visiting the Blessed Shrines, and ask God to guide and assist you.

23. The Kitáb-i-Iqán (*The Book of Certitude*) is an early work of Bahá'u'lláh. Shoghi Effendi described it as of 'unsurpassed pre-eminence among the writings of the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation'. His English translation was published in 1931. See also letters 7 May, 29 May and 27 June 1933.

As regards the translation and publication of the Iqán, Shoghi Effendi believes that as long as Mr. [...] is going to translate it free of charge we should not let the chance be left to slip away. Encourage him to start that work and complete it as soon as possible. Meanwhile will you obtain some estimate as to how much its publication will cost and inform the Guardian? He is very eager to have this wonderful book translated well, for it is the best means of grounding those who become interested in the fundamental teachings of the Faith. The Iqán and Dr. Esslemont's book will be sufficient to make any seeker a true believer in the divine nature of the Faith.

The Guardian is eagerly awaiting the news of the progress of your work. He hopes you will keep him informed as to any interesting developments especially regarding the translation of the Iqán.

Assuring you of his prayers and best wishes, yours ever sincerely, Rúhí Afnán

Dear and precious co-worker:

I wonder whether it would be possible to induce the translator to print the Iqán at his own expense and obtain whatever profit he can make from the sale of the books, with a definite assurance that we would purchase from him a fixed percentage of the books immediately they are published. If this is not acceptable, I would appreciate an estimate of the cost of publication, and trust it will be possible, in the near future, to provide the sum that is required. I trust and pray that the Beloved may guide and sustain you in your arduous, your pioneer and highly meritorious endeavours for the spread of the Cause in Holland. Shoghi

24. This letter arrived on 7 June and presented Wright with, what she called, a 'startling assignment'. How could she find out whether or not the publisher's proposition was 'wholly genuine'? She sought the advice of her other Dutch contacts and learned that the publisher was not the right person. On 10 June, Wright advised the Guardian by cable to cancel the project. See also letter 27 June 1933.

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

Shoghi Effendi has directed me to address you these few lines, informing you of a letter he has recently received from Mr. [...] in which he has proposed to translate the Kitáb-i-Iqán into Dutch and to have it published partly on his own account. Mr. [...], who is a journalist, seems to be deeply interested in the Bahá'í teachings and, although himself not a Bahá'í, yet his genuine belief is that the Iqán is a highly-important and interesting book that can be of an invaluable help to every thoughtful person with some knowledge of religious literature.

His proposition for the publication of the book is as follows. The cost of the publication of 1000 copies he estimates to be 550 dollars and the price of each copy will not exceed 1,50 dollars. He is willing to translate the book free of any charge and he is ready to bring out the book provided Shoghi Effendi purchases from him 350 copies at a total price of 350 dollars, of which to be paid 175 dollars at once and 175 dollars at the date of publication.

The Guardian is very glad that Mr. [...] is ready to facilitate and expedite the publication of the Iqán, and he is ready to contribute his share for the immediate completion of this work.

Inasmuch, however, as he is not sufficiently acquainted with the man he would prefer not sending him the sum directly. He thinks it would be much wiser and safer to have the amount sent directly to you so as to prevent any possible difficulty or misunderstanding.

With the assurance of his best and loving greetings and of his continued prayers for the advancement and success of your work.

Yours in His Service, H. Rabbání

P.S. Shoghi Effendi would like you to find out whether Mr. [...]’s proposition is wholly genuine and in case you confirm it, he is ready to send you half of the sum immediately.²⁴ H.R.

Dear and valued co-worker,

Your deeply interesting letters of May 12 brought deep joy to my heart. I am so sorry to hear of the delay in the publication of the 'New Era'. Do please make every effort to expedite the work, and ensure its early publication. The services you are rendering in protecting the Cause, in defending its institutions, in explaining its principles, in diffusing its spirit and circulating its literature are indeed highly praiseworthy, most appropriate and meritorious in the sight of God. Your pioneer work will surely be richly blessed and enrich the annals of our immortal Faith, if you persevere in your high endeavours. Immediately you confirm and approve the proposition of Mr. [...] I will send you the sum of \$175 as first instalment. Your true brother, Shoghi

Shoghi Effendi has postponed answering Mr. [...]’s letter until he hears from you. Please write to him immediately.

9 Inez Greeven, 13 June 1933

Dear Bahá’í Sister,

Your letters dated Apr. 4th and 14th, 1933 addressed to Shoghi Effendi were received and were read with great care and deepest appreciation.

He wishes me to extend to you his heartfelt thanks for your splendid efforts in connection with the translation of Dr. Esslemont’s book into Dutch.²⁵ He hopes that through your perseverance and your zeal the whole work will be soon ready for distribution.

The Guardian is fully confident that the circulation of this book will greatly facilitate the teaching efforts of the friends and that through its reading many eager souls will be attracted to the Cause.

25. The Dutch translation of *Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era* ('Bahá’u’lláh en het Nieuwe Tijdperk') was published in Rotterdam in May 1933.

In closing may I assure you once more of his loving greetings and of his best wishes for your husband and for yourself. In his hours of meditation and prayer at the Blessed Shrines he will surely remember you and will ask the Lord to sustain your efforts, cheer your heart, and enable you to render His Faith yet more outstanding services.

Yours in His service, H. Rabbání

Dear and valued co-worker:

I am eagerly awaiting the news of the publication of the book, and I trust that nothing unexpected has happened to delay the work in which you are so devotedly engaged. I wish to reaffirm my deep sense of thankfulness for all that you have done and for the efforts you are still exerting in this connection. The Beloved is, I feel certain, well pleased with your achievements. Your true and grateful brother, Shoghi

10 Louise Drake Wright, 27 June 1933

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

Your letters dated June 8th and 11th, 1933 were received and read with deep appreciation by the Guardian.

He is very sorry to learn that the publication of the Iqán has to be given up in view of the fact that the publisher is not a very reliable person and that his sympathies are not quite in harmony with the teachings of the Cause. But now that the publication of the Iqán has been temporarily abandoned, you should try to give a fuller publicity to the Dutch translation of Dr. Esslemont's book and thus pave the way for a further and more intense campaign of teaching.

Shoghi Effendi, however, would not like you to undergo further sacrifices in case you feel that you have to go back to the States for reason of health. He is fully alive to the tremendous difficulties that have for so long stood in your way and he is firmly convinced that if you find that your leaving

Holland is imperatively necessary, you should not hesitate to leave your work for some time and take all the rest you need.

In closing may I assure you once more of his best wishes and of his ardent prayers for the further advancement of your work.

Yours in His service, H. Rabbání

Dear and precious co-worker:

It is sad and regrettable that the plan for the publication of so important a book had to be abandoned. I still cherish the hope that Bahá'u'lláh will guide you in your devoted and persistent efforts to prepare the way for the consummation of this great and notable service to the Cause. Do not, I pray you, lose courage or hope. I will continue to pray for you and for those you have been so devotedly striving to interest and attract to this Divine Revelation. Your true and grateful brother, Shoghi

11 Louise Drake Wright, 9 February 1934

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

Shoghi Effendi has just received your letter of January 30th and he is so happy to learn that you have safely arrived at the Hague, and that you are resuming your teaching activities with the same enthusiasm as that which signalized your first teaching trip to that country.²⁶

He is looking forward to the day when as a result of your unceasing labours a group of young, active and zealous Bahá'ís will be established in Holland, and who will arise to carry forward the message of peace and of salvation among their own countrymen.

It will certainly encourage you to learn that Mr. Grosfeld, one of our active and capable Dutch Bahá'ís who lived formerly in Java is leaving very soon for Holland and is planning to settle there and to teach actively the

26. Wright stayed in the Netherlands for a third and last period from 15 January to 20 April 1934.

Cause.²⁷ He was converted to the Faith a few years ago through the care of one of our Egyptian Bahá'ís. He was on a visit to Cairo when he met that friend, and was so much impressed by the Teachings that he accepted them at once. Ever since he has been living in the East Indies and only a few months ago he left that country for a visit around the world. He has been to China, Japan, and has visited the friends in various parts of the States. He speaks many languages, and is eager to teach the Cause. On his way to Holland, the Guardian has requested him to visit the believers in Syria, Turkey, Bulgaria, Austria and Germany.²⁸ May his presence and his close cooperation with you pave the way for the effective spread of the Teachings. With the assurance of his prayers on your behalf and on behalf of those to whom you have referred in your letter.

Yours in His service, H. Rabbání

With the assurance of my deepest and abiding appreciation of your continued and notable services to the Faith, and of my prayers for your welfare and spiritual advancement, Your true brother, Shoghi

27. From the United States Grosfeld travelled to Haifa. He left the Holy Land in early 1934. It is not certain whether he had already returned to the Netherlands during the period that Wright was there. But the two never met.

28. Grosfeld carried with him a letter of introduction from the Guardian: 'Mr Grosfeld, a devoted and capable Bahá'í from Holland is leaving Haifa for his native land, where he is planning to teach the Cause. On his way home he is at my request endeavouring to visit as many friends and centres as possible. I am sure that all the believers will be delighted to meet him and to make his acquaintance, and will facilitate and render pleasant his stay among them. His devotion to the Faith fully entitles him to such a consideration.'

Dear Mr. Grosfeld,

The Guardian was deeply gratified to receive your very kind and assuring message of June 1st, and is indeed comforted to learn that you are keeping in good health, and are as ever deeply attached to the Cause. It was such a long time that he had no news from you, and was feeling really anxious, knowing well the difficult circumstances under which you were living in Holland.²⁹ He is profoundly grieved to learn that you are still being faced with so many difficulties, and that you have not yet succeeded in securing a suitable position which would enable you to settle permanently in your country. He feels that in case you are sure to find some employment, or work privately in Java or in any other place you should not hesitate to do so.

As you have been already in the East, it would not be very difficult for you to return there and start once more your work. But before undertaking such a trip, the Guardian would advise you to make all the necessary enquiries, and to fully ascertain that once there you will be sure to find a proper job.

In his prayers and meditations, the Guardian will remember you and will specially entreat Bahá'u'lláh to protect, strengthen and guide you, and open before you the door of success. You should not feel discouraged at the sight of the obstacles that so severely confront you at present, but should feel confident that through your sustained and wise efforts and through God's unfailing guidance you will succeed in overcoming them one by one. Also, you should bear in mind that sorrows and afflictions are a

29. Between 1925 and 1934, while living in Java in the Dutch East Indies, Grosfeld received several letters from Shoghi Effendi, but none of these seem to have survived. The correspondence had temporarily stopped with a letter dated 19 August 1934. Given that unemployment in the Netherlands had risen dramatically since 1929, Grosfeld had difficulties in finding a job there. By 1936, a third of the Dutch labour force was out of work.

necessary part of life, and are often blessings in disguise, as they serve to open our eyes to the nobler spiritual aspects of life. Trials and sufferings are therefore very helpful to our spiritual growth, and as such should be accepted with the utmost resignation and submissiveness to the Divine Will.

With warmest Bahá'í greetings, and every good wish, yours in His Service, H. Rabbání

Dearly beloved co-worker:

It is such a joy and relief to hear from you after such a long silence. I do hope and pray from all my heart that your affairs may be speedily adjusted that you may be enabled to resume actively your work of service to our beloved Faith. Wherever you may settle and labour my prayers will ever be with you. I am eager to keep in close touch with you, and I hope you will continue to write to me about your plans and future decisions. Wishing you happiness and success from the depths of my heart, your true brother, Shoghi

13 Wim Grosfeld, 4 September 1936

Dear Mr. Grosfeld,

Your welcome letter of August 7th to the Guardian has arrived, and the news of the success of the teaching work in Holland has greatly rejoiced his heart.³⁰ He hopes that the small group of beginners you have succeeded

30. In his letter dated 7 August 1936 Grosfeld had written to the Guardian: 'The beautiful Cause is beginning to live in Holland. In a very short time we have together 8 or 9 friends, all very kind and zealous souls.' He mentioned Johan (John) and Diana Verhoeven, who had become Bahá'ís in Canada and now lived in The Hague; Liebau, who lived in Rotterdam; Bertelink, who lived in Hengeloo; Käthe Braun, a German nurse working in Haarlem; Mr. and Mrs. Eugen Epple who also came from Germany and lived in Brummen; and Mr. Grootenhuis.

in forming will meet regularly, and that through careful and concentrated study of the Cause they will grow both in numbers and in strength. Will you be so kind as to convey his greetings and heartfelt congratulations to these dear friends, and to assure each and all of them of his ardent prayers and best wishes for the success of their endeavours in the path of service to our beloved Cause.

The Guardian is however extremely grieved to learn that you are still without proper work, and he would certainly advise you, in case you find it quite impossible to earn your living in Holland, to leave for any other country where you can be assured of gaining the means of your livelihood.

Assuring you once more of his fervent prayers for the removal of your difficulties, and for the realization of your fondest hopes and dearest wishes.

Yours in His service, H. Rabbání

Dearest co-worker:

Kindly assure those precious friends that you have interested in the Cause of my love, my best wishes and prayers for their spiritual advancement. Your noble and historic work, conducted under such difficult circumstances, is dear and near to my heart, and is worthy of the highest praise. I pray that you may be enabled to find the necessary means that will enable you to expand and consolidate the work you have so nobly initiated. Persevere and rest confident. Affectionately, Shoghi

14 Inez Greeven, 17 November 1937

Dear Mrs. Greeven,

The Guardian has received your letter of the 26th October and has learned with satisfaction of the news of the completion of the printing of the Dutch version of the Kitáb-i-Iqán.³¹ He has also received a note from the publisher regarding the printing expenses, and has mailed him a draft for £ 41.17.1, being half of the total cost for publishing the book.³²

He would approve of the publisher's suggestion to place three hundred copies with all the booksellers, and to send the remaining two hundred over to Haifa. He trusts that the books will be soon mailed and will reach in good condition. Needless to assure you how grateful he feels for this outstanding service you and your dear sister have been able to render, and he will pray that as a result the Cause may make a good start in Holland. He is eagerly waiting to hear of the good news of the progress of your teaching activities, and would urge you to whole-heartedly and confidently persevere in your efforts.

Regarding the statement you had enclosed about the sale of the Esslemont book: the Guardian indeed regrets that the results are so disappointing, and does not think it necessary for you to make any accounting to the Esslemont heirs. He would advise you to wait until the amount collected would be sufficiently substantial.

In closing may I express the Guardian's hope that your trip to Italy will prove helpful in restoring your health. He will specially pray to the Beloved that He may strengthen your forces for many more years of service to His Faith.

Loving greetings to you and dear Mr. Greeven, and with best wishes for your success in your new field of work in Holland.³³

Yours ever in His service, H. Rabbání

31. After his involvement in the translation and publication of *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, Liebau had translated a short mystical work of Bahá'u'lláh called *The Hidden Words*. Upon publication of this Dutch translation in 1935, he had started on another early work of Bahá'u'lláh: *Kitáb-i-Iqán* or *The Book of Certitude*.

32. In September 1936 the Greevens had informed the Guardian that Liebau had completed the job. However, due to financial difficulties caused by the worldwide Great Depression, it seemed impossible to them to have the work printed. With the Guardian's help the Dutch translation of the book came out in November 1937.

33. With all the Bahá'í activity forbidden and foreign trade at a complete standstill as well, the Greevens were forced to leave Germany. In the autumn of 1937 they moved to The Hague.

P.S. Of the 200 copies you are going to send to Haifa, the Guardian wishes you to mail fifty to the American National Spiritual Assembly and to distribute thirty among the various other Assemblies throughout the Bahá'í world.

Dear and valued co-worker:

I wish to assure you in person of my special prayers for the success of the efforts which you and dear Mr. Greeven are now exerting in Holland for the progress and establishment of the Faith. The literature which through your generous assistance is now available in Dutch will no doubt be a great help to you in your devoted labours, and I pray that your dearest hopes may be fully and speedily realized. My loving gratitude to you both, your true brother, Shoghi

15 Max Greeven, 10 November 1938

Dear Mr. Greeven,

I am directed by the Guardian to express his thanks for your letters dated August 9th and October 11th.

With reference to the situation of the Cause in Germany; Frau Mühlshlegel³⁴ wrote sometime ago that the friends in Stuttgart had received a communication from the Berlin Secret Police to the effect that "for state-police reasons" the Faith had to remain prohibited, and that the objects confiscated would not be returned.³⁵

34. Herma Mühlshlegel (*née* Weidle) (1902-1964) was the wife of Dr. Adelbert Mühlshlegel. In 1936 the couple made a pilgrimage to Haifa.

35. In the spring of 1933, Germany had turned into a totalitarian state. To discuss the ominous situation in their country, the Guardian had invited some prominent German Bahá'ís – Greeven being one of them – for consultations in Haifa in March 1934. Following that meeting, Greeven became the Guardian's chief instrument in the 'delicate and difficult mission' of having the Ministry of Church Affairs' measures for

There is apparently nothing the friends in Stuttgart can do to induce the authorities to re-examine their rulings, or to rescind it, even in part. Further representation on their part not only seem to bring no results, but might have the effect of displeasing the authorities. And in view of this, the Guardian wrote in reply to Frau Mühlshlegel that under existing circumstances it would be wiser for the believers to keep entirely silent, and not to press any longer their case by addressing any appeal either to the authorities in Stuttgart or Berlin.

As regards your own efforts to approach the minister in charge of ecclesiastical affairs in the capital; the Guardian has noted your view that under the existing regime in Germany there is very little chance of your obtaining any definite results through representations to that department. He would suggest therefore that, in case you deem it feasible and opportune, you should endeavour to find new ways of approach, possibly by trying to contact some of the high officials in the "Gestapo" which, as you have written, reigns supreme in the Germany of today. This is, however, merely a suggestion, and he leaves it entirely to you to decide as to its practicability, particularly as events in Germany are all developing in the direction of greater centralization, and of a further suppression of all religious groups and denominations.

The general world condition is obviously growing more tense every day and clearly points to the inevitability of that world-wide conflagration foretold by the Master and explained by the Guardian in his "Goal of a New World Order".³⁶ Shoghi Effendi wishes the friends to be prepared

curtailing Bahá'í activity rescinded. Despite his American nationality, German background, and – what Shoghi Effendi described as – his 'mature experience, wisdom and above all unwavering loyalty and attachment to the Cause', Greeven's efforts had been of no avail. The situation for the German Bahá'ís did not improve; on the contrary. In 1937 all Bahá'í activity had been forbidden owing to the Faith's 'pacifist and international teachings'.

36. *The Goal of a New World Order* is a letter of the Guardian to the Bahá'ís of the world dated 28 November 1931, commemorating the first decade since the passing of

for still far more serious developments than those which we have witnessed in the course of the last two months, but he wishes them also to feel assured and confident in the glorious promises for a brighter future so emphatically given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

With regard to the photographs of the Paris bust of the Master; Shoghi Effendi does not wish you to undergo the expense and trouble of ordering another fifty copies of the same dimensions as the original photos. Those of the post-card size you had sent, he feels, are quite good and sufficient.

With his most loving greetings, also to Mrs. Greeven, yours in His Service, H. Rabbání

Dearest co-worker:

Just a word to assure you of my ever-deepening gratitude and admiration for the efforts you are ceaselessly exerting on behalf of our oppressed brethren. Bahá'u'lláh is no doubt watching over you, and the Beloved is well pleased with your historic endeavours. Whatever their outcome, you have won for yourself an abiding place in the affections of the believers. Affectionately and gratefully Shoghi

16 Max Greeven, 20 November 1939

Dear Mr. Greeven,

Your very kind letter of October 28th was truly welcome, and it indeed greatly rejoiced the heart of our beloved Guardian to know that both Mrs.

'Abdu'l-Bahá. In this letter he had written: 'Might we not already discern, as we scan the political horizon, the alignment of those forces that are dividing afresh the continent of Europe into camps of potential combatants, determined upon a contest that may mark, unlike the last war, the end of an epoch, a vast epoch, in the history of human evolution?' The Guardian had also repeated 'Abdu'l-Bahá's warning of 1920 that 'another war fiercer than the last, will assuredly break out'.

Greeven and yourself are keeping well, and that in spite of the storm and stress created by the outbreak of war in Europe you have been spared so far the sufferings and privations which millions of souls are now bitterly experiencing.³⁷ He hopes, and indeed will earnestly pray that the protection and guidance of Bahá'u'lláh may continue to be vouchsafed unto you both, and unto each and everyone of the believers throughout the world.

In view of the gravity of the situation in Holland, and the possibility of war spreading gradually to that and other adjoining countries, he still feels that, in case your business conditions permit, you should move as soon as possible to Sweden, where you have certainly a greater chance of safety than in the Netherlands.³⁸ He would leave, however, the final decision to you and to Mrs. Greeven that you may, in consultation with each other, decide upon the course that would be the best and most feasible for you to take under present circumstances.

Assuring you afresh of his warmest good wishes and his affectionate greetings, yours in His Service, H. Rabbání

Dear and valued co-worker:

I am so glad to learn that you and Mrs. Greeven are both safe and well, despite the perils and dangers that surround you in that troubled continent. I trust and pray that when you transfer your residence to a safer country you may both be enabled to render outstanding services to the Faith, and thus continue to enrich, no matter how grave the hour, the record of your past accomplishments. With my best wishes for you both, your true brother, Shoghi

37. In a letter to Wright, dated 23 August 1939, Greeven-Marshall had written: 'I have been able to accomplish so very little in the way of teaching, but am hoping that after the coming war (if I be alive!) that the people will be more ready to hear what I have to say.' A week later, on 1 September, German troops crossed the border into Poland.

38. The Netherlands pursued a policy of neutrality, but on 4 September the Parliament voted in favour of a law for the mobilization of the Dutch Army.

17 Max and Inez Greeven, 6 April 1940

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Greeven,

Your joint and eagerly-awaited message dated March 25th was indeed most welcome, and the Guardian was truly heartened by its perusal, and rejoiced to know that you are both keeping well, and are continually exerting your utmost for the spread of the Cause in Holland.³⁹ You should rest assured that your painstaking efforts will in time bear fruit, and should not feel discouraged therefore if you have not so far succeeded in accomplishing any tangible results. Now is the time of seed sowing, and consequently one of slow and painful progress. But the harvest which the future shall reap will be incalculably rich, and great will also be your reward for having so unremittingly toiled in bringing it about....

Renewing to you both his prayers for your protection and safety in these trying times, and with the season's warmest greetings.

Yours ever sincerely, H. Rabbáni

Dear and valued co-workers:

I wish to assure you in person of my special prayers for your protection in these days of increasing stress and peril. I hope and pray that, despite the prevailing gloom, you may be graciously assisted by the spirit of our Beloved to win over to the Faith a few souls who, however small their number, may be able to lay a firm foundation for the glorious work destined to be accomplished in the days to come. May He inspire you and sustain you always. Your true and grateful brother, Shoghi

39. As this letter indicates, the Greevens still were in The Hague on 25 March 1940. In the next days or weeks they left the Netherlands for North America. On 10 May, German troops entered the Benelux.

Dear Bahá'í Sister:⁴⁰

Your letter of February 20th has been received, and the beloved Guardian has instructed me to answer it on his behalf.

He is most happy to welcome you as a co-worker in our glorious Cause, and he approves of your plan to go to Holland and spread the teachings.

The need for Bahá'í workers is tremendous in Europe, and those who, like yourself, have relatives and facilities there should certainly do all they can to carry this hope-giving Message to people who have suffered so much misery and disillusionment.

He will pray that your sister may also accept the Faith, and that your services in your native land may be richly blessed by God.⁴¹

With Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání⁴²

May the Beloved enable you to undertake the journey to your native land in the near future, and may He bless richly your work, guide every step you take, and fulfil every hope you cherish, for the establishment of this glorious Faith in that country.

Your true and grateful brother, Shoghi

40. Hendrika (Rita) van Bleyswijk Sombeek (1903-1981) had taken the train to go from Amsterdam to Paris, and left by boat from Italy for the United States on the day that the German troops invaded Norway (10 April 1940). She arrived in New York on the 1st of May. While studying philosophy at Columbia University, she came in contact with Bahá'ís and formally became a believer in August 1945. In a letter to the Guardian dated 20 February 1946, she offered her services as a pioneer to the Netherlands: 'Mrs. Greeven... wrote me that because of his health Mr. Greeven could not comply with your wish to return to Holland. Beloved Guardian, the purpose of this letter is to ask your permission to go in his stead, although I am only a new and inexperienced Bahá'í.'

41. Van Bleyswijk Sombeek's sister Jetty Straub (1906-1979) had spent the war in the Netherlands. She joined her sister in New York in December 1945.

42. On 24 March 1937, Shoghi Effendi had married the Canadian Bahá'í Mary Maxwell (1910-2000), who since then became known as Rúhíyyih Rabbani or

19 Anita Ioas, 2 September 1946

Dear Bahá'í Sister:⁴³

Your letter of August 9th was received, and our beloved Guardian has instructed me to answer it on his behalf.

He was delighted with your suggestion that you enter the European teaching field at this important juncture, and fully approves of your going.

Your dear family has been and is so constantly active in the service of the Faith, and your labours are deeply appreciated by the Guardian. He followed your previous pioneer work, and admires the spirit of devotion that prompts you to again go out in this important field.

Please give his loving greetings to your father⁴⁴, and assure him he is often remembered.

As to the place you will be able to render the greatest service in Europe: that is a matter for the European Teaching Committee⁴⁵ to advise you on.

Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánúm. She served him for many years as a personal secretary. Shoghi Effendi appointed her to be a Hand of the Cause in March 1952. See also letter 30 Sept 1946.

43. Anita Ioas (*married* Chapman) was born into a Californian Bahá'í family, and she went to Europe as a Bahá'í pioneer. In a letter of 14 March 1947, the secretary of the ETC wrote to Van Bleysswijk Sombeek and Straub in Rotterdam: 'You will rejoice to know that the five pioneers about whom I wrote you on March 3 (this included Anita Ioas), sailed March 12 on the "Veendam" and should be arriving in Rotterdam a week from today or the 22nd. We are concerned about the job it has presented to you in preparing for their arrival and we hope that you can arrange for the truck which we had to meet them and transfer their accumulated baggage to the train.' Ioas settled in Luxembourg together with Sally Sanor. See also footnote 87.

44. Leroy C. Ioas. See also letter 1 May 1957.

45. The European Teaching Committee was appointed in 1946 by the NSA of the US and Canada. The eight- (later six-) member committee was to coordinate and support all Bahá'í promulgation activity in Europe; to establish an office in Geneva; to confirm membership applications; to bring out a monthly news bulletin; and to print translations of standard Bahá'í books.

If Honor Kempton⁴⁶ can manage to go with you, without weakening the work in Alaska, it would be very nice for you both.

You may be sure he will pray for your success in this noble service you are undertaking.

With Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

Dear co-worker:

I am delighted to hear of the plan you have conceived, and I pray from the depths of my heart for your success and the realization of every hope you cherish for the work you will be undertaking. You will be enriching the record of service associated with your dear family, and particularly your dear father whose outstanding services in connection with the first Seven Year Plan⁴⁷ will ever be remembered with joy and gratitude. Your true brother, Shoghi

20 Melanie Humbert, 30 September 1946

Dear Bahá'í Sister:⁴⁸

Your letter of September 1st announcing the very good news of your intention to pioneer in Belgium reached our beloved Guardian, and he was delighted with this news.

46. Honor Kempton (1892-1981) was British and had become a Bahá'í in 1935 at the home of the Ioas family in San Francisco. Four years later, she had been the first Bahá'í to settle in Alaska. In February 1947 she arrived as the first Bahá'í pioneer in Luxembourg. From there, Kempton moved to Geneva in January 1949.

47. The first Seven Year Plan (1937-1944) was a plan for the North American Bahá'í community. It called for at least one spiritual assembly in every American state and Canadian province, and a Bahá'í resident in each Latin American and Caribbean republic.

48. Madeline (Melanie) Humbert was a Belgian living in the United States during the war. She became a Bahá'í in New York in 1943. At that time, she received this letter

He has been anxious now for very many years that the Cause should be really established there, and a permanent center formed. Now your departure promises the future development of such a center, and you should feel very proud to be able to undertake such a mission to your native land.

You may be sure he will pray for you, and that the doors may open, and your work meet with great success. He would also like you to report to him from time to time regarding your work there, and he urges you to keep in close touch with the friends in neighbouring countries.

With loving good wishes, yours, R. Rabbání

Dear co-worker:

I am thrilled by the news you give and by your noble intentions to pioneer in Belgium. My loving and fervent prayers will accompany you in your glorious mission. Persevere and never feel despondent.

Future generations, if you be steadfast, will extol the work you will be undertaking, and the Beloved will reward you a thousand fold for your meritorious services.

Be happy and confident, your true brother, Shoghi

from Haifa: 'Dear Bahá'í Sister: Your letter dated July 28th reached the Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer it on his behalf. He is very pleased to see with what love and devotion you have accepted our beloved Faith and long to serve it. Not all of us are capable of serving in the same way, but the one way every Bahá'í can spread the Faith is by example, this moves the hearts of people far more deeply than words ever can. The love we show others, the hospitality and understanding, the willingness to help them, these are the very best advertisements of the Faith. They will want to hear about it when they see these things in our lives. The Guardian will pray that Bahá'u'lláh will aid you and strengthen you to teach His Cause to many souls. With Bahá'í love, R. Rabbani.' The Guardian added in his own handwriting: 'Assuring you of my special prayers for the success of your devoted efforts for the spread of our beloved Faith. Your true brother, Shoghi.' See also cable January 1947.

[P.S.] Dear Miss Humbert,

Just a note to put in the Guardian's letter: when I was in Brussels with my mother we stayed at the Palace Hotel; there was a Russian man there who was the public stenographer and had his office in the hotel. Mother often spoke to him about the Cause. He was a nice man and you might find him still there and now more ready for the Faith.

I forget his name, but I am sure he would remember "Mrs. Maxwell".⁴⁹

Love to you and good wishes for your work, Rúhíyyih

21 **Arnold van Ogtrop, 20 November 1946**

Dear Bahá'í Brother,⁵⁰

Your welcome letter, dated August 19th, has been received, and our beloved Guardian was very pleased to hear from you, as he had already received news of your attachment to the Faith from the English believers. He has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

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 center 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.

49. May Maxwell (*née* Bolles) (1870-1940) was a prominent early Canadian Bahá'í. In the summer of 1935, she and her daughter Mary started a tour to promulgate the Bahá'í Faith in Europe. While Maxwell focused on France and Belgium, Mary paralleled her mother's work in Germany. A year later, the mother and daughter concluded their tour with a pilgrimage to Haifa. They arrived there in January 1937.

50. Arnold van Ogtrop (1916-2000) had become a Bahá'í in 1937 while working as a dancer in the Kurt Jooss Ballet at Dartington Hall in Devon in the United Kingdom. In the spring of 1946, the English Bahá'ís had invited him to their summer school in Matlock Bath. There he had met some 140 Bahá'ís from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Iran, Egypt, and France. 'I can't say in words what this Summer School did to me.

He was also very pleased to hear of your visit to the Swiss Bahá'ís; they are devoted and persevering, but need outside help and stimulation. Your experience at the Summer School in England will also be of great help to you, for when the friends gather for study and consultation they really feel the depths of the bonds which unite us in the Faith of God for this day.

You may be sure his ardent prayers will be offered for the success of your Bahá'í work, and he will also pray for your father and for the soul of your dear mother, that in the worlds beyond she may have the joy of recognizing Bahá'u'lláh.

He would welcome news of your activities and of the progress of the work there.

With warm Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

Dear and valued co-worker:

I was so glad to hear from you and to be assured of your noble sentiments and determination to serve our beloved Faith. I assure you of my loving and fervent prayers on your behalf, and of my eagerness to hear of the progress of your work to which I attach the utmost importance. Persevere in your noble task, and be assured and happy. Your true brother, Shoghi

Being like a dry sponge, I just drank it all in every minute of the day. I wanted to give the Message – but how and to whom?' In August 1946, he was 'intensely pleased' to learn that Van Bleyswijk Sombeek and Straub were coming to help him. They met in Rotterdam on 8 October. 'That day I finished being an isolated believer.'

51. The date of this cable is not known, but it was most likely sent when Humbert moved from the US to Belgium. By December 1946, the European Teaching Committee had sent out a total of eleven pioneers to Europe, and in January 1947 another five left; among them Madeline (Melanie) Humbert. In a letter to Van Bleyswijk Sombeek and Straub, the ETC wrote: 'You will be happy to know that Madeline Humbert's plans are at last completed and that she is sailing January 29 on the "Noordam", sister ship to our nice "Westerdam". She will pass through Rotterdam of course, and hopes to see you both to convey to you personally our deep love and warm greetings. Perhaps you can arrange to meet her steamer and assist her through the customs to her train for Brussels.' Straub lived in Rotterdam, so that was no

22 Melanie Humbert, January 1947

ASSURE LOVING FERVENT PRAYERS SUCCESS HISTORIC MISSION – SHOGHI⁵¹

23 Rita van Bleyswijk Sombeek, 2 February 1947

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your letter of November 9th was received, together with that of your dear sister, and our beloved Guardian has instructed me to answer it on his behalf.

He was so happy to see that your sister has embraced the Faith and arisen to serve it with you with so much devotion and enthusiasm.⁵² He was also very pleased to see you were able to attend, together, both the Convention and the Summer School at Greenacre.⁵³ These experiences have no doubt deepened your knowledge of the Faith and your attachment to it.

The work in Holland is very promising, and he feels sure you both, with Mr. van Ogtrop, will soon see tangible results of your devoted labours.

problem. After Humbert arrived, the ETC wrote on 20 February 1947: 'The committee members were very happy indeed to have your letter of Feb 8 and to hear of your meeting with Madeline Humbert. We deeply appreciate the beautiful hospitality offered by Jetty to pioneers passing that way and will plan to have as many as possible routed through Rotterdam, providing we do not impose on her generosity.'

52. Straub had become a Bahá'í in New York in April 1946.

53. At the National Convention in Wilmette (Illinois), the Guardian's second Seven Year Plan (1946-1953) for the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada had been disclosed. The plan, operating in three continents, covered four main objectives, the last one of which was 'the initiation of systematic teaching activities in the war-torn, spiritually-famished European continent... aiming at the establishment of administratively firm, well-grounded Assemblies in the Scandinavian countries, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Italy, Spain and Portugal'.

The translation work is of the utmost importance and as soon as you have at least the Esslemont in printed form you will be able to start your teaching work on a large scale.⁵⁴ You should keep in close touch with Mrs. Graeffe⁵⁵ in Geneva and, as far as practicable, with your co-workers in nearby countries. This will both help and inspire you and cement the bonds of the love of Bahá'u'lláh which is spreading over Europe through the efforts of His consecrated servants.

You may be sure your work will be remembered in his prayers, and that he will pray for you both, your happiness and your success.

With warm Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

Dear and valued co-worker:

The work on which you and you dear sister have embarked is historic, meritorious, and rich in possibilities. Future generations will extol your labours and derive inspiration from the example you have set. I am deeply grateful to you both, admire your spirit, will pray for your success, and am eager to receive the report of your activities. Never lose heart, be assured, happy and grateful. Your true and grateful brother, Shoghi

54. Van Bleyswijk Sombeek and Straub had returned to the Netherlands in October of 1946, and settled in Straub's house in Rotterdam. Van Bleyswijk Sombeek wrote: 'At that time food and fuel was rationed and living was difficult. I don't know what I missed most, whether it was not having eggs, or citrus fruit, or coffee...

In our house of nine rooms, only one room was allowed to be heated.' During those cold winter months, the two sisters made a new Dutch translation of *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*. The book would come out in June.

55. To execute the European goals of the Guardian's second Seven Year Plan, the NSA of the US had appointed a 'European Teaching Committee'. This committee had an office in Geneva of which Etty Graeffe (1897-1969) was in charge. See also letter 2 September 1946.

56. Martha Root (1872-1939) was a prominent American Bahá'í and Esperantist. She was a journalist by profession and travelled the world extensively to promulgate the Bahá'í Faith. In 1926, Root was in The Hague to deliver Bahá'í books to Queen

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your letters dated January 4th and February 13th have been received by our beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer them on his behalf.

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 Root⁵⁶ 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.⁵⁷

By all means speak to gatherings, when the opportunity arises, about the Faith. There is no objection to broadcasting the Message over the radio – but your first consideration and main objective is to confirm sufficient souls to establish a spiritual assembly, and also to build up your literature in the Dutch language.

Wilhelmina, and two years later she attended an international conference on 'Peace by Religion' in that same city. From there she went to the 20th Universal Esperanto Congress in Antwerp. See also letter 14 April 1932.

57. Because of Bahá'u'lláh's teaching to select a *single language for the use of all on earth*, there had been long-standing and close relations between the Esperanto movement and the Bahá'í community, also in the Netherlands. Apparently Van Bleyswijk Sombeek intended to build on this connection. On 10 June 1947, she became a member of the Esperanto Club of Amsterdam, where she was introduced as 'a Bahá'í representative'. A few days later the *Heraldo de Esperanto* carried an article on the Faith and gave her address for those who wished to know more.

He is very encouraged to hear you and your dear sister and Mr. van Ogtrop are working in close harmony, and that your spirits are high and you are facing the work with so much joy!

You may be sure his loving prayers for your spiritual advancement and understanding will be offered in the Holy Shrines.

With Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

May the Spirit of Bahá'u'lláh ever sustain you, cheer your heart, illumine your path, remove every obstacle that impedes the progress of your historic work, aid you to attract capable souls to the Faith, and establish a firm and unassailable foundation for its institutions. Your true and grateful brother, Shoghi

25 Melanie Humbert, 5 April 1947

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your letter dated March 14th was received by our beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer it on his behalf.

He was very happy indeed to see you are going to have a class of six interested persons there⁵⁸, and he assures you he will ardently pray in the Holy Shrines that you may find and confirm receptive souls and soon establish an assembly there.

This will be an historic achievement, as the Cause has never spread in Belgium before, in spite of the efforts of many Bahá'í teachers.

Your labours are deeply valued, and he will always be happy to receive news of the progress of your activities.

With warmest Bahá'í greetings, yours in the service of the blessed Faith,
R. Rabbání.

58. Etty Graeffe of the ETC office in Geneva had provided Humbert with the address of some friends of hers in Brussels, the Leyenberger family. It was in the home of this family that the first public Bahá'í information meetings took place at Easter 1947.

Dear and valued co-worker:

I am so grateful to you for your magnificent response and I truly admire the spirit which animates you so powerfully in the service of the Faith. You are, I assure you, often in my thoughts and prayers, and I am so eager to learn of the progress of your activities and long for the news of the formation of a spiritual assembly in that country.

Persevere in your noble task, rest assured, be happy and grateful for the great privilege and honour conferred upon you in these days.

Your true and grateful brother, Shoghi

26 Melanie Humbert, 14 April 1947

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your letters dated February 16th and March 10th, with other enclosures, were received, and Shoghi Effendi has instructed me to answer you on his behalf. He is indeed (as you so clearly see) very over-worked with his mail; but he does not want your kind letter to go unanswered.

It is wonderful to see, at last, the intellectuals turning to the problems of the world and seeking to solve them. Side by side with this non-Bahá'í work, so close to many of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, we believers must carry on our purely Bahá'í work, which only we can do, and which has such tremendous implications for the future of humanity in every sphere.

Your interest in our glorious Faith, in its many aspects, pleases him greatly, and he urges you to teach the Cause as much as possible, and help to find new ways of reaching the public and different elements in it.

He read your letters to the N.S.A. and Contacts Committee, and is glad to see the evidences of your devotion to the Cause.

You may be sure he will pray for the success of your labours in its service.

With Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

May the Beloved bless, guide and sustain you, and enable you to promote effectively the best interests of His Faith, and fulfil your heart's desire in its service. Your true brother, Shoghi

27 Theo Durieux, 24 April 1947

Dear Bahá'í Brother:⁵⁹

Your letter dated April 5th was received by our beloved Guardian and he has instructed me to answer it on his behalf.

He was very happy indeed to receive news of you, and to know that dear Miss Humbert has an active Bahá'í brother to lean upon in Belgium, and to assist her in her labour to promote the Cause of God there!

You may be sure he will especially pray for your health, that you may regain your strength and thus be able to not only pursue your work but assist Miss Humbert in her teaching efforts. He will also pray that some members of your family at least, if not all of them, will become spiritually quickened and receptive to the world transforming Message of Bahá'u'lláh.

Please give his cordial greetings to Miss Humbert when you see her.

With warm Bahá'í greetings to you, yours in the Faith, R. Rabbání

Assuring you of my loving and ardent prayers for your spiritual advancement, for the expansion of your meritorious activities, and the realization of every hope you cherish for the progress of our beloved Faith and the establishment of its nascent institutions in that country. Your true brother, Shoghi

59. This letter was addressed to Théodore (Theo) Durieux who had learned of the Bahá'í Faith in 1915 while visiting the Griffith family in Santa Rosa, California. Through literature, sent him regularly by the Griffith sisters, he had accepted the Faith without official registration. Durieux lived in Antwerp where he worked as a salesman. It was the ETC that brought the three Bahá'í pioneers in Brussels – Humbert and the Shurcliff couple – in contact with him. Durieux formally became a Bahá'í on 31 May 1947, at the age of 59.

Dear Bahá'í Sister:⁶⁰

Your letter to our beloved Guardian, dated April 18th, has just been received, and he has instructed me to answer it on his behalf.

He is very happy to hear of your settling in Amsterdam and of the close cooperation between the fine Bahá'ís in Holland. It is so wonderful to think that already the better half of an assembly exists there, in number!

He was also delighted to hear that Mr. van Ogtrop has been having such well attended fireside meetings; this type of teaching is very important as through it new souls are often confirmed.

The devoted labours you and the other dear believers there are putting forth in order to speedily establish the first Spiritual Assembly in the Low countries, are very deeply appreciated by him, and you may rest assured he is ardently praying for the success of your work and the fulfilment of your hearts desire in every way.

With warmest Bahá'í love and greetings, yours in the Faith, R. Rabbání

May the Almighty bless your pioneer efforts, reward you for your historic labours, aid you to assist in the establishment of a spiritual assembly in that land, and to fulfil every desire you cherish for the promotion of our glorious Faith. Your true brother, Shoghi

60. Charlotte Stirrat was originally from Texas. She became a Bahá'í in Los Angeles and had lived in Houston for five years as a home front pioneer. In early 1947 she had volunteered for Europe. Stirrat lived in Amsterdam from 5 April 1947 until November 1948 and then left for Portugal.

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your letter to our beloved Guardian, dated November 16th, has been received, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

He is delighted to hear you are now fully recovered and again active in your important work for the Cause.⁶¹ However, you should not neglect your health but consider it the means which enables you to serve. It – the body – is like a horse which carries the personality and spirit, and as such should be well cared for so it can do its work! You should certainly safeguard your nerves, and force yourself to take time, and not only for prayer and meditation, but for real rest and relaxation. We don't have to pray and meditate for hours in order to be spiritual.

The meetings you are so successfully holding, and the interest in our Bahá'í books shown by Mr. Buys, are very encouraging signs of progress.⁶² If a non-Bahá'í publishing firm should bring out a Bahá'í book it would add greatly to the prestige of the Cause in the eyes of the public. As long as the original text is preserved in its entirety and the translation good, we can certainly have no objection to such a constructive effort.

He will pray for the success of all you and the other dear believers there are doing, and for the speedy establishment of an assembly in Amsterdam.

With loving greetings, R. Rabbání

61. On 29 August, Van Bleyswijk Sombeek had undergone gallbladder surgery. She was hospitalized for about a month.

62. Hendricus (Henk) Buys (1891-1962) and his wife Marie Theresa Buys (*née* Hulshoff) (1903-1991) had come to the Netherlands after the war. They had lived in the Dutch East Indies, where Buys had been a captain in the Royal Dutch Indies Army. When they first met the Amsterdam Bahá'ís in October, they already had read the Dutch translation of *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* from cover to cover. And they now wanted to publish other Bahá'í books in Dutch.

May the Almighty aid you to recover fully and speedily your strength, promote actively the teaching activities you have so nobly and energetically initiated, win to the Faith additional souls of great capacity, and hasten the advent of the day when the first historic Bahá'í assembly will have been established in Holland.⁶³ Your true and grateful brother, Shoghi

30 Brussels' community, 29 April 1948

LOVING REMEMBRANCE SHRINES HEARTFELT CONGRATULATIONS – SHOGHI⁶⁴

31 Charlotte Stirrat, 4 June 1948

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your letter of March 2nd, written on behalf of Miss Van Sombeek, and enclosing a translation of the Dutch pamphlet, has been received by our beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.⁶⁵

The excellent progress being made in Holland, the formation of the first historic assembly⁶⁶ there, the translation work being done – all are great sources of comfort and pride to our Guardian's heart. Please assure dear Miss Van Sombeek of this, as she and her sister have devoted so much care and love to the work there.

63. The main objective of all Bahá'í activity during that first year (1947) was the formation of a spiritual assembly in Amsterdam. At the time this letter was received the total number of Bahá'ís living in the Netherlands was seven.

64. This cable was most likely sent on the occasion of the formation of the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Brussels.

65. The pamphlet was entitled: *De Weg tot een Menswaardige Wereld* (The Road to a Humane World).

66. The first Spiritual Assembly of Amsterdam was formed on 20 April 1948. Its members were: Jan Piet de Borst, Josephine Diebold (treasurer), Harry Dieperink,

In a country of such intelligent and forward-thinking people as the Dutch the Cause should make steady headway, and soon become well, and – we hope – nationally established.⁶⁷

He assures you all of his loving prayers, and greatly appreciates your own dedicated services.

With loving greetings, R. Rabbání

May the Beloved bless your efforts, guide and sustain you in your highly meritorious labours, remove all obstacles from your path, and enable you to extend continually the range of your valuable and historic achievements, your true and grateful brother, Shoghi

32 To the Believers of Amsterdam, 4 July 1948

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

Your words of greeting and expressions of devotion to our beloved, were forwarded to the Guardian by Mrs. Baker⁶⁸, and he assures you they were much appreciated. He would have answered you sooner, had circumstances here not only held up the mails but kept him very occupied.

He was so happy to see how alive and active you all are in serving the Cause there, and spreading this great Message of hope amongst the people.

John Carré, Charlotte Stirrat, Hans Slim, Rita van Bleywijk Sombeek (secretary), Arnold van Ogtrop (vice-chairman), and Jetty Straub (chairman).

67. Did the Guardian know that some American Bahá'í visitors to the Netherlands held somewhat different opinions? 'You will never find a country of people so much in favour of the Bahá'í principles – they offer no resistance – they offer no help – they're just apathetic as a whole.' Another apparently had that same impression. Obviously referring to the Dutch polder landscape, she concluded that its inhabitants were 'so broadminded that they're flat'. And a third was inspired by geography too: 'The Dutch build a dyke around you, then drain you dry.'

68. Dorothy Baker (1898–1954) was a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States. During her stay in Amsterdam – from 4 to 8 February – she spoke at public

We Bahá'ís can clearly see that the only way out for humanity is this way, this New World Order.

He will pray that your services may yield a rich harvest, and that your love and unity as a group may attract the hungry hearts of the true seekers.

With Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

May the Almighty, abundantly and continually bless your labours, guide your steps, remove every obstacle from your path, deepen your understanding of the essential verities of His Faith, and enable you to establish firmly its institutions in that land.

Your true and grateful brother, Shoghi

33 Local Spiritual Assembly of Brussels, 6 July 1948

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

Your letters to our beloved, with photos enclosed, and dated May 10th and 13th have been received, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

It gave him great pleasure to see the faces of the new believers in Belgium, and the formation of your first Assembly there is an event of great importance - however unobtrusive it may seem to have been in the eyes of your fellow-countrymen!⁶⁹

meetings each day. Stirrat described her as 'the most outstanding and spiritual woman I have ever known. She has a great gift of intuition, a keen sense of justice, a loving and understanding heart'. The Guardian appointed her Hand of the Cause in 1951.

69. The first Spiritual Assembly of Brussels was elected on 21 April 1948. Its members were: John and Eunice Shurcliff (chairman and vice-chairman), Léa Nys (secretary), Antoine Vloebergh (treasurer), Jeanne Fayaux, Georgine Jacobs, Suzanne Dekoninck, Jean (Willy) Mestagh, and Gustave van de Velde.

He urges you all to persevere, in conjunction with the dear American Bahá'ís labouring with you, in your efforts to establish a sound, well-grounded, united and mature community of believers there, as this is the bed-rock on which all your future activities must rest.

You may be sure his loving prayers will be with you all in your historic labours.

With warmest greetings, R. Rabbání

Dear and valued co-workers,

I was delighted to receive your most welcome message and I rejoice at the great success achieved in Brussels. The Beloved is well pleased with your victory, and will no doubt, watch over you and guide your steps and enable you to achieve still greater victories. I will pray for you from the depths of my heart. Rest assured and persevere in your glorious task. Your true and grateful brother, Shoghi

34 John and Eunice Shurcliff, Doris Lohse, 6 July 1948

Dear Bahá'í Friends:⁷⁰

Your letter to our beloved Guardian, dated May 9th, has been received, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

He has been greatly encouraged over the wonderful way the work has progressed in Europe during the past year. The formation of the Brussels Assembly being a most welcome addition to the list of triumphs registered!

70. Doris Lohse was an American Bahá'í pioneer who lived in Brussels from September 1947 to 29 June 1948. John (Jack) and Eunice Shurcliff were also American Bahá'í pioneers. They lived in Uccle (Ukkel) near Brussels from March 1947 to October 1949. In a letter to friends and relatives in the US, dated 24 April 1947, Eunice wrote:

'Our passports came through at the last minute, and we got our Dutch and Belgian visas in New York just a day before sailing on the S.S. Veendam of the Holland-America line. It is a 20,000 ton ship, recently remodelled after combat use in the war.

Three other Bahá'í pioneers were with us on the Veendam: Anita Ioas and Sally Sanor from San Francisco, going to Luxembourg, and John Carré from Los Angeles, bound for Amsterdam. All of us were in the same general age group, i.e., 26 to 36.

Many New York Bahá'ís were on deck to see us off with chocolates and magazines... Very quickly the animated handkerchiefs and hats faded from sight and we were passing tugs, ferryboats, great ships in dock and still vessels of war. As the famous New York skyline, Ellis Island, and finally our grand and noble symbol of freedom passed in revue, I think we all realized how bountiful and blest is strong, young America.

For the first few days out, the passengers on S.S. Veendam (1st class) seemed rather stiff and formal, and we looked down enviously upon the friendly group chatting and laughing on 'B' deck. But gradually a few sunny personalities managed to break the first class ice, and we learned the story of everyone's life.

Jack, Francie and I had one of the choicest cabins with a good window, yet it seemed rather cramped to us. We had the baby's crib removed because it took up most of the floor space, but Francie slept happily on her mattress on the floor between my bunk and the bureau. She would wake up every night when the ship rocked heartily and cry until one of us took her into his bed.

Jack ate with the first sitting and I with the second - so we could take turns with the baby... My table companions were two very interesting Dutchmen, engineers from Java going home to Amsterdam after three years in a Japanese concentration camp. Both spoke English very well, had been to America and were exceptionally good conversationalists...

On board were the Maharaja of Indore, his American wife and three-year-old son, Prince Richard, who used to kiss Francie's hand and then her cheek each night at bedtime. Jack says she hasn't been the same since she was kissed by a prince.

During our voyage, news of the Bahá'í Faith spread from one passenger to another, and several persons asked us for literature... Our comparatively luxurious trip was extended a day or so because of rough weather, and so we arrived in Rotterdam Sunday morning, March 23rd (we left New York March 12th at 5 pm). Entering the canal just at daybreak, we felt all the charm of the quiet Dutch countryside; only later, as the sunlight grew stronger, could we discern the misery that lay behind those picturesque windmills and farmhouses.

Every few minutes a scrap-iron pile showed itself upon the water's edge, and the sun shone through the bombed-out tops of houses. Former passenger ships, used in combat during the war, sat idle and useless. Soon our ship's slow movement ceased altogether, and the stevedores scrambled aboard after the tons of luggage.

Our window looked out upon the opposite side from Rotterdam's one remaining pier. We saw tiny boats anchored in front of 15th and 16th-century buildings of deep barn-red and canary yellow, antiquated brown and white stone ones with spires, and vacant spaces where proud masonry had stood before the bombings.

* Alighting at the pier was something of a shock, and we stood around in dazed fashion while everyone rushed frantically in search of his baggage. Dutch people crowded in as close as allowed to stare enviously at the fortunate passengers from America, grabbed extended oranges hungrily, some eating them lustily on the spot. Children squealed with excitement, and babies cried fearfully as they were handed over to Dutch grandparents. In the midst of it all, nets full of luggage descended threateningly through an opening in the roof, and workmen scurried to and fro, attempting to speak a few words of English but mixing everyone up even more.

Holland is a cold, damp country, and Rotterdam looked old and dying as a result of the intense bombings and hardships. Jetty [Straub] told us how people tore up their floors, doors and cupboards in a mad and desperate effort to have warmth and to cook the eternal sugar beets. Most of the trees have been cut down for the same purpose... I suppose it is always rather a surprise to Americans to see that upon crossing a European boundary line the whole aspect of the country and the people changes immediately. The Dutch countryside looked immaculately neat but poor and terribly somber. Just over the line in Belgium, the sun seemed warmer, the trees greener, the houses gayer. Belgium has suffered not at all compared with poor Holland. We could see from the train that Antwerp was badly bombed but still very much alive and kicking. Entering Brussels was delightful - an exciting, rich city after gaunt, ghostly Rotterdam... We were grateful to see well-dressed, well-fed people, oranges sold fairly inexpensively everywhere, chocolates in the shops and comfort in general - though one has to wonder how the people manage with such terrifically high prices and correspondingly low wages... We are now happily installed with a family of three in the suburban town of Uccle... and the arrangement is made liveable by their having sleeping quarters three flights upstairs.

Uccle, where we are, is typical of a Belgian village - tall, slim gaily-painted houses, cobblestone streets (which require heavy, flat-heeled shoes), a neat 'Boucherie', 'Poissonerie', 'Charcuterie', and 'Patisserie' in every other block, horse-drawn bread and milk wagons, rather few automobiles, and every now and then a 'Dog of Flanders' cart - usually selling beer or milk...

Our greatest problem is how to use the fleeting hours and moments to the best advantage for the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

With warm greetings and love to you all, Eunice and Jack Shurcliff.'

71. The conference referred to was the first Bahá'í European Teaching Conference, which was held in Geneva (Switzerland) from Saturday 22 to Thursday 27 May. The conference was attended by some 90 Bahá'ís of 13 different nationalities. From Belgium Léa Nys and Doris Lohse attended. In a letter to her parents, Stirrat wrote: 'Tues. night our train left A'dam - five Bahá'ís were in the second class compartment together with one stranger. It was a beautiful moonlight night and it was fine being together - eating and sleeping (sitting up). At 7.00 in the morning we went through

Also the marked success of the Geneva conference, the large attendance (and representatives of so many countries!) and the enthusiasm of those present were all a source of great satisfaction to him.⁷¹

He deeply values the dedicated services you are rendering the Cause in Belgium, and he hopes the work there will grow steadily and strike deep roots.

You may be sure his prayers are offered for you all.

With Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

May the Almighty abundantly bless your efforts, guide your steps, reward you for your splendid achievements, aid you to extend continually the range of your activities, and enable you to win notable victories for His Faith and its institutions, your true and grateful brother, Shoghí

Luxembourg and were met at the station by 2 of the Bahá'ís there – taking us to breakfast and bringing us sandwiches, bananas, oranges, candy, cookies etc. Such precious people those two Bahá'ís... Luxembourg is a most beautiful, mountainous country – streams, luxurious green grass carpets, wild flowers and lovely large trees – it's really a heavenly nation – but oh so tiny! Luxembourg Ville is the principal city and is like a medieval town even today in thought, action and surroundings... A little ticket from Adam to Basel is about the size of 1½ mail postage stamps – yet wherever we passed a border it had to be punched. First by Dutch, then Belgians, Luxembourgers, then French, then Swiss – 5 punches on this little card! And in another letter she continued: 'The conference was thrilling beyond words and unique in my Bahá'í experience. This is the beginning of future conferences – the very first one to be held on the European Continent... When I was planning for the trip, the real significance of the conference skipped my mind... gradually, the true meaning of the conference became clear – it was as though the curtain were pulled aside for a moment, and I saw what the Bahá'ís are really doing – in 91 countries of the world... It is so thrilling to see how our Guardian works – it is as though he has his finger on the pulse of the world – he is always several jumps ahead of the statesmen in the world... And now – in the midst of the chaos, uncertainty and falling bombs in Palestine, plans are being made to erect the first building of the Universal House of Justice on the slope of Mt. Carmel – the Sepulchre of the Bab.'

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

Your letter to our beloved Guardian of December 5th has been received and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.⁷²

He is delighted to see your committee is so active and planning to get underway in this all-important work of teaching, through proper translations.

He would suggest you work in close cooperation with the Paris believers, in particular, in order to avoid any duplication of effort, and obtain the maximum results in the shortest time. In the past, on more than one occasion, there has been duplication of translations and of work, which is an awful waste of our limited resources. If the French Bahá'ís already have any translations made, he suggests, you review them and use them, rather than make new ones, – unless of course, they should not be considered usable.

You may be sure his loving prayers are being offered for the success of your work and your other devoted Bahá'í activities.

With warmest greetings, R. Rabbání

Dear co-workers,

I wish to assure you of my deep and abiding appreciation of your high endeavours and of my ardent prayers for your success. The Beloved will surely bless your work and reward you for your services, which I greatly value. May He remove all obstacles from your path and aid you to achieve your goal. Your true brother, Shoghi

72. The committee had its first meeting on 4 December 1948. Its members were: Etty Graeffe and Anne Lynch for Switzerland, Suzette Hipp and Mrs. Roeder for Luxembourg, and Léa Nys and Mrs. P. Rose-Spanoghe for Belgium. During that meeting it was not only decided to first review the works already published in French first, but also to send a letter to the Guardian. Suzette Hipp, mentioned here, was the first native Bahá'í in Luxembourg. She declared on 31 December 1947.

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

Your letter to our beloved Guardian of June 7, was received, and he has instructed me to answer it on his behalf.

He was most happy to see the truly remarkable way in which your passport-difficulties have been straightened out, and feels that this in itself has been a way of serving the Cause, for it has called to the attention – and evidently won the sympathy of the American authorities for your uprightness, and devotion to this Faith of ours.

Your struggles have been richly blessed and must serve as an example to other pioneers and a sure proof that God will assist all those who arise to serve Him.

It is part of the preciousness of this great work being done in the teaching field that it should be done through real sacrifices and not without heartaches attending it. There is a tendency in the American outlook on life at present to believe that suffering is produced by clumsiness and is not only avoidable but not a good thing, and not essential. While there is some truth in this attitude, we as Bahá'ís cannot but believe that suffering is often an essential part of our service. The Prophets suffered bitterly, so did all the saints and martyrs and often “fed on the fragments of those broken hearts”, as Bahá'u'lláh says in one of His beautiful prayers.

He is very happy to hear the Cause is now so firmly established there, and also that you are going to be able to attend the European Teaching Conference before your return to America.⁷³

He hopes your plan to travel and teach in America will be realized and that in the future you will again return to teach and serve in Holland. Your devoted labours have been very deeply appreciated, and he feels proud of you.

With warm Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

73. During her years in the United States, Van Bleyswijk Sombeek had adopted American citizenship and she greatly prized it. On 19 August 1949 she left for the

Assuring you of my great and increasing admiration for the work you are achieving, of my deep gratitude for your incessant endeavour and of my constant prayers for you and your dear co-workers who are laying such a solid foundation for the institutions of our beloved Faith in that promising country. Your true and grateful brother, Shoghi

37 European Teaching Conference, Brussels, 29 July 1949

Heart overflowing with joyous exaltation on the occasion of the holding of the Second European Teaching Conference, celebrating the attainment of the objectives of the historic Second Seven Year Plan in all ten goal countries of the European continent. My hopes, fondly cherished at the inception of the transatlantic project, have been fulfilled, nay far surpassed.

The establishment of twelve assemblies and the formation of twenty-two additional groups and isolated centres ere the halfway mark of the plan has been reached, constitute an outstanding exploit unparalleled since the inauguration of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan, unsurpassed in vastness of range and of spiritual potency by any collective enterprise yet undertaken by the followers of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in any continent of the globe since the inception of the Formative Age of His Dispensation.

Am moved to offer warmest congratulations to the American National Spiritual Assembly, as trustees of the plan; to the European Teaching Committee, as its appointed executors; to all pioneers whether settlers or itinerant teachers; to all native believers both new and old; to all newly-formed assemblies; to all groups, and to all isolated believers, who directly or indirectly participated so valiantly in this unique, brilliant, and greatest single victory since the plan was set in motion.

United States for one year to retain her American passport. The conference referred to is the 2nd European Teaching Conference held in Brussels. See also letter 29 July 1949.

The stage is set, the moment is propitious for no less spectacular exertion of effort, concentration of attention, and expenditure of energy, during the course of the final phase of the plan in the European continent, aiming, though above and beyond the prescribed objectives, at the broadening and the consolidation of the structural basis already laid, through the preservation of the prizes already won, the conversion of the larger groups into assemblies, the expansion of recently-instituted extension work, the increased participation of the native believers in both administrative and teaching activities, the acceleration of the translation and publication of Bahá'í literature, the gradual institution of regional summer schools, and the promotion of closer fellowship and more active collaboration, despite great distances, paucity of resources, and diversity in range of customs and language among the budding communities scattered in the north, west, south, and in the heart of the European continent, which (attainments) posterity will recognize as the bedrock of Bahá'u'lláh's fast-evolving administrative order, as the torchbearers of His embryonic World Order, and as the heralds of a yet unborn world civilization amidst the turmoil of a travailing age, of overspreading gloom, and of present chaotic social and political order.

The firmly-knit and sacred bonds of spiritual fellowship, more enduring and possessed of greater cohesive strength than any ties of kinship or race, are more potent than any social ideology or political alliance, deriving constant sustenance from the Mandate issued by the Pen of the author of the Divine Plan, and assured the overshadowing protection vouchsafed by the Lord of the Covenant Himself presiding over the Plan's unfolding Destiny.

Let them on this auspicious occasion dedicate themselves, through their assembled representatives, to the dual task of steadily consolidating their infant strength and tirelessly diffusing the holy influences inherent in their mission, until a visionless, slumbering, and spiritually-impoverished continent is awakened, through the saving grace of Baha'u'llah's Revelation, and its peace and security are unassailably established, through the

redemptive power released through the emergence of the Institutions divinely-appointed in His World Order.⁷⁴

Shoghi

38 2nd European Teaching Conference, Brussels, 9 August 1949

DELIGHTED LARGE ATTENDANCE REPRESENTATIVE
CHARACTER SECOND HISTORIC CONFERENCE WELCOME
DETERMINATION REPRESENTATIVES ENRICH FURTHER
RECORD INITIAL SUCCESSES RESPECTIVE COMMUNITIES
STOP OVERBURDENED HEART CHEERED COMFORTED LOV-
ING MESSAGE PRAYING STILL MIGHTIER CONFIRMATIONS
– SHOGHI⁷⁵

39 Léa Nys, 20 October 1949

Dear Bahá'í Sister:⁷⁶

The Guardian has instructed me to answer you directly regarding the questions you asked Mrs. Lynch⁷⁷ to put to him concerning the proper term to be used in French for the English: “by which the letters B and E (be) have been joined together.”⁷⁸

74. The last two paragraphs of this letter were published incorrectly at the time; see letter 5 November 1949.

75. During the conference the participants had written a letter to the Guardian. His answer was included in a thank-you letter of the European Teaching Committee to the Bahá'í friends, dated 15 August. ‘Dear Bahá'í friends, the following touching cable addressed to the Conference was received on Tuesday, August 9th, too late to be given to you during the sessions. We know that you will wish to add this to the Guardian's special Conference message when sharing your recent experiences with those who were unable to be with us in Brussels.’

He feels that your committee should consult the Paris assembly and also see if, in the translations of Hippolyte Dreyfus⁷⁹ of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, etc. and also Mr. Nicolas' translations of the Bayán, you cannot find a good French usage for this difficult expression, which in English works out so well.⁸⁰

He does not advise you to put a whole phrase, such as "le symbole précieux, le Verbe de Dieu..." as this departs too much from the original and does not convey the true meaning.

He is very pleased over the excellent work your committee is doing, and assures you all of his loving prayers for your complete success.

With Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

76. Léa Nys, became a Bahá'í on 30 September 1947 in Brussels. She served in the first Spiritual Assembly of Brussels, the first Regional Assembly of the Benelux, as well as the first National Spiritual Assembly of Belgium. On her passing in 1992 the Universal House of Justice wrote:

'We profoundly lament the passing of dearly loved Léa Nys, valiant handmaiden Bahá'u'lláh, outstanding promoter His Faith. The first to accept Bahá'u'lláh on the soil of Belgium, she, from that moment in September 1947, unstintingly devoted her highly meritorious endeavours to the promotion of that Message and the up building of the Bahá'í community. Whether as a member of the first Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Brussels, as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly, as a participant in the first election of the Universal House of Justice, as a member of the Auxiliary Board, as official representative of the Bahá'í International Community, as a translator of Bahá'í literature into French, as a victorious travelling teacher to innumerable countries in North and South America and the Antilles, to the islands of the Pacific and Indian Ocean, to east and west Africa, she has conveyed the divine summons to high and low alike, and raised aloft the banner of the oneness of mankind.'

77. Anne Slastiona Lynch (1892-1966) was an American Bahá'í who since 1928 had worked at the International Bahá'í Bureau that was established in Geneva (Switzerland) in 1925. During World War II she ran the bureau single-handedly.

78. The letter is referring to a phrase used in the long obligatory prayer.

79. Hippolyte Dreyfus-Barney (1873-1928) was a lawyer in Paris. He became a Bahá'í in 1900, mastered Farsi and Arabic, and translated many Bahá'í writings into French.

80. A.L.M. Nicolas (1864-1939) was a French orientalist and consular official who published the first French translation of the Báb's Persian Bayan in four volumes

Dear Bahá'í Brother:⁸¹

Our beloved Guardian was very happy to receive your letter of October 2, and also to hear you are going out to Indonesia.

You can do an immense lot of good for the Faith there by teaching people whom you find open-minded and receptive to the wonderful message of Bahá'u'lláh.

He urges you to get in touch with:

Mr. Rustam Sabet, P.O. Box 19, New Delhi, India, who is the secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India, Pakistan and Burma. There is already one pioneer from India in Indonesia, and if you can see him, or write to him, after obtaining from Mr. Sabet his address, your cooperation would be very useful, as of course this believer is of oriental background.⁸²

It would be a wonderful service to the Faith if you can find some way of having the book *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* translated into Malay.

It is wonderful to think that whereas a few months ago there were no Bahá'ís in Indonesia, there will now be three, two from Holland and one from India.⁸³ God truly moves in mysterious ways to carry His Faith to suffering humanity!

between 1911 and 1914. He was born in Persia and spent most of his working life there.

81. Henk and Marie Buys became Bahá'ís in Amsterdam in 1949. See also letter 23 November 1947. That same year, Buys informed the Guardian that he intended to return to the East Indies. Times had changed however. Right after the end of World War II, nationalists had declared the East Indies to be the Republic of Indonesia, but since the Dutch colonial power had not recognized this, a period of unrest, chaos and military confrontation had started. The colony was granted full independence in December 1949. Buys arrived there that same month.

82. Apart from this Indian pioneer of Iranian background, Grosfeld also still lived in Java. See letter 29 June 1936.

83. Buys travelled together with Jan Piet de Borst. The latter was the youngest of three children of an Indonesian mother and a Dutch father. On 3 August 1947, during a

It is just possible that Mr. Charles Mason Remey may be able to visit, on his world tour, Indonesia. Mr. Sabet can inform you of this. As Mr. Remey is a very charming and cultivated man he could be introduced to your circle of friends and give them lectures on the Cause in a way that would not savour of any propaganda, but rather seem a privilege to those who met him.

The Guardian assures you of his prayers for the success of your work out there, and also for dear Mrs. Buys.⁸⁴

With warmest greetings, R. Rabbání

P.S. In view of the great importance of having some literature in Malay the Guardian urges you, and the other two pioneers out there, to make every effort to have at least a small pamphlet translated and printed as soon as possible. He would like to receive some copies of this for the Bahá'í libraries in Haifa and Bahjí as soon as they are available.

May the Almighty bless richly your efforts in the new field opening before you, remove all obstacles from your path, and aid you to lay a strong and unassailable foundation for the institutions of His Faith, your true brother, Shoghi

meeting at the house of Straub in Rotterdam and in the presence of Edna and Corinne True, De Borst had become 'the first new Bahá'í in Holland'. Buys and De Borst stayed in Indonesia until early 1953. In July 1951 Buys was one of the four Bahá'í representatives to the UN Non-Governmental Organizations Regional Conferences held in Den Pasar on the island of Bali. At that occasion the Guardian cabled: PRAYERS SURROUNDING YOU – SHOGHI.

84. Because of the unstable political situation Marie Buys and De Borst's fiancée remained in Holland.



Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum



Louise Drake Wright, The Hague 1934



Inez Greeven, c.1930

Max Greeven, c.1930



Jaap Liebau, c.1930





(from left to right) Rita van Bleyswijk Sombeek, Edna True and Jetty Straub, Rotterdam 1946



Wim Grosfeld, Jakarta 1954



Theo Durieux

Charlotte Stirrat, Amsterdam 1947



John and Eunice Shurcliff with
their daughter Frances, Brussels 1948





Arnold van Ogtrop (second from the left), as a participant in the Fauré Concourse, Amsterdam 1953



Suzette Hipp



Marie Buys, c.1950

First Local Spiritual Assembly of Amsterdam, 1948: (from left to right) Jan de Borst, Josephine Diebold, Harry Dieperink, John Carré, Charlotte Stirrat, Hans Slim, Rita van Bleywijk Sombeek, Arnold van Ogtrop and Jetty Straub



First Local Spiritual Assembly of Luxembourg, 1949:
 (from left to right, seated) Martha Boucon, Anita Ioas, Suzette Hipp,
 Frantisek Milicka, Jindra Mynarova, (standing) Camille Berg,
 Margot Vandenbroeck-Lévy, Sally Sanor and David Ned Blackmer
 →



Fourth European Teaching
 Conference, Scheveningen 1951

→
 The 'All Holland Day', The Hague 13 January 1957: (from left to right, seated)
 Fippie van Duyn, Josephine Diebold, Sanayeh Ala'i, Jeanne Boekhoudt and
 Marie Buys, (standing, first row) Marijke van Lith, Theo Beets, Jopie Nijland,
 Mieke Richel, Marthi Rothschild, Jetty Straub, Henk Buys and Eleanor Hollibaugh,
 (standing, second row) Hally Watrin, Nerty Rijenenburg, Ab van der Hulst,
 Wim Vermeulen, Luis de Frètes, Arnold van Ogtrop, Lottie Tobias and Jan Sijssling





First Local Spiritual Assembly of Brussels, 1948: (from left to right, front) Georgine Jacobs, Léa Nys, Jeanne Fayaux, Jean Mestagh: (back row) Eunice Shurcliff, Jack Shurcliff, Gustave van de Velde, Antoine Vloebergh and Suzanne Dekoninck

CARTE D'ADHERANT

Je soussigné déclare:

reconnaître pleinement la station du Précurseur (Le Báb)
de la Cause Baha'ie, de Son Auteur (Baha'u'llah) et
d'Abdu'l-Bahà, son parfait Exemple;

accepter sans réserve et me soumettre à tout ce que leurs
Ecrits ont révélé;

adhérer fermement et loyalement à chacune des clauses du
Testament sacré d'Abdu'l-Bahà;

et m'associer étroitement tant avec l'esprit que la forme
de l'Administration actuelle baha'ie dans le monde

(Signature)

Theo Durieux

Declaration card, signed by Theo Durieux,
believed to be the first native Bahá'í of Belgium

Nom et prénom

Durieux Theo Age 59

Profession

Voyageur de commerce

Adresse

22 Spillemansstraat

Ville

Borgerhout Pays Belgie
Antwerpen.

Date

31/5/47

your well efforts not reward
that our it doubt will color your work
high endeavours. Your true brother, Frank

3. blessings of Bahá'u'lláh
cannot but be showered
upon you all.

With warmest greetings,
R. R. Abraham

May so. wonderful:
I was so pleased to
receive your letter, & wish
to assure you of my
deep appreciation of the spirit
that animates you in the
service of His Faith, &
of my ardent prayers
for your success in
its service. Persevere



The Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of
Luxembourg.

Ahoifa
February 15
1950

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

Your letter of recent
date, with the photograph
of your assembly enclosed,
has been received by

held is perforce a very slow process. So far you have done very well indeed, and the will certainly assist you all he can with his prayers.

He urges you to be confident and courageous, united and loving amongst yourselves - then the

our beloved Guardian, and he thanks you for it.

He is proud of the achievements of the friends in Luxembourg and delighted to hear that many of them are veterans of the Duchy. In a small and conservative country such as that to gain a foot

Letter dated 15 February 1950 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Luxembourg



I gratefully acknowledge receipt of
 the sum of Two Dollars
 from my dear Bahá'í co-worker's
Bahá'í Assembly of Brussels, Belgium
 to be expended for the construction of
 the International Archives.

Haifa, Israel
 April 28th 1956

Shoghi

Receipt, signed by Shoghi Effendi

Telegram, sent by Shoghi Effendi on 24 April 1957

Telegramm - Télégramme - Telegramma					
95			Wieder Sende Punkte	Telegraphen-Bez. Lagepunkt & Einschreibungs-Nr.	Stunde Monat Jahr
+ 8195 haifa has17 17 24/4 1137					
Erläuterung - Preis - Währung			Einschreiben - Freigabe - Transmiss		
-BNB	173	10			
No. 6088					
= it = benelux national assembly care bahai geneveuisse					
= greatly value noble sentiments heartfelt congratulations assure fervent prayers = shoghi					
<i>...me hautement vales sentiments chaleureux felicitations assure fervente prieres = Shoghi</i>					



Léa Nys, Henri Jarvis, and Doris Lohse, Brussels 1948

Second European Teaching Conference, Brussels 1949





First Benelux Conference, Brussels 1952

Fifth European Teaching Conference, Luxembourg 1952





Jeanne Boekhoudt



Honor Kempton

Jeanne Kranen, Cyprus c.1954

Lex and Elly Meerburg,
Dutch New Guinea 1959





Dedication National Bahá'í Centre, The Hague 1956

Benelux Conference, Rotterdam 1953





Delegates to the first Regional Convention of the Benelux, Brussels 1957.
 Standing in the back row, 8th from left: Borrah Kavelin.

Local Spiritual Assembly of The Hague, 1952: (from left to right, seated)
 Agnes Leenart and Lottie Tobias, (standing) Jopie Nijland, Fippie van Duyne-Ouborg,
 Ton Bloem, Jeanne Boekboudt, Eleanor Hollibaugh, Theo Beets and Elly Becking





First Regional Spiritual Assembly of the Benelux, Brussels 1957: (from left to right seated) Fernand Radar, Elsa Dekoninck, Léa Nys, Jean Nys, (standing) Jan Sijlsing, Roger Swinnen, Louis Hénuzet, Bob van Lith, and Claude Lévy

Benelux Conference, Aerdenhout 1955





Marthe Molitor

Geertrui Ankersmit, c.1955



Etty Graeffe



Dear Bahá'í Sister:

The beloved Guardian has instructed me to answer your letter of October 2, enclosing that of Mr. E. Remacle, as well as the post card relevant to it.

I am sending you herewith his answer, which no doubt Mr. Remacle will share with you, and which explains his attitude towards the questions raised.

No pressure should be brought to bear on these kind and loving friends, to join the faith. This is a matter of conscience, and whatever their future attitude may be, the Bahá'ís should continue to cooperate with them and show them great cordiality and friendship.

The Guardian is praying for their spiritual enlightenment, and also for the steady progress of your Assembly's work in Brussels.

He was made most happy by the excellent reports of the Brussels Conference and the high praise bestowed upon the Brussels Bahá'ís for all they did to make it such a success.

With Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

Dear and valued co-workers:

I wish to assure you in person of my deep and heartfelt gratitude for your notable services to the Faith, and particularly in connection with the Brussels Conference. I feel truly proud of your accomplishments, and will supplicate the Beloved to bless richly your valuable and meritorious activities, and enable you in the days to come, to win still greater victories in the service of His Faith. Your true and grateful brother, Shoghi

42 2nd European Teaching Conference, 5 November 1949

The Guardian wants me to call your attention to an error in the published version (October Bahá'í News) of his cable to the European Conference. It should read as follows:

Right hand column, beginning of the second paragraph:

“Firmly knit (by the) sacred bonds (of a) spiritual fellowship more enduring, possessed of greater cohesive strength than any ties (of) kinship or race, (and) more potent (than) any social ideology or political alliance; deriving constant sustenance from (the) Mandate issued (from the) Pen (of the) Author (of the) Divine Plan; (and) assured (of the) overshadowing protection vouchsafed by (the) Lord (of the) Covenant Himself presiding (over the) Plan’s unfolding destiny, let them, (on) this auspicious occasion, dedicate themselves, through their assembled representatives, (to the) dual task (of) steadily consolidating their infant strength (and) tirelessly diffusing (the) holy influences inherent (in) their mission, until (a) visionless, slumbering, spiritually-impooverished continent (is) awakened through (the) saving grace (of) Baha’u’llah’s Revelation and its peace (and) security unassailably established through (the) redemptive power released through (the) emergence of (the) institutions of (a) divinely appointed World Order.”

43 Josephine Diebold, 30 November 1949

Dear Bahá'í Sister:⁸⁵

Your letter dated November 23 has reached our beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

85. Josephine C. Diebold (1876-1966) was the daughter of a German mother and a Swiss father. She was a teacher-governess by profession and became a Bahá'í in Amsterdam on 21 March 1947. She was the oldest member of the Local Spiritual

He fully realizes how very distressing it is to see any inharmony in a Bahá'í Community. However, a great deal of inharmony – if not all of it – is due to the fact that the Bahá'ís do not properly understand the administration. They know that the Spiritual Assembly is the body to decide the affairs of the Community, but they do not let it do so! This is usually due not to lack of a desire to see the assembly function, but rather to over-anxiety to see it do what one or two people think is the proper thing.

It is very hard for people to learn to function the way 'Abdu'l-Bahá says we should: the friends on the assembly must consult freely, all of them; then whatever the majority decides must be accepted wholeheartedly, for the sake of God. Personal opinions are important, but once the majority has voted, they must be given up and not clung to.

The Guardian appreciates very much your devotion to the Faith, and your loving and helpful attitude towards your fellow Bahá'ís. He urges you to go on encouraging them, and pointing out to them that these are small problems – growing pains – and will and can be overcome.

He will certainly pray for the unity of the friends there.

With Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

Assuring you of my loving prayers for your success in the service of our beloved Faith and for the realization of every hope you cherish for the promotion of the interests of its institutions, your true brother, Shoghi

44 Jeanne Boekhoudt, 25 December 1949

Dear Bahá'í Sister:⁸⁶

Your letter of November 3 was received and our beloved Guardian has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

Assembly at the time. Stirrat described her as 'a steady rock' during many a stormy assembly meeting.

As he is particularly busy at this time in connection with the work going on at the Shrine I will make this just a short letter.

He does not feel that you should try to do anything special about this capacity you feel to help people when they are ill. This does not mean you should not use it when the occasion arises, such as it did recently. But he means you should not become a "healer" such as the Christian Scientists have, and we Bahá'ís do not have.

As your niece seems quite happy in her new life there is nothing you can do to open her eyes but pray for her. He too will pray for her.

With warmest greetings, R. Rabbání

Assuring you of my loving prayers for your success in the service of our beloved Faith, and for the realization of every hope you cherish for its promotion. Your true brother, Shoghi

45 Local Spiritual Assembly of Luxembourg, 15 February 1950

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

Your letter of recent date, with the photograph of your assembly enclosed has been received by our beloved Guardian, and he thanks you for it.⁸⁷

He is proud of the achievements of the friends in Luxembourg and delighted to hear that many of them are natives of the Duchy. In a small

86. Jeanne (Jane) Boekhoudt (1901-1975) was the first Bahá'í in The Hague. Stirrat described her as 'warm-hearted, fun loving, not as critical as most Dutch', as well as being a 'very understanding person' and 'a very good listener'. Boekhoudt worked as a corrector for a local newspaper. She was appointed a member of the Dutch Translating and Publishing Committee in June 1949.

87. The Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Luxembourg was first elected on 21 April 1949. Its members were: Martha Boucon, Suzette Hipp, Anita Ioas, Jindra Mynarova, Sally Sanor, Margot Vandenbroeck-Lévy, Camille Berg, David Ned Blackmer, and Frantisek Milicka. There were 13 Bahá'ís living in Luxembourg at the time, half of them native believers.

and conservative country such as that to gain a foothold is perforce a very slow process. So far you have done very well indeed, and he will certainly assist you all he can with his prayers.

He urges you to be confident and courageous, united and loving amongst yourselves - then the blessings of Bahá'u'lláh cannot but be showered upon you all.

With warmest greetings, R. Rabbání

Dear co-workers:

I was so pleased to receive your letter, and wish to assure you of my deep appreciation of the spirit that animates you in the service of His Faith, and of my ardent prayers for your success in its service. Persevere in your noble efforts, and rest assured that the Beloved will bless your high endeavours. Your true brother, Shoghi

46 Ned Blackmer, 5 September 1950

Dear Bahá'í Brother:⁸⁸

Your letter of August 8 has been received and our beloved Guardian has instructed me to answer it in his behalf.

He feels that as long as your dear mother, so devoted and heroic in her service to the Faith, is in good health, able to support herself and happy you are doing this valuable pioneer work, you should remain in Europe. Your pioneer activities are very much needed and in remaining you are also saving the Fund the extra expense of sending someone to take your place.

88. David Ned Blackmer was an American Bahá'í pioneer to Luxembourg in 1947. He served in the first Spiritual Assembly of Luxembourg-Ville, which was elected in 1949. He left Luxembourg in 1950 and lived in Brussels until 1952. After a stay in the United States, he returned to Luxembourg in 1965.

The attitude of your non-Bahá'í relatives is quite understandable, but the Guardian feels this is a matter which lies between you and your mother to decide, both being so united in spirit and so dedicated to the Cause of God.

He will pray for you both, and that your relatives may come to see the rightness of your acts.

With Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

May the Beloved bless your high endeavours, enable you to enrich the record of your splendid services, and aid you to win still greater victories for this glorious Faith and its infant institutions. Your true and grateful brother, Shoghi

47 **Jeanne Boekhoudt, 2 November 1950**

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your letter of October 6 was received by our beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

He was very pleased to see you are working now and that you have also a dear Bahá'í sister there to assist you and labour with you to establish eventually a Spiritual Assembly there in the Hague.

The Guardian feels that the question of the Clark's remaining in Holland or leaving is a matter which the European Teaching Committee must decide.⁸⁹ You must always remember that this Committee is responsible for

89. George and Mildred (Millie) Eileen Clark were an American pioneer couple who had come from Oslo to Amsterdam in January 1950. They both served in the Local Spiritual Assembly and their apartment functioned as the local Bahá'í Centre. In a letter of 5 October the European Teaching Committee had informed the believers that the Clarks were about to be assigned to Luxembourg. 'We know it is with genuine regret that you and the Clarks will bid each other farewell and yet there is no real parting among Bahá'ís. We can assure you that we would not take these valuable

10 countries, and they are often forced to take away the strongest pioneers they have and transfer them to a weak place which is not progressing satisfactorily or is in danger.

All Bahá'í Communities suffer setbacks and growing pains, have problems to meet and tests. This is inevitable; but the remedy is to do one's best, with love and patience, and seek to adjust our problems in the framework of the administration. He realizes this is not always easy! But it is required of us, and will lead to great things in the future.

He urges you to continue your teaching of the Faith there, with a peaceful heart, confident Bahá'u'lláh will help you and bless you.

With Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

May the Almighty bless, sustain and guide you, and enable you to promote, at all times, the vital interests of His Faith and of its God-given institutions. Your true brother, Shoghi

48 Jeanne Kranen, 2 November 1950

Dear Bahá'í Sister:⁹⁰

Your letter of October 6 has been received, and our beloved Guardian has instructed me to answer it on his behalf.

pioneers from you at this time if we did not need them especially for this other post.' On 28 August 1953, Millie Clark (1892-1967) would be the first Bahá'í to settle on Norway's Lofoten Islands. For this important service Shoghi Effendi appointed her a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh.

90. Adriana (Jeanne) Petronella Kranen (1907-1993) was from The Hague, and since 1933 had worked in that city as a school teacher. In November 1948, she left the Netherlands to become a governess-teacher in Iran. There she learned of the Bahá'í Faith, and upon her return to the Netherlands she formally became a Bahá'í on 31 August 1950. Clark described her as 'a vivid, energetic person, (who) is busily spreading news of the Bahá'í Faith among her friends in The Hague'. In April 1951,

He is very happy to see you are working to spread the Faith in the Hague, and are so active and devoted in serving it.

Regarding the Clark's leaving Holland: he feels this is a matter which must be decided by the European Teaching Committee as they have all the goal countries to consider, and know where the need is greatest, which, of course, is more than the individual Bahá'ís in different countries do. Often they are forced to transfer capable pioneers from a relatively strong community to a weaker one in danger.

He feels you should have confidence in the E.T.C. and while appreciating the fact that the Bahá'ís are all just human and like other people, realize that this Committee has acted with great wisdom, courage and integrity, otherwise it never could have accomplished what it has.

He urges you to follow the example of Mr. and Mrs. Clark, whose spirit so strongly influenced you, and if they are transferred, do all you can to accomplish their work and assist any future pioneers who may take their place.

With Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

May the Beloved guide and sustain you, cheer your heart, remove all obstacles from your path, and enable you to win great victories in the service of His Faith and its infant institutions. Your true brother, Shoghi

49 Rita van Bleyswijk Sombeek, 2 November 1950

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your letter of February 16 was received, but owing to the pressure of the Guardian's work on the Shrine at that time, and subsequently to the

Kranen left the Netherlands to work for the family of the Dutch Ambassador in London.

months of illness of Mr. Maxwell, his correspondence was unanswered for many months.⁹¹

He trusts that since writing your letter your affairs have improved and your confidence returned.

The thing the friends should always remember is that wherever they are they can serve the Faith through word and deed. All fields of Bahá'í service are important, not only the pioneer one, and so no one should feel he cannot do something for the Cause unless circumstances change, because there is always a way of serving right where one is.

He urges you not to feel depressed or sad, but to go forward with a confident heart.

With Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

May the Almighty reward you abundantly for your past labours, enable you to enrich the record of your past services, and aid you to win still greater victories in the service of His Faith and its God-given infant institutions. Your true brother, Shoghi

91. This letter was sent to Van Bleyswijk Sombeek's address in the United States, but it had to be forwarded to Stockholm. After a year-long stay in the United States, where she presented Bahá'í lectures with titles like 'Progress Toward World Unity' in New York, Grosse Pointe, Park Ridge, and various other places, she had left as a pioneer to Sweden in the autumn of 1950. The unusual months-long delay in correspondence was caused by the construction of the superstructure of the Shrine of the Báb which had begun in 1949, and by the illness of its Canadian architect, William Sutherland Maxwell (1874-1952). Maxwell was the father of the Guardian's secretary and wife, Rúhíyyih Rabbání (née Mary Maxwell)

Dear Bahá'í Friends:⁹²

Your letter of December 25 has been received, and our beloved Guardian has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

He extends to you a most hearty welcome into the service of our beloved Faith – a Faith you have so strangely been prepared for many years ago in Indonesia.

If you can migrate to Latin America he thinks it would be a very good thing; you could certainly, wherever you were, help the spread of the Cause and its consolidation.

However, he feels you should be very careful of any scheme for building up a colony along Bahá'í lines; this is, he feels premature, and might not only involve a failure affecting you, and because you are Bahá'ís, the good name of the Cause too.

He will pray that the way may open for you to find a satisfactory life for yourselves and your children, and at the same time serve this Faith you love so dearly.

He will also pray for your friends, whom you mention in your letter.

With Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

With the assurance of my loving prayers for your success and spiritual advancement, your true brother, Shoghi

92. Augusta (Aukje) and Ulrich Reinwald Antoine LaFontaine became Bahá'ís in Amsterdam, the place where they lived, in October 1950. They both served on the Spiritual Assembly from April 1951 onwards. See also letter 13 March 1952.

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your letter to our beloved Guardian, dated May 15 has been received, as well as the photographs you enclosed, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

The picture supposed to be of the Báb is not authentic at all. He advises you to destroy these as we never under any circumstances circulate pictures of either the blessed Báb or Bahá'u'lláh, and this one is not even of Him.

You are free to do as you please with the others, though he would prefer that the friends concentrate on the Master's photographs and ignore those of himself.

He is happy to see you and your dear husband, as well as your children, are united in serving the Faith, and assures you all of his most loving prayers. He deeply appreciates your spirit and your work for Bahá'u'lláh.

With Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

May the Beloved bless, guide and sustain you, and enable you to win great victories for His Faith and its nascent institutions, You true brother, Shoghi

52 4th European Teaching Conference,
Scheveningen, September 1951

ACCLAIM JOYOUS OCCASION CONVOCATION ON DUTCH SOIL HISTORIC EUROPEAN TEACHING CONFERENCE, CONSTITUTING YET ANOTHER LINK CHAIN ANNUAL GATHERINGS REPRESENTATIVES FOLLOWERS FAITH BAHÁ'U'LLÁH TEN EUROPEAN GOAL COUNTRIES AS WELL AS BAHÁ'Í COM-

93. The 4th European Teaching Conference was held in Scheveningen, near The Hague. It was attended by some 140 believers from 22 different countries.

MUNITIES EASTERN WESTERN HEMISPHERES.²³

HEART DILATED, SPIRIT UPLIFTED CONTEMPLATION RANGE QUALITY SERVICES RENDERED; SPIRIT DEMONSTRATED, DEGREE MATURITY ATTAINED DIVERSIFIED BUDDING, VIRILE COMMUNITIES RIGHTLY REGARDED FIRST FRUITS OPERATION 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ'S DIVINE PLAN EUROPEAN CONTINENT.

WELCOME WITH FEELINGS PARTICULAR GRATIFICATION PARTICIPATION NEWLY ENROLLED DUTCH, DANISH PORTUGUESE BELIEVERS ENTERPRISES INITIATED INDIAN, CANADIAN, BRITISH, BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITIES INDONESIA, GREENLAND AFRICAN CONTINENT, PRESAGING UNDERTAKINGS DESTINED BE SYSTEMATICALLY LAUNCHED ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES NEWLY EMERGED EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT REMAINING COUNTRIES EUROPE AND POSSIBLY, BEYOND ITS CONFINES.

CONCLUDING YEARS SECOND SEVEN YEAR PLAN MUST WITNESS WITHIN EACH EVERY GOAL COUNTRY, NOTABLE MULTIPLICATION CENTERS, STEADY CONSOLIDATION ASSEMBLIES, RAPID INCREASE NUMBER AVOWED SUPPORTERS FAITH, CLEARER VISION STRENUOUS TASKS AHEAD, DEEPER AWARENESS THEIR SIGNIFICANCE, FIRMER RESOLVE THEIR PROSECUTION GREATER DEDICATION THEIR PURPOSE.

SIGNAL, WHOLLY UNEXPECTED, MANIFOLD ACHIEVEMENTS, ILLUMINATING ANNALS FIRST FIVE YEARS OPERATION SECOND SEVEN YEAR PLAN EMBOLDEN ME CONFIDENTLY ANTICIPATE, UPON TERMINATION BRIEF SPAN REMAINING TWO YEARS, GRADUAL FORMATION REGIONAL NATIONAL ASSEMBLIES PRELUDE EMERGENCE SEPARATE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY EACH GOAL COUNTRY AS WELL AS LAUNCHING ORGANIZED CAMPAIGNS, IN COLLABORATION PARENT COMMUNITY GREAT REPUBLIC OF THE WEST

CONJUNCTION LONG STANDING, PRE-EMINENT NATIONAL
COMMUNITY LABOURING HEART EUROPEAN CONTINENT,
AIMING SPIRITUAL CONQUEST REMAINING SOVEREIGN
STATES EUROPE AND, GOD WILLING, REACHING BEYOND ITS
BORDERS AS FAR AS HEART ASIATIC CONTINENT.

INTERVAL SEPARATING US INAUGURATION YET ANOTHER
STAGE UNFOLDMENT DIVINE PLAN SWIFTLY DIMINISHING,
PERILS CONFRONTING SORELY TRIED CONTINENT
STEADILY MOUNTING.

AUSPICIOUSLY INAUGURATED, MYSTERIOUSLY UNFOLD-
ING, HIGHLY PROMISING WIDELY RAMIFIED CRUSADE,
EMBRACING WELL NIGH SCORE OF DEPENDENCIES
AFRICAN CONTINENT PRESENTING PRIVILEGED PROSECU-
TORS DIVINE PLAN EUROPEAN FIELD CHALLENGE AT ONCE
SEVERE, SOUL-STIRRING INESCAPABLE.

FUTURE EDIFICE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, DEPEND-
ING FOR ITS STABILITY ON SUSTAINING STRENGTH PILLARS
ERECTED DIVERSIFIED COMMUNITIES EAST WEST, DESTINED
DERIVE ADDED POWER THROUGH EMERGENCE THREE
NATIONAL ASSEMBLIES AMERICAN CONTINENTS AWAITS RISE
ESTABLISHMENT SIMILAR INSTITUTIONS EUROPEAN MAIN-
LAND, EACH DEPENDING DIRECTLY EFFORTS NOW
CONSCIOUSLY EXERTED BY CHAMPION BUILDERS ADMINIS-
TRATIVE ORDER FAITH BAHÁ'U'LLÁH EUROPEAN CONTINENT.

MAY CONFERENCE BE AIDED THROUGH OUTPOURING
GRACE AUTHOR REVELATION HASTEN, THROUGH DELIBER-
ATIONS CONSECRATION ATTENDANTS, SO BLISSFUL CON-
SUMMATION, LEND UNPRECEDENTED IMPETUS PRESENT
EVOLUTION ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER AND ACCELERATE
PROGRESS LEADING FUTURE EMERGENCE WORLD ORDER
OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH. – SHOGHI

53 The Bahá'ís who sent a greeting from
the 4th European Teaching Conference, 30 October 1951

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

Just a little note to thank you on the Guardian's behalf for your message from Scheveningen.

He has been made very happy by reports of how excellent the Conference was this year, and how mature, active and devoted the new European believers are.

He sends you his loving greetings.

With Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

May the Beloved reward you for your devoted labours, guide and sustain you in your meritorious activities, and enable you to promote effectively the vital interests of the institutions of His Faith. Your true brother, Shoghi

54 The Bahá'ís of the Hague, 25 December 1951

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

Your letter of December 11th has reached our beloved Guardian; and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf. He was most happy to see that you are now a united, dedicated and firm group, endeavoring to promote the Faith in that city, which is truly of historic importance; and he hopes that, through your energetic labors, it will soon be possible for you to have an Assembly.⁹⁴

The European Teaching Conference no doubt lent a great impetus to the work in Holland. The Cause is spreading at a very increasing rate, and

94. The 4th European Bahá'í Teaching Conference and Summer School in Scheveningen lent a boost to the Bahá'í activities in The Hague. Several participants wanted to join the community. In December, Eleanor Hollibaugh – an American pioneer who had arrived in Amsterdam in 1948, but who now lived in The Hague – could report that 'a group of seven earnest believers' had formed in The Hague. These

its glory mounting rapidly above the horizon, so to speak. We are, it seems, entering the period the Master foretold, when the masses of the people would become aware of this Cause, and attracted to it. We must work energetically to hasten that happy hour.

His loving thoughts are with you; and his prayers offered in the Holy Shrine on your behalf.

With warmest greetings, R. Rabbání

May the Almighty, Whose Cause you are serving so devotedly, and with ability and steadfastness, reward you for your labours, guide and sustain you always, and enable you to extend continually the range of your meritorious services. Your true and grateful brother, Shoghi

55 Jeanne Boekhoudt, 13 January 1952

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your letter of October 18th, 1951, with enclosure, has been received, and the beloved Guardian has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

He is most happy to hear of the success which attended the Conference, and that there are now seven believers in The Hague.⁹⁵

He sees no objection to your migrating to New Zealand if you can arrange to do so; and suggests that, if you do go out there, you try and settle in a place where your services are most useful to the Faith.

Pending your possible departure for New Zealand, he hopes that you will do all you can to assist in the establishment of a local assembly in The Hague; and assures you of his loving prayers for the success of your Bahá'í services.

With warmest greetings, R. Rabbání

P.S. Mr. Maxwell⁹⁶ is much better.

included, as well as herself: Jeanne Boekhoudt, Theo Beets, Elly Becking, Lottie Tobias, Fippie van Duyne-Ouborg, and Ton Bloem.

95. See letter 25 December 1951.

96. See letter 2 November 1950 (49).

Assuring you of my loving prayers for your success in the service of our beloved Faith and its institutions. Your true brother, Shoghi

56 Honor Kempton, 4 February 1952

Dear Bahá'í Sister:⁹⁷

Your letters dated January 23rd and 25th have been received; and the beloved Guardian has instructed me to answer you on his behalf, and to forward to you the enclosed receipt for the loving contributions made by the pioneers in the ten goal countries, to the Shrine of the Báb, on the occasion of the 90th birthday of dear Mrs. True.⁹⁸

He was very happy to receive from you, as well as from so many other friends, such heartening reports of the success of the Fourth European Teaching Conference held in Holland. There is no doubt that yearly the magnitude of these Conferences, and their repercussions are growing.

He is likewise delighted over the preparations being made for the Berne Conference, to which he attaches great importance, as he feels the Cause in Switzerland is now making very promising headway; and, if it continues at this pace, it may look forward to being represented, he hopes, in the not-too-distant future, by a National Spiritual Assembly, perhaps in conjunction with one of its neighboring countries. This at least is the goal for which the friends must arduously work.

97. Honor Kempton (1892-1981) was born in England. She became a Bahá'í in 1935 in San Francisco. In 1939 she helped found the Bahá'í community in Alaska. She arrived in Luxembourg as a pioneer on 7 February, 1947. Two years later, January 1949, she moved to Geneva to serve as the representative of the European Teaching Committee at the International Bahá'í Bureau. Kempton returned to Luxembourg in 1959 and served in the Regional Spiritual Assembly of the Benelux as well as the National Spiritual Assembly of Luxembourg.

98. Corinne Knight True (1861-1961) was a prominent early Bahá'í. She became a believer in 1899 in Chicago. In the evening of 3 August, 1947, she and her daughter Edna, who was a member of the European Teaching Committee, visited Straub's house

Your own tireless labors are very deeply valued, and he assures you of his loving prayers on your behalf, in the Holy Shrines.

With warm Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

May the Beloved bless, sustain and reward all those who have contributed for the progress of this Holy Enterprise, and enable them to win great victories in the service of His glorious Faith. Your true brother, Shoghi

57 Ulrich and Aukje LaFontaine, 13 March 1952

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

Your letter of February 29th has been received, and the beloved Guardian has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.⁹⁹

He was very happy indeed to hear of the possibility of your going out to Surinam to teach the Faith; and considers that this would be rendering a most important and historical service at a time when we are planning to rapidly open up new countries to the Message of Bahá'u'lláh, and carry these life-giving Teachings to all the peoples of the world.

He assures you both that he will ardently pray that this plan may materialize; and that you may be blessed and protected, as well as successful.

With warm Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

May the Beloved bless, guide and sustain you, aid you to achieve the desire of your hearts, and win great victories in the service of His Faith. Your true brother, Shoghi

in Rotterdam to welcome Jan de Borst as 'the first new (post-war) Bahá'í in Holland'. Shoghi Effendi appointed her Hand of the Cause in February 1952.

99. See also letter 14 December 1955.

100. Secretary at the time was Rijk Johannes Frans (Luis) de Frètes (1919-1994), who had been born in Ambon in the Dutch East Indies. He became a Bahá'í in 1950 in Amsterdam and was a schoolteacher by profession.

Dear Bahá'í Brother:

Our beloved Guardian has received your letter of February 14th, and I have been instructed to answer you on his behalf.¹⁰⁰

He is indeed very happy to hear with what love the friends are working together, and that others have felt this unity of spirit and have joined your ranks.¹⁰¹ Please express to them a warm welcome from the Guardian, and tell them he hopes they will, in the days to come, render great services to the Cause of God.

He wishes me to express to you his appreciation for the publicity which you sent, which is most interesting.

The news of the rapid progress of the faith in the many European countries is most stimulating; and the Guardian will supplicate in the Holy Shrines that the devoted believers in Holland may receive such confirmation in their teaching work as to amaze themselves and their co-workers in other lands.

With warm Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

P.S. Enclosed is a brief note to the Bahá'ís who were present at the Feast of Sovereignty in Amsterdam.¹⁰²

101. Following the Scheveningen Conference and Summer School there was an upward surge in activities, not only in The Hague but also in Amsterdam. On 9 January 1952, four new Bahá'ís enrolled there: Bob and Marijke van Lith, and Jan and Gieny Sijssling.

102. At the Nineteen Day Feast of Sovereignty, on 19 January 1952, the Amsterdam community was delighted to welcome a fifth new believer, Geertruida Ankersmit, who had accepted the Bahá'í Faith in November 1951 in Brighton, England. See also letter 9 September 1955 (82). That evening the believers also signed a note of greeting to the Guardian.

Assuring you of my loving and abiding appreciation of your splendid services, of my fervent prayers for the extension of your valued activities, and the realization of every hope you cherish for the consolidation of the institutions of our glorious Faith. Your true and grateful brother, Shoghi

**59 The Bahá'ís gathered for the Feast of Sovereignty
in Amsterdam, 27 March 1952**

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

The note of greeting, which was signed by all of you, has been received by our beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to tell you he deeply appreciates your loyalty and devotion to the Cause, and the loving spirit which animates you in its service.

He will remember you all in his loving prayers at the Holy Shrines.

With warm Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

May the Almighty bless, guide and sustain you, aid you to promote, at all times, the vital interests of His Faith, and enable you to win great victories in its service. Your true brother, Shoghi

60 Jeanne Boekhoudt, 14 April 1952

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your letter of April 5th has been received, and I have been instructed by our beloved Guardian, to answer you on his behalf.

He is continuing his prayers that you may be enabled to fulfil your heart's desire in service to the Faith, and thanks you for the photograph you sent him.

With warm Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

Assuring you of my loving prayers for your success and spiritual advancement. Your true brother, Shoghi

61 Benelux Conference, Brussels, 16 April 1952

DELIGHTED LOVING APPRECIATION SUPPLICATING SUCCESS – SHOGHI¹⁰³

62 Jeanne Boekhoudt, 22 April 1952

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your letter of April 8th has been received; and, as the beloved Guardian is extremely busy, and has just written to you a short time ago, please consider this in the nature of a Post Script.

103. In December 1951, the European Teaching Committee appointed three new 'Regional Committees', including one for the Benelux. The Regional Committee of the Benelux consisted of six members: Louis Hénuzet and Léa Nys from Belgium, Rita van Bleywijk Sombeek and Theo Beets from the Netherlands, and Claude Lévy and Suzette Hipp from Luxembourg. Its primary task was to organize an annual regional conference. And so it happened that on 12 April 1952, 47 Benelux Bahá'ís gathered for a three-day Benelux Conference at the Bahá'í Centre in Brussels. The conference was also attended by Hand of the Cause Zikrulláh Khádem. His wife remembered: 'After visiting some Bahá'í communities in Italy, we proceeded from Milan to Brussels on 11 April 1952.' After a train journey of several hours and little sleep the couple arrived exhausted, but the welcome made up for the hardship. 'Upon receipt of the news that we were coming, the Bahá'ís had assembled in front of the building to watch for us. Words of welcome and Bahá'í greetings echoed as we arrived. We were escorted to the conference hall to the sound of clapping and cheering. In this manner the dear friends received the representative of their Guardian.' This first Benelux conference was such a success that the European Teaching Committee had to warn the organizers that these regional conferences should not divert interest from the larger annual European Teaching Conferences!

He is very happy to hear that you now have nine Bahá'ís in the Hague, which no doubt means you have a Spiritual Assembly.¹⁰⁴ He assures you he will pray for the rapid progress of the work there.

With Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

63 Ulrich and Aukje LaFontaine, 30 April 1952

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

This is just a little note to assure you, on behalf of our beloved Guardian, that your letter of April 11th has been received.

He will continue to pray that your fondest hopes may be realized; and that you may soon go forward as pioneers in the service of Bahá'u'lláh.

With Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

May the Beloved bless your high endeavours, and enable you to win great and memorable victories in the service of His Faith, your true brother, Shoghi

64 Jeanne Boekhoudt, 22 May 1952

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your letter of May 8th has been received, and the beloved Guardian has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

104. The first Spiritual Assembly of The Hague was elected on 21 April 1952. Its members were: Elly Becking, Lottie Tobias, Fippie van Duyne, Agnes Leenart, Ton Bloem, Jeanne Boekhoudt, Eléanor Hollibaugh, Agnes Bichnese and Theo Beets. In the summer of that year Bichnese requested to be relieved of her duty in the assembly, because of her physical condition. Her request was granted and Jopie Nijland, who had become a Bahá'í a few months earlier, replaced her.

The Guardian and I both appreciate your kind thoughts about my father.¹⁰⁵ Truly his name will always be remembered because of the many honors conferred upon him in the service of Bahá'u'lláh, one of which was his having been the architect of the exquisite Shrine of the Báb, which is now so very beautiful, though not yet completed.

The teaching work you are doing pleased the Guardian greatly, and he will pray for those souls who have been attracted to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh through your efforts.

He assures you also of his loving prayers in your behalf.

With warm Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

P.S. He will pray particularly that the way may open for you to go out to New Zealand.

Assuring you of my loving prayers for your success and spiritual advancement. Your true brother, Shoghi

65 5th European Teaching Conference, Luxembourg, 23 August 1952

OCCASION, AUSPICIOUS OPENING LUXEMBOURG TEACHING CONFERENCE COINCIDING EVE HISTORIC HOLY YEAR MARKING CONCLUSION SERIES MEMORABLE ANNUAL GATHERINGS, LEAVING INDELIBLE IMPRINT ANNALS SECOND STAGE EVOLUTION 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ'S DIVINE PLAN, WHOLEHEARTEDLY SHARE FEELINGS JOY, PRIDE GRATITUDE EVOKED HEARTS ASSEMBLED REPRESENTATIVES BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITIES EUROPEAN CONTINENT PROSPECT

105. The Guardian's secretary refers to William Sutherland Maxwell, the Canadian architect of the superstructure for the Shrine of the Báb, who had died on 26 March 1952 in Montreal (Canada). Shoghi Effendi had named him a Hand of the Cause in December 1951.

FORTHCOMING CONVOCATION EPOCH-MAKING CONVENTION FLORENCE, HARBINGER BIRTH ITALO-SWISS BAHÁ'Í NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

PROJECTED INSTITUTION CALLED BEING AMIDST WORLD-WIDE CELEBRATIONS COMMEMORATING INCEPTION BAHÁ'U'LLÁH'S PROPHETIC MISSION, CONSTITUTING FAIREST FRUIT INITIAL STAGE EUROPEAN CRUSADE, BOUND ADD ITS VALUABLE SUPPORT TRIPLE PILLARS RECENTLY ERECTED UNDER AEGIS SAME PLAN COURSE SAME STAGE ITS EVOLUTION DESIGNED SUSTAIN WEIGHT, BROADEN BASIS, ENHANCE PRESTIGE, ADD DIVERSITY ELEMENTS DESTINED PARTICIPATE SIX CONTINENTS GLOBE, FUTURE ELECTION UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE.

MOVED WARMLY CONGRATULATE AMERICAN NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY, ABLY DIRECTING VAST OPERATIONS EUROPEAN CRUSADE FROM HEART NORTH AMERICAN CONTINENT; EUROPEAN TEACHING COMMITTEE, PRINCIPAL EXECUTOR PLAN, INAUGURATING EUROPEAN PHASE AMERICA'S UNFOLDING MISSION; EUROPEAN REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED GENEVA, VIGILANTLY COORDINATING RAMIFICATIONS NEWLY LAUNCHED PROJECT; EVERY SUBSIDIARY AGENCY, REGIONAL LOCAL, CONTRIBUTING ITS SHARE TRIUMPH COMMON CAUSE; ALL PIONEERS, PAST PRESENT; SETTLERS, ITINERANT TEACHERS, WORTHY EMISSARIES CENTRE COVENANT, WHO NOBLY RESPONDED HIS CALL LENGTH BREADTH TEN GOAL COUNTRIES; ENTIRE BODY STEADILY MULTIPLYING NATIVE BELIEVERS, CONSTITUTING CORE VANGUARD ARMY, SINGLED OUT BY LORD HOSTS QUICKENING ULTIMATE CONQUEST SPIRITUALLY SLUMBERING CONTINENT, PARTICULARLY MEMBERS TWIN RAPIDLY RISING COMMUNITIES ITALY SWITZERLAND, WHO SINGLY COLLECTIVELY HASTENED, THROUGH HIGH ENDEAVOURS,

CONSUMMATION ENTERPRISE, EXCEEDING FONDEST EXPECTATIONS.

HAIL THIS CROWNING EXPLOIT SECOND SEVEN YEAR PLAN AS FORERUNNER FORMATION RAPID SUCCESSION, COURSE THIRD PHASE THE PLAN CONCEIVED CENTER OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH'S COVENANT, REGIONAL-NATIONAL ASSEMBLIES SCANDINAVIA, BENELUX COUNTRIES¹⁰⁶, IBERIAN PENINSULA, THEMSELVES A PRELUDE ESTABLISHMENT PRESENT SUCCEEDING EPOCHS EVOLUTION DIVINE PLAN, SEPARATE NATIONAL ASSEMBLIES EACH SOVEREIGN STATE, PRINCIPALITY, CHIEF DEPENDENCY EUROPEAN CONTINENT, AS WELL AS NEIGHBOURING PRINCIPAL ISLANDS MEDITERRANEAN, ATLANTIC OCEAN, NORTH SEA.

EARNESTLY APPEAL ALL PARTICIPANTS PHENOMENAL BIRTH RISE COMMUNITIES CONSTITUTING WEIGHTY ELEMENTS LIFE FIRMLY KNIT WORLD BAHÁ'Í FAMILY PREPARE THEMSELVES DURING PRESENT CONFERENCE FUTURE CLOSE COLLABORATION LONG ESTABLISHED SISTER COMMUNITIES BRITISH ISLES, FRANCE, GERMANY MEET CHALLENGE MAJOR STRENUOUS TASK CONSTITUTING PIVOT DELIBERATIONS APPROACHING STOCKHOLM INTER-CONTINENTAL CONFERENCE, DESIGNED EXPAND CONSOLIDATE FRAMEWORK ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER FAITH BAHÁ'U'LLÁH NORTH, SOUTH, WEST HEART EUROPEAN CONTINENT, FORESHADOWING LAUNCHING FUTURE ENTERPRISES COLLABORATION GERMAN, PERSIAN, IRAQI BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITIES, CALCULATED EXTEND REGENERATING INFLUENCE SAME ORDER EASTERN SOUTH-EASTERN TERRITORIES SAME CONTINENT EVENTUALLY BEYOND ITS CONFINES, ACROSS URAL MOUNTAINS NORTH, WEST ULTIMATELY HEART ASIATIC CONTINENT.

106. The first Regional Spiritual Assembly of the Benelux was elected in 1957. See also letter April 1957.

URGE ALL ATTENDANTS DEDICATE PART SESSIONS CONFERENCE SYNCHRONIZING CENTENARY IMPRISONMENT BAHÁ'U'LLÁH SÍYÁH-CHÁL PRAYERFUL REMEMBRANCE SOMBRE TRAGEDY PRECEDING RISE RESPLENDENT ORB AUGUST REVELATION, DRAW NIGH HIS SPIRIT, FIX THOUGHTS HIS PROMISES, DERIVE FRESH INSPIRATION GLORIOUS TRIUMPH, FOLLOWING SO CLOSELY HIS AGONIZING ORDEAL, CONTEMPLATE MAGNITUDE HIS CAUSE, PLEDGE THEMSELVES ENSURE COURSE DECADE OPENING BEFORE THEM SUCCESS TWIN COLOSSAL TASKS ASSIGNED THEM, PROPAGATION HIS FAITH CONSOLIDATION AGENCIES HIS RISING ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER THROUGHOUT ENTIRE EUROPEAN CONTINENT. – SHOGHI

66 5th European Teaching Conference, Luxembourg, August 1952

DEEPLY TOUCHED NOBLE RESOLVE PRAYING GLORIOUS SUCCESS HISTORIC TASKS AHEAD – SHOGHI

67 Rita van Bleyswijk Sombeek, 11 November 1952

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your letter of October 21st has been received by the beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

He was very happy to see that you are teaching in Milano; and will pray that you may be successful in raising the number of believers sufficiently to have a Spiritual Assembly in the Spring¹⁰⁷.

107. It is not certain which future assembly is indicated here: the Local Spiritual Assembly of Milan or the Regional Spiritual Assembly of Italy and Switzerland. The latter was elected on 21 April 1953.

He will also pray that the obstacles in your sister's path may be removed, and that she may win over her husband sufficiently to the Faith to enable her to do more active teaching, and fulfil her heart's desire.

He was extremely pleased over the publicity about the Faith in Holland, as the article seemed to be most favorable in every way, to the Cause.¹⁰⁸ He hopes that you will be able to get some good publicity in Milano.

With warmest Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

Assuring you of my loving prayers for your success in the service of our beloved Faith. Your true brother, Shoghi

68 Arnold van Ogtrop, 21 November 1952

Dear Bahá'í Brother:¹⁰⁹

Your letter of October 27th has been received by the beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

He was very happy to hear of your contact with the nice Siamese people you mentioned in your letter, and he will certainly pray that they may become more interested in the Faith, and, God willing, embrace it.

It is of great advantage to contact students from countries where there are not at present any Bahá'ís, and open this important door of teaching.

He is happy over the progress being made in Holland, and assures you all of his loving prayers.

With warm Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

May the Beloved bless, guide and sustain you always, and enable you to promote the best interests of His Faith, Your true brother, Shoghi

108. The article about the Faith referred to is *De Tempel van de Bab te Haifa* (The Temple of the Báb in Haifa) which was published in the national newspaper *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* on Saturday, 11 October 1952.

109. See also letter 20 November 1946.

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your letter of February 15th has been received by the beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

The calamities that this winter's flood has brought on Europe, especially on Holland, have indeed been terrible, and all hearts were saddened to think of the sufferings of so many people, the beloved Guardian's heart included. He hopes that none of the believers have been affected personally in this great national catastrophe.¹¹⁰

He was sorry to hear that your plans to migrate to Australia have not worked out satisfactorily, and perhaps the wisdom in this is that you continue to teach the Cause in Holland, where the believers are still few in number, and there remains a great deal of work to be done during the coming ten years.¹¹¹ He hopes and will pray that you may become ever more active in this important field, and that God may crown your labors with success.

Please convey his loving greetings to all the dear friends there, and assure them of his concern for their welfare and his prayers for the people who have suffered so deeply during the floods.

With Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

Assuring you of my loving prayers for your spiritual advancement. Your true brother, Shoghi

110. In the night of the weekend of 31 January and 1 February 1953, the southwestern part of Holland was hit by a flood. Some 1,835 people drowned and 72,000 had to be evacuated. None of the Bahá'ís were affected personally. The disaster was international news at the time.

111. This is a reference to the Ten Year Plan (1953-1963) which was to be launched in April.

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your letter of June 17, 1952, has been received by the beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

Your indefatigable services in so many fields are deeply appreciated by him.

We can only hope that the Queen of Holland will gradually realize the greatness of our Faith, and will bend her energies toward its propagation.¹¹²

The Guardian assures you of his loving prayers on your behalf.

With warm Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

May the Beloved bless, guide and sustain you in your meritorious services to His Faith. Your true brother, Shoghi

71 2nd Benelux Conference, Overschie, 22 April 1953

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

Your letter of April 6th has been received by the beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

He was indeed happy to learn of the love and unity which existed among those present at that important Conference¹¹³, and that you are all

112. Queen Juliana (1909-2004) shared her mother's spiritual inclination and ecumenical ideals. In 1951, she organized the first of a series of private international conferences on religious pacifism. The American Bahá'í pioneer Hollibaugh had been invited to the second conference which was held in November 1951. In July 1953, the Bahá'ís of the Netherlands sent the Queen the book *The Mission of Bahá'u'lláh*, which had been prepared to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Bahá'u'lláh's revelatory vision in the *Síyáh-Chál*.

113. This was the 2nd Benelux Conference. It was held in Overschie near Rotterdam on 4-6 April 1953. In December 1951, the European Teaching Committee had appointed three new 'Regional Committees', including one for the Benelux. Its main function was 'to arrange for one regional conference each year'. On 12 April 1952, the first Benelux Conference had been organized in the Bahá'í Centre in Brussels.

completely resolved to fulfil, in their entirety, the tasks allotted to you during this historic World Crusade.

The Guardian was particularly happy that Dr. Mühlischlegel¹¹⁴ could be present, and that his contribution to the conference was so helpful; also that Mrs. van Sombeek added so much to the spirit of the gathering by her account of her visit to Haifa¹¹⁵, and of the Kampala Conference¹¹⁶.

He was also pleased that a number of the German friends could attend.

The Guardian assures you all of his loving prayers for you in the fulfilment of your noble tasks, that all your labours may be abundantly blessed.

With warm Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

May the Almighty bless, guide and sustain you, reward you for your splendid services, remove all obstacles from your path, and enable you to lend a great impetus to the onward march of His Faith. Your true brother, Shoghi

72 Marthe Molitor, 31 May 1953

Dear Bahá'í Sister:¹¹⁷

Your letter of May 13th has been received by the beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

114. Dr. Adelbert Mühlischlegel (1897-1980) was a prominent German Bahá'í. Shoghi Effendi appointed him a Hand of the Cause in February 1952.

115. Van Bleywijk Sombeek was the first post-war Dutch Bahá'í to make a pilgrimage to Haifa.

116. The first Intercontinental Teaching Conference convened in Kampala (Uganda) from 12-18 February 1953.

117. Marthe Molitor-Noury (1904-1994) was a French-born painter and journalist. She discovered the Bahá'í Faith in 1947 during a trip to Belgium from her home in Rwanda. She married a Belgian, and in October 1951 left for the Belgian Congo (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) one day after becoming a Bahá'í in Brussels. This letter of Shoghi Effendi reached her two months after her meeting with Zikrulláh and

The Guardian was most happy to hear from you, and to learn of the wonderful contact you had with Mr. and Mrs. Khádem¹¹⁸ and Mr. and Mrs. Banání¹¹⁹, and that you now realize the importance of serving the Faith and teaching the Message of Bahá'u'lláh at this time. He is praying for your success, and urges you to keep in touch with the Bahá'í Centres in Uganda, Nairobi and other places in Africa.

With warm Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

May the Almighty bless, guide and sustain you, remove all obstacles from your path, and enable you to promote the vital interests of His Faith. Your true brother, Shoghi

Javidukht Khádem as well as Músá and Sami Banání in Léopoldville (now Kinshasa). At the time, Molitor was one of the only two Bahá'ís living in that country. Javidukht Khádem described Molitor as 'a mature woman with a very attractive disposition'. And she added: 'Could this dedicated woman who labored so devotedly, grasped every opportunity, and persisted in her lonely attempts to teach the Faith ever have imagined that today there would be thousands of believers? How could she have known that her lonely labors – pioneering with a non-Bahá'í husband, lacking funds, and being out of communication with the rest of the Bahá'í world – would bear such fruit?' Molitor assisted in the formation of the Spiritual Assembly of Brazzaville, capital of French Equatorial Africa (now The Republic of Congo). In 1954, at the completion of her husband's term of service for the government, Molitor returned to Brussels. There Mr. Molitor became a Bahá'í too.

118. Zikru'lláh Khádem (1904-1986) was a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran from 1938-1960. He was appointed a Hand of the Cause in February 1952, and subsequently travelled to many Bahá'í communities world-wide.

119. Músá Banání (1886-1971) was an Iranian Bahá'í of Jewish background. In 1951, he settled in Uganda with his wife, his daughter, and her family. Shoghi Effendi appointed him Hand of the Cause in February 1952.

73 Benelux Conference, 27 September 1953

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The beloved Guardian has received your note sent from the Benelux Conference, and has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.¹²⁰

Now the wonderful Stockholm Conference¹²¹ has taken place, and the friends are all aware of the important tasks which have been set before them for the coming ten years.

The Guardian urges all the believers to redouble their efforts in the teaching field, and to endeavour to form new groups and new Assemblies; as the sooner this is accomplished, the more quickly the new National Assemblies will come into existence – the new pillars of the future Universal House of Justice.

He assures you all of his loving prayers for your guidance and assistance in your labours.

With warm Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

May the Almighty guide, bless and sustain you and aid you to promote effectively and at all times, the vital interests of His Faith and of its nascent institutions. Your true brother, Shoghi

74 Elly Becking, 27 October 1953

Dear Bahá'í Sister:¹²²

Your letter of October 15th has been received by the beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

120. This Benelux Conference was held on 15-16 August 1953.

121. The Third Intercontinental Teaching Conference was held in Stockholm, 21-26 July 1953. Some 370 Bahá'ís from 30 countries, including 14 Hands of the Cause, attended.

122. Elly Becking (1918-2005) was born on Celebes (now Sulawesi) in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia). She was a trained secretary and became a Bahá'í in The Hague

The Guardian was indeed delighted to learn that, although you are still so young in the Faith, you have arisen and gone forth as a pioneer to Dutch New Guinea. He will pray that you may be guided and assisted to find and confirm ready souls, so that in a short time a nucleus of active and devoted Bahá'ís will be established in that virgin area.

The Guardian hopes that, in the near future, your future husband will decide to join the ranks of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh, and will lend his reinforcement to your teaching activities.

He urges you to persevere in your task and never to become disheartened, as this is a most meritorious work, and those who pioneer in virgin territories are receiving special bounties from God in this historic period.

With warm Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

Assuring you of my loving prayers for your success and spiritual advancement. Your true brother, Shoghi

75 The Bahá'ís of the Hague and Rotterdam, 14 November 1953

LOVING APPRECIATION PRAYERS – SHOGHI¹²³

in June 1951. At the Stockholm conference she volunteered as a Bahá'í pioneer to Dutch New Guinea (now Irian Jaya). She arrived there in October 1953.

123. On the eve before the anniversary of Bahá'u'lláh's birthday, 12 November 1817, the Bahá'ís of The Hague and Rotterdam had sent a cable to the Guardian: BEHEIS AND FRIENDS GETHERED CELEBRATION BIRTHDAY BEHEULEH SENT LOVING GREETINGS - THE HAGUE AND ROTTERDAM BEHEIS [Original spelling]

Dear Bahá'í Friends:¹²⁴

Your letter of April 18th has been received by the beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

He was very happy indeed to see that you have been united, and that you are going to be able to establish a permanent residence in New Guinea, and teach the Faith there. He attaches the greatest possible importance to your presence in that virgin country; and he urges you under no circumstances to abandon your post, but to persevere, and with tact and patience gradually build up contacts with the local people, so that you can seek out those souls who are waiting to hear the Message of Bahá'u'lláh, and will prove the most receptive.

The most important thing for the pioneers to do in these countries into which it is difficult to gain entry, is to be very careful not to antagonize the officials, the missionaries or the local people, as this might cause them to be deprived of their possibilities of gaining a livelihood, or to be driven out of the country and to have their visa suspended.¹²⁵

To remain, to keep the beacon burning, to teach the Faith discreetly and to establish a foundation, is the work of every single pioneer in the Ten-Year Crusade.

You may be sure he will pray for your happiness in your marriage, for your service to Bahá'u'lláh, and for your success in every way.

With warmest Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

Assuring you of my loving prayers for your success and spiritual advancement, Your true brother, Shoghi

124. Elly Becking had married Hector Alexander (Lex) Meerburg (1925-1996) by proxy. Meerburg joined his wife in Dutch New Guinea in the summer of 1954. Shoghi Effendi appointed them both Knights of Bahá'u'lláh.

125. The Meerburgs left their post in 1959 when Indonesia claimed the Dutch colony. They returned to the Netherlands and settled in Diemen near Amsterdam.

DEEPLY TOUCHED MESSAGE WELCOME PLEDGE AR-
DENTLY SUPPLICATING UNPRECEDENTED BLESSINGS
GREAT VICTORIES – SHOGHI¹²⁶

78 Marijke van Lith,
Bahá'í Publishing Trust of the Netherlands, 4 October 1954

Dear Bahá'í Sister:¹²⁷

Your two letters dated August 23rd, with enclosures, have been received by the beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

He was happy to learn that you had sent a special leather-bound copy of the Dutch prayer book “Bahá'í Gebeden” to Her Majesty Queen Juliana, of the Netherlands, and to see the copy of her acknowledgement of this book.

He wishes me to thank you for the first copy of the first book printed under the authority of the “Stichting Bahá'í Literatuur”, which you sent him.

The Guardian was most happy to see the copy of the Notarial Deed certifying the registration of the “Stichting Bahá'í Literatuur”, which is the first official recognition of a Bahá'í Body in Holland.¹²⁸

He will pray that the labours of your Foundation may bring forth abundant fruit, and he assures you of his deep appreciation of the services of your Committee.

With warm Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

126. This Benelux Conference was held in Oosterbeek (near Arnhem).

127. The secretary of the *Stichting Bahá'í Literatuur* (Bahá'í Publishing Trust) at that time was Marijke Maria Johanna van Lith (*née* Boxman) (1924-2006). She had become a Bahá'í in 1952 in Amsterdam together with her husband Jacobus (Bob) Eduard van Lith (1922-1983).

128. The *Stichting Bahá'í Literatuur* was founded 17 December 1953.

Assuring you of my loving prayers for your success and spiritual advancement. Your true brother, Shoghi

79 Ulrich and Aukje LaFontaine, 17 March 1955

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

Your letter of the 7th of March made our beloved Guardian very happy indeed.

He is delighted to see that, through your consecration and perseverance, you have succeeded in securing work in Surinam; and you may be sure that his loving prayers will surround you as you go forth to carry the Message of Bahá'u'lláh to the Javanese and other races you may meet with in that country.¹²⁹

The Dutch Community must be proud of your determination and the example you have set.

Just recently he had the pleasure of meeting another Dutch pioneer, Miss Jeanne Kranen from Cyprus, who came here on a pilgrimage.¹³⁰ It impresses him very much to see the way the Dutch believers, new in the Faith, are showing such devotion and staunchness.

With warm Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

May the Almighty bless, guide and sustain you, and enable you to promote the vital interests of His Faith. Your true brother, Shoghi

129. The LaFontaines and their children left for Surinam in February 1955. See also letter 14 December 1955.

130. In February 1955, Kranen made a pilgrimage to Haifa. At that time she was a pioneer and Spiritual Assembly member in Nicosia (Cyprus) where she worked as a governess-teacher. Kranen returned to the Netherlands in 1963. See also letter 2 November 1950 (48).

80 The Bahá'ís of Amsterdam, 27 March 1955

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

The beloved Guardian has received your Naw-Rúz greeting, and wishes me to thank you on his behalf.

The Guardian hopes during this year the friends in Amsterdam will exert every effort toward the accomplishment of the important goals assigned to them under the Ten-Year Crusade. He feels all the believers can assist in the teaching work and in the creation of new Assemblies, thus hastening the time when their National Assembly will be elected. This striving toward these goals will in itself bring great joy to the Bahá'ís.

He assures you all of his loving prayers.

With warm Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

81 Benelux Conference, 3 September 1955

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

Your letter and cable of August 8th were received by the beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.¹³¹

If the cable was sent as such, it was never received by him, or he would have cabled a reply.

There are great tasks before the believers in the Benelux countries; but the Guardian is confident the dear Bahá'ís there are determined to shoulder them befittingly, and bring them to a successful conclusion. While they cannot possibly realize all that their dear Bahá'í brothers and sisters in Írán have been experiencing for their Faith, yet the knowledge of their suffering and distress, he knows, will spur on the friends in those countries to even greater effort to teach, in their lands, where they have

131. This Bahá'í Benelux Conference was held in Aerdenhout (near Amsterdam) on 6-14 August 1955. During the conference the purchase of a Dutch Bahá'í headquarters in The Hague was announced.

freedom to do so, and thus bear witness to the power in God's "Unde-featable Faith".¹³²

You are all often remembered in his loving prayers.

With warm Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

May the Almighty bless continually your high endeavours, aid you to extend the range of your meritorious activities, and enrich the record of your historic services to His Faith. Your true brother, Shoghi

82 Geertrui Ankersmit, 9 September 1955

Dear Bahá'í Sister:¹³³

Your letter of August 16th has been received by the beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

He was very sorry to learn that you have been experiencing such difficulties in your endeavors to remain at your pioneering post. Your perseverance and persistence he considers most commendable.

132. In April that year, the Iranian Bahá'í community fell victim to a campaign to suppress 'the Bahá'í sect'. High-ranking government officials joined the Muslim clergy in personally participating in the destruction of the national headquarters in Tehran. The house of the Báb in Shiráz was also pillaged and severely damaged, not to mention the murder, injury, and robbery of Bahá'ís that was reported in many areas of the country. On 7 June 1955, the Dutch Bahá'ís sent a cable to the Shah: VERY DISTURBED PRESS REPORTS VIOLENCE AGAINST BAHAI'S URGENTLY APPEAL YOUR MAJESTY APPLY JUSTICE FOR THOSE RECOGNIZE DIVINE ORIGIN ISLAM BAHAI'S ALL OVER WORLD ARE DEVOTED YOUR COUNTRY - BAHAI'S AMSTERDAM HOLLAND

133. Geertruida (Geertrui) Ankersmit was originally from Nijmegen, but she had become a Bahá'í in Brighton (England), in November 1951. At the Intercontinental Teaching Conference in Stockholm (21-26 July 1953), she volunteered to go to Texel, thereby opening the Frisian Islands for the Faith. She arrived there in October 1953, and Shoghi Effendi appointed her to be a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh. It was difficult, however, to find a job on the island. And when she at last found work as an assistant

You should write to the European Teaching Committee telling them of the conditions, so that they can get another pioneer to replace you. It is very important that a pioneer be stationed there; and the Guardian would urge you, if it is at all possible, to remain until your replacement arrives.

You should try to secure less arduous work, where the strain on your health would not be so great.

He assures you he very deeply appreciates your devoted spirit, and will pray that the way may open for you to continue your meritorious services for the Faith in the pioneering field which is so close to your heart.

With warm Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

Assuring you of my deepfelt appreciation of your meritorious efforts, as well as of my ardent and loving prayers for your success and spiritual advancement. Your true brother, Shoghi

83 Local Spiritual Assembly of Brussels, 9 September 1955

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The beloved Guardian has received your letter of August 19, and has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.¹³⁴

He hopes you will soon locate and secure a modest but suitable premises for your own Hazíratu'l-Quds, as he knows this will be of immense benefit to the progress of the work there.

nurse in a home for the elderly, this proved to be too great a strain on her health. On 16 August 1956, Ankersmit asked the Guardian to release her of her responsibility as a pioneer on Texel. 'I wholeheartedly long to serve the Cause where and as you wish me to. I will await your wishes before taking any further steps. I know that urgent pioneer assistance is needed in Luxembourg and over there is a possibility of employment. How I dislike to disappoint the beloved Guardian, but I hope to become a pioneer soon, so that I will be able to help you in your sacred task.' A few months later she joined Van Bleyswijk Sombeek as a pioneer in Luxembourg.

134. See also letter 3 September 1955 and footnote 132.

He was very pleased to hear that the friends are so devoted, and are serving the Faith so diligently.

He has indeed suffered greatly due to the wave of persecutions which has recently swept over Persia. His dearest hope is that the believers, in lands where there is freedom, will make a determined effort to counteract and compensate for this setback and loss to the Faith in the land of its birth, by their increased teaching activities, and by taking every opportunity that comes to them to proclaim this Message.

He assures you all of his prayers for the success of all your efforts in the Cause.

With warm Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

May the Almighty bless continually your high endeavours, remove all obstacles from your path, and enable you to extend continually the range of your valued activities and consolidate rapidly your historic achievements. Your true brother, Shoghi

84 Ulrich and Aukje LaFontaine, 14 December 1955

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

Your letter of December 2nd has been received, and the beloved Guardian has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

He is very happy to see that you are persevering so steadfastly in the service of the Faith; and that you think that by next April you will have an Assembly in Paramaribo, which would indeed be a great step forward in establishing the Cause throughout that area.¹³⁵

He assures you that in the holy Shrines he will pray for your success, and for that of all the dear and devoted pioneers and believers there.

With warmest greetings, R. Rabbání

135. It turned out that the LaFontaines were aiming too high here. The first Local Spiritual Assembly of Paramaribo (Surinam) was formed in April 1966. The family

May the Beloved reward you abundantly for your splendid labours, and guide and sustain you always, and enable you to enrich the record of your unforgettable achievements, your true brother, Shoghi

85 Local Spiritual Assembly of Brussels, 17 March 1956

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

The beloved Guardian has received your letter of February 15th, and has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

He was delighted to hear of the purchase of your Ḥazíratu'l-Quds; and considers it an important step forward in the progress of the Faith in Belgium, as well as marking the attainment of one of the goals of the Ten Year Plan.¹³⁶

He hopes that the hearts of the believers will become more united and loving than ever before through this blessed meeting-place they have acquired. The people of the world are seeking a high standard and a pure example; and the degree to which they see the Bahá'í life lived by the believers will be the degree to which they accept the Faith.

He will pray for your Assembly and for the members of the Community in the holy Shrines, and sends you all his loving Naw-Rúz greetings.

With Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

May the Almighty bless your highly meritorious efforts, guide and sustain you always, and enable you to win great victories in the service of His Faith. Your true brother, Shoghi

apparently returned to Amsterdam in 1957 or 1958 and left again in the end of 1958, this time for Los Angeles in the USA.

136. The Belgian National Bahá'í Centre was inaugurated on 1 April 1956. The program started at 10 a.m. with music and prayers after which Léa Nys officially opened the building. After the lunch there was a public meeting with lectures about the Faith and the significance of the Ḥazíratu'l-Quds. See also letter 25 April 1956.

Dear Bahá'í Brother,¹³⁷

Your letter of March 20th reached the beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

When the friends are gathered for the inauguration of the new Ḥazíratu'l-Quds, he wishes you to kindly convey to them his loving greetings; and to tell them that he rejoices with them in their new Centre, which is bound to play such an important role in the development of the Faith in the future.

He hopes it will be a means of not only uniting the hearts of the friends, and stimulating them to greater services, but also a magnet for attracting the public; and that, through meetings and study classes held there, many souls will be quickened, and arise to serve the Cause of God.

The progress that has been made in Belgium of late years has greatly encouraged him, and he takes a keen interest in every step forward.

He assures you and all the other Bahá'ís of his loving prayers for your success.

With warmest greetings, R. Rabbání

May the Almighty bless your highly meritorious efforts, guide and sustain you always, and aid you to win great and memorable victories in the days to come. Your true brother, Shoghi

137. Louis Hénuzet became a Bahá'í in Brussels in 1948. He served among the first Auxiliary Board members (1954-1966) and was later appointed to the first Continental Board of Counsellors (1968-2003).

138. This was a thank-you letter for the encouragement conveyed in the previous letter of the Guardian, dated 30 March 1956. Henriëtte van Meerbeeck was the Secretary of the Local Spiritual Assembly at the time.

87 Local Spiritual Assembly of Brussels,
Miss Henriëtte van Meerbeeck, Secretary, 25 April 1956

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your letter of April 19th on behalf of the Brussels Spiritual Assembly¹³⁸ was received by the beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer on his behalf.

He was very happy to hear that the inauguration of your Ḥazíratu'l-Quds was a great success, and that already it is beginning to have an influence on the teaching work there, an influence which he hopes will steadily increase.

He sends you all his loving greetings, and assures you of his prayers.

With warm Bahá'í love, R. Rabbání

May the Spirit of Bahá'u'lláh guide, inspire and sustain you always, and aid you to win memorable victories. Your true brother, Shoghi

88 Lottie Tobias, 30 May 1956

Dear Bahá'í Sister:¹³⁹

The loving message sent through you by the Bahá'ís who were present at the Benelux Conference, May 19-21, was received by the beloved Guardian, and he was delighted to see that so many believers from so many countries had been able to attend the Conference.

He was also very happy that the future National Ḥazíratu'l-Quds of Holland was dedicated on this occasion.

139. Elisabeth Charlotte (Lottie) Tobias (1909-2003) was a social worker by profession. She became a Bahá'í in 1951 and had served in the Local Spiritual Assembly of The Hague since its first election in 1952. This Benelux Conference was held in The Hague from 19 to 21 May 1956.

The most important task facing the friends is to multiply the Assemblies, Groups and Centers, and he hopes that every Bahá'í will devote particular attention to the teaching work in order to have a firm foundation laid for the Regional Assembly¹⁴⁰ next year.

He will pray for your success in the holy Shrines.

With warm Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

May the Almighty bless, guide and sustain you and your dear co-workers, and aid you to extend the scope of your valued activities and win memorable victories in the service of His Faith. Your true brother, Shoghi

89 Bahá'í Centre, Brussels, 2 July 1956

ASSEMBLED FRIENDS LOVINGLY REMEMBERED FEEL
PROUD SPLENDID ACHIEVEMENT URGE REDOUBLE EF-
FORTS ATTAINMENT OBJECTIVES PLAN PARTICULARLY

140. The Regional Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the Benelux. See message April 1957.

141. Eleanor G. Hollibaugh-Smith (1897-1987) was a Bahá'í pioneer from Nebraska. She had become a believer in 1939, had lived as a pioneer in Bolivia and in the southern United States, and on 22 October 1948 she had arrived in Amsterdam. After the conference in Scheveningen in 1951 she had moved to The Hague. In her letter of 16 June 1956 on behalf of 'the Spiritual Assembly of The Hague and the Hazíratu'l-Quds Committee' Hollibaugh wrote: 'Beloved Guardian: On May the 20th, the Dedication of the Hazíratu'l-Quds took place in The Hague, preceding the Benelux Conference. Deep gratitude was expressed by all the Friends toward those who had made it possible for us to have this building. Therefore, I am writing this letter thanking you for your generous gift to us at the time of its purchase in August of last year...

Every day there is a fresh realization of the benefit that ownership of this building gives us. It seems to be a visible anchor, something material to back up our teaching efforts. We hope and pray that we may be worthy of this gift and that we may take hold of our responsibilities in every way, both in the maintenance of the building and in the further spreading of our beloved Faith. With loving greetings from the Bahá'ís of Holland.'

MULTIPLICATION CENTERS SUPPLICATING ABUNDANT
BLESSINGS DELIBERATIONS DEEPEST LOVE – SHOGHI

90 Eleanor Hollibaugh, 10 July 1956

Dear Bahá'í Sister:¹⁴¹

Your letter of June 16th, written for the Spiritual Assembly of the Hague and the Ḥazíratu'l-Quds Committee has been received by the beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

He hopes that this Ḥazíratu'l-Quds, which will later serve as the National Headquarters for Holland, will as a magnet draw the friends closer together in loving service, and attract through them new souls who will eagerly join in the teaching work both in The Hague and in adjoining localities.

He assures all the friends of his prayers for the success of their efforts in the Faith.

With warm Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

May the Spirit of Bahá'u'lláh guide your steps, aid you and your devoted co-workers to enlarge continually the scope of your valued activities, and consolidate the historic and splendid work already accomplished. Your true brother, Shoghi

91 Benelux Conference, Brussels, 21 September 1956

DEEPLY APPRECIATE MESSAGE FERVENTLY PRAYING AT-
TAINMANT GOALS ACHIEVEMENT GREAT VICTORIES LOVE
– SHOGHI¹⁴²

142. In a letter dated 4 September 1956, Léa Nys, Secretary of the Benelux Regional Committee, had informed Leroy Ioas, the Guardian's secretary, that due to 'the (numerical) seriousness of the situation' in the Benelux and 'in view of the birth of the

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your letter of September 4th has been received by the beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

Homosexuality is highly condemned¹⁴³ and often a great trial and cause of suffering to a person, as a Bahá'í. Any individual so afflicted must, through prayer, and any other means, seek to overcome this handicap. But, unless the actions of such individuals are flagrantly immoral¹⁴⁴, it cannot be a pretext for depriving them of their voting rights.

The young believers in question must adhere to their Faith, and not withdraw from active service, because of the tests they experience. In one way or another, we are all tested; and this must strengthen us, not weaken us.

The Guardian will pray for these two young believers, and also for you and for the situation there.

With warm Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

May the Beloved bless your efforts, guide and sustain you always, and enable you to win great victories in the days to come. Your true brother, Shoghi

Regional Spiritual Assembly of the Benelux, to be elected next year, a special Conference instead of the Summer School' was to be held in the Bahá'í Centre in Brussels from 15 to 17 September. The conference was attended by 42 believers, including Edna True, the representative of the European Teaching Committee.

143. In 1950 the Guardian had written to an individual believer: 'No matter how devoted and fine the love may be between people of the same sex, to let it find expression in sexual acts is wrong.' And in 1954: 'Homosexuality, according to the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, is spiritually condemned. This does not mean that those people so afflicted must not be helped and advised and sympathized with. It does mean that we do not believe that it is a permissible way of life.'

144. The word 'flagrantly' is one of very few words ever underlined in a letter of the Guardian. The phrase 'flagrantly immoral' was understood at the time to mean 'showing very obvious disrespect for Bahá'í law'.

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

The beloved Guardian has received your letter of December 7th, and has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

He was sorry to hear of the inharmony amongst the Bahá'ís of The Hague.¹⁴⁵ He feels sure however that a great many of these problems will be solved automatically when the Faith takes a step forward in Europe through the formation of the new Regional Spiritual Assemblies, who will then automatically become responsible for such problems as these.

He urges you to point out to the friend who is making every effort to become reinstated that he should persevere, and that the complications which arise, which are part of our tests in life, should not cool him off in his devotion to the Faith or his determination to serve it. Indeed, a strong tree has deeper roots through passing through a severe storm.

He will pray for all the friends there, and for the situation.

With warm Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

May the Almighty bless, guide and sustain you, aid you to overcome all obstacles, and win great victories in the service of His Faith. Your true brother, Shoghi

145. This discord centered around a couple who defended their homosexual lifestyle and tried to win others over to their position, thereby causing a rift within the community. One of these believers left the Faith, while the other had his voting rights suspended. His rights were restored some 18 months later.

Dearly beloved friends:¹⁴⁶

The opening of the second year of the third phase of a ten-year long Crusade, marking the passing of a little over one third of its duration; coinciding with the closing of a period rendered memorable by the achievement of so many of its goals, as well as by a succession of victories won in fields beyond its scope; significantly ushered in by the emergence of no less than thirteen National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies in four continents, with a jurisdiction embracing more than forty territories of the globe, in the election of which over three hundred delegates, representing more than one hundred and thirty local communities will participate; and over the inauguration of which no less than thirteen Hands of the Cause of God will preside – the opening of so auspicious a year must be signalized by a solemn renewal of dedication, on the part of all who are participating in this colossal, world-girdling enterprise, and indeed by the entire company of those who profess the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh – a dedication which, as the year pursues its course, will be reflected in acts the brilliance of which will eclipse the shining exploits achieved since the inception of the Crusade, and, indeed, since the commencement of the Formative Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation.

The pre-eminent task of teaching the Faith to the multitudes who consciously or unconsciously thirst after the healing Word of God in this day – a task so dear to the heart of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; at once so sacred, so fundamental, and so urgent; primarily involving and challenging every single

146. On Saturday, 20 April 1957, the Benelux Bahá'ís assembled at the Bahá'í Centre in Brussels. Two days later, on a Monday afternoon, the 19 delegates elected, from among all adult believers living in that area, the nine members of the first Regional Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the Benelux. Its members were: Louis Hénuzet, Claude Lévy, the couple Jean and Léa Nys, Fernand Radar, Roger Swinnen, Elsa Dekoninck, Jan Sijlsing and Bob van Lith.

The text of the letter printed here was found as such in the three National Archives. It is the last part of a much longer message of the Guardian to the Benelux Convention.

individual; the bed-rock on which the solidity and the stability of the multiplying institutions of a rising Order must rest – such a task must, in the course of this year, be accorded priority over every other Bahá'í activity.

“If they arise to teach My Cause”, Bahá'u'lláh Himself, revealing the secret of success for the propagation of His Faith, has declared, “they must let the breath of Him Who is the Unconstrained, stir them, must spread it abroad on the earth with high resolve, with minds that are wholly centered in Him, and with hearts that are completely detached from, and independent of all things, and with souls that are sanctified from the world and its vanities. It behoveth them to choose as the best provision for their journey reliance upon God, and to clothe themselves with the love of their Lord, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious. If they do so, their words shall influence their hearers.”

The historic work initiated at the price of so much sacrifice, in more than one hundred territories of the globe, must not only be jealously safeguarded, but continually expanded, and wisely consolidated. A determined effort must be made to ensure, as speedily as possible, the resettlement of the territories which Bahá'í pioneers have been forced to abandon and the opening of the three virgin islands situated in the North Sea and in the Indian Ocean, as well as the six Republics of the Soviet Union and the five territories included within the Soviet Orbit. Particular attention should be paid to the all-important task of broadening and consolidating the foundations of the newly emerged National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies, as an essential preliminary to the formation of additional ones designed to buttress the fabric of a steadily expanding Administrative Order.

Simultaneous with the acceleration in the process of individual conversion, the equally pressing need of safeguarding local spiritual assemblies from dissolution and of increasing rapidly their number, must continually be borne in mind, as the most effectual means for the strengthening of the structural basis of the Administrative Order of the Faith. Complementing this laudable task, strenuous efforts must be exerted for the purpose of multiplying the existing groups and isolated centres in all the

continents of the globe, ensuring thereby the early attainment of the goal of five thousand Bahá'í centres in the Eastern and Western Hemispheres. The three remaining *Házíratu'l-Quds*, the last two national endowments, the one remaining Temple site, must despite the present obstacles and the complications that have arisen, be speedily acquired, whilst the unexpected setback in the purchase of the temple site in Frankfurt must be overcome.

The important two-fold task of translating and of publishing Bahá'í literature, constituting so vital an aspect of the Plan must be diligently pursued and rapidly completed. The construction of the Home for the Aged – an institution designed to inaugurate the Dependencies of the Mother Temple of the West – must without further delay be commenced. The process of incorporating firmly grounded local as well as newly formed national and regional assemblies must be given an unprecedented impetus in every continent of the globe. The no less essential obligation to establish the remaining Bahá'í Publishing Trust must likewise be discharged. Strenuous efforts must be exerted to vindicate the independent character of the Bahá'í Faith through obtaining recognition by civil authorities, in as many countries, states and localities as possible, of both the Bahá'í Marriage Certificate and the Bahá'í Holy Days. Nor should any effort be spared, however severe the challenge, to ensure the acquisition and preservation for posterity of the few remaining historic sites in the Cradle of the Faith, and particularly those associated with the incarceration and execution of its Herald in *Adhírbáyján*. The equally meritorious project of transferring the remains of the father of Bahá'u'lláh, of the mother and of the cousin of the Báb to the Bahá'í burial-ground in the vicinity of the Most Great House, must receive the continued and prayerful attention of those on whom this sacred responsibility primarily devolves. In particular a determined effort must be made, now that no less than nine of the fifteen Republics constituting the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics are included within the pale of the Faith, and especially by those Bahá'í communities situated on the periphery of this vast territory, to establish a nucleus, however small, in each of the six remaining republics, all of which

are now confined to the European continent, as well as in each of the two islands and of the three satellites included within the Soviet Orbit, thereby decisively contributing to the consummation of one of the most challenging objectives of this world-embracing Crusade.

Supplementing these manifold and pressing duties, which the audacious prosecutors of this vast Crusade are now, with such modest resources, and despite the smallness of their numbers, so nobly discharging, over so large a portion of the globe, and at so turbulent a stage in the affairs of mankind, is the no less vital obligation to ensure, through a still more spectacular demonstration of world-wide Bahá'í solidarity and self-sacrifice, the means whereby the three monumental Edifices, each designed to serve as a house for the indwelling Spirit of God and a tabernacle for the glorification of His appointed Messenger in this day, may, without any interruption, be raised and dedicated, in the European, the African and Australian continents, and contribute their share to the world-wide celebrations of the Centenary towards which every Bahá'í heart is eagerly straining.

Great are the strides that have already been made, and phenomenal the success achieved, by the prosecutors of a thrice blessed Crusade, a Crusade so closely associated with the epoch-making Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan utilizing as its agencies the laboriously erected institutions of an efficiently functioning, divinely-appointed Administrative Order and linking, as it forges ahead, two historic centenaries commemorating the Birth and the Declaration of the Mission of the Founder of our Faith. The tasks that still remain to be accomplished, however, are truly formidable. Above all, the homefront, that must serve as a base, and act as a reservoir for the supply of a steady flow of pioneers and resources for the multiple organized operations of a continually expanding Crusade, and which, alas, in several countries, distinguished by an outstanding record of service to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh has been progressively declining, must, at whatever cost, and within as short a time as possible, be revitalized, extended and consolidated. More than ever its manpower must rapidly increase, the administrative machinery it utilizes, and on which it relies, for the effectual

discharge of its Mission, must be assiduously perfected, and, most important of all, its spiritual driving force must be constantly reinforced through a firmer grasp by the individuals, ultimately responsible for its progress, of the distinguishing verities and fundamental purposes of their Faith, through a fuller dedication to its glorious Mission, and through a closer communion with its animating Spirit.

I appeal, as I close this review of the superb feats already accomplished, in the course of so many campaigns, by the heroic band of the warriors of Bahá'u'lláh, battling in His Name and by His aid for the purification, the unification and the spiritualization of a morally and spiritually bankrupt society, now hovering on the brink of self-destruction, for a renewed dedication, at this critical hour in the fortunes of mankind, on the part of the entire company of my spiritual brethren in every continent of the globe, to the high ideals of the Cause they have espoused, as well as to the immediate accomplishment of the goals of the Crusade on which they have embarked, be they in active service or not, of either sex, young as well as old, rich or poor, whether veteran or newly enrolled – a dedication reminiscent of the pledges which the Dawnbreakers of an earlier Apostolic Age, assembled in conference at Badash^t, and faced with issues of a different but equally challenging nature, willingly and solemnly made for the prosecution of the collective task with which they were confronted.

May this Crusade, on which the privileged heirs and present successors of the heroes of the Primitive Age of our Faith have so auspiciously embarked, yield, as it speeds on to its mid-way point, such a harvest as will amaze its prosecutors, astonish the world at large, and draw forth from the Source on high a measure of celestial strength adequate to ensure its triumphant consummation.

Shoghi

95 Benelux Convention, 24 April 1957

DEEPLY APPRECIATE MESSAGE WELCOME NOBLE DETERMINATION DELEGATES FERVENTLY SUPPLICATING ABUNDANT BLESSINGS BEFITTINGLY DISCHARGE SACRED HEAVY RESPONSIBILITIES URGE PERSEVERANCE DEEPEST LOVE – SHOGHI

96 National Spiritual Assembly of the Benelux Countries,
24 April 1957

GREATLY VALUE NOBLE SENTIMENTS HEARTFELT CONGRATULATIONS ASSURE FERVENT PRAYERS – SHOGHI¹⁴⁷

97 National Spiritual Assembly of the Benelux Countries,
Mrs. Léa Nys, Secretary, 1 May 1957

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

The Beloved Guardian has directed me to write you concerning an item in the minutes of your Assembly held just after the election, at which Mr. Kavelin¹⁴⁸ was present.

This item is to the effect that you were to write the Hands of the Cause, and thank them for the two Albums sent, one of the Shrines and Houses of Worship, and the other of the Ḥazíra's purchased under the Ten Year Crusade.

147. These two cables were sent through Lynch at the Bahá'í Bureau in Geneva.

148. Howard Borrah Kavelin (1906-1988) was a Russian-American real-estate broker in New York. He was a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States who had presided over the convention and gave the members of the newly elected Regional Spiritual Assembly an intensive course in practical Bahá'í

Actually these Albums were prepared by the Guardian, and sent by him with the Hand of the Cause to the newly created National Assemblies, as a gift – and to encourage the friends, and he is wondering if this was not made very clear by the Hand, at the Convention, or subsequently.

Will you please let me know for the Beloved Guardian.

Faithfully yours, Leroy Ioas¹⁴⁹

98 National Spiritual Assembly of the Benelux Countries,
Mrs. Léa Nys, Secretary, 15 May 1957

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your loving letter of May 9th has just come to hand and its contents presented to the Beloved Guardian.

He fully understands the situation.

The Guardian greatly values the devoted services which you and all the members of the National Assembly are rendering. He prays for you individually and collectively knowing that you will win many great victories for the Faith.

There are one or two suggestions which if you will permit, I will offer personally. One is that your Assembly should write a letter directly to the Guardian and not allow your expression of appreciation to come only through Dr. Grossman.¹⁵⁰ In other words it is perfectly proper that Dr.

administration. The assembly had its first regular meeting in the weekend of 4-5 May in Brussels. In 1963 Kavelin was elected as member of the Universal House of Justice. 149. Leroy Ioas (1896-1965) was a prominent American Bahá'í from a German Lutheran background. Shoghi Effendi appointed him a Hand of the Cause in December 1951 and invited him to Haifa. He became both Secretary-General of the International Bahá'í Council and an assistant secretary to the Guardian. See also letter 2 September 1946.

150. Hermann Grossmann (1899-1968) was born in Argentina. He became a Bahá'í in Germany in 1920. He was active in child education and organized the Bahá'í Esperanto movement in Germany. After the war he was a leading figure in the

Grossman express your appreciation to the Guardian, but it is my opinion that the Guardian would feel a closer tie with your Assembly if your Assembly itself wrote to him.

There is one other suggestion which I may offer to you and that is whenever you list those in attendance at meetings. The Hands of the Cause should always be listed first, then members of a National Assembly, then members of National committees. I note in your bulletin you list the members of the NSA first, then the Hands of the Cause second. I only mention this that you might understand the proper method of listing the various institutions of the Faith.

With loving Bahá'í greetings, I am faithfully yours, Leroy Ioas

99 National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís
of the Benelux Countries, 20 May 1957

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

Our beloved Guardian has instructed me to write you on his behalf and inform you that the Hand of the Cause, Mr. Varqá, will shortly be forwarding to your assembly the equivalent of five hundred English Pounds, as the Guardian's contribution to your newly established National Fund.¹⁵¹

He hopes that, in the formulation of your plans, particular attention will be given to the

all-important teaching work, the foundation of all the activities of the Faith, and the most urgent task facing the friends in this critical period the world is passing through.

You may be sure he will pray for your success.

With Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

rebuilding of the German Bahá'í community. Shoghi Effendi appointed him a Hand of the Cause in December 1951.

151. 'Alí-Muḥammad Varqá (1912-2007) was a Hand of the Cause and trustee of the Ḥuququ'lláh ('The Right of God', an international Bahá'í fund).

GUARDIAN CABLES JOYFUL ANNOUNCEMENT YET ANOTHER VICTORY WON IN CRADLE FAITH SWIFTLY FOLLOWING CRUSHING DEFEAT RECENTLY SUSTAINED BY COVENANT BREAKERS IN HOLY LAND¹⁵² STOP NATIONAL HAZIRATU'L-QUDS TEHERAN RETURNED COMPLETING THEREBY RESTITUTION BAHÁ'Í PROPERTIES SEIZED AT INSTIGATION OF TRADITIONAL ENEMIES IN BAHÁ'U'LLAH'S NATIVE LAND¹⁵³ STOP YOUR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ALSO ALL LOCAL ASSEMBLIES UNDER YOUR JURISDICTION ADVISED CABLE HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY MOHAMMED RIZA PAHLAVI SHAHINSHAH OF IRAN TEHERAN IRAN EXPRESSING DEEPEST GRATITUDE FOR IRANIAN GOVERNMENT'S ACTION IN RESTITUTION NATIONAL BAHÁ'Í HEADQUARTERS AND ASSURING HIS MAJESTY BAHÁ'ÍS ARE PRAYING FOR DIVINE BLESSINGS FOR HIS THRONE FOR PROSPERITY HIS GOVERNMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT HIGH DESTINY HIS BELOVED COUNTRY STOP IMPORTANT AVOID PRESS RADIO OR OTHER PUBLICITY REGARDING RESTORATION THIS PROPERTY STOP LETTER FOLLOWS STOP SEND GUARDIAN COPIES ALL CABLED MESSAGES ISSUED YOUR NATIONAL AND LOCAL ASSEMBLIES – HOLLEY – SECRETARY

152. In June 1957 Shoghi Effendi had cabled to the Bahá'í world: 'The expropriation order issued by the Israeli government... related to the entire property owned by Covenant-breakers within the Ḥaram-i-Aqdas, recently contested by these same enemies through appeal to Israel's Supreme Court, now confirmed through adverse decision just announced by same Court, enabling the civil authorities to enforce the original decision and proceed with the eviction of the wretched remnants of the once redoubtable adversaries who, both within the Holy Land and beyond its confines, laboured so long and so assiduously to disrupt the foundations of the Faith, sap their loyalty and cause a permanent cleavage in the ranks of its supporters.' The houses were pulled down in December of that year.

101 National Spiritual Assembly of the Benelux Countries,
Mrs. Léa Nys, Secretary, 1 July 1957

Dear Bahá'í Friend:

Your loving letter of June 26th has just come to hand.

I will submit to the Guardian the question you raised with regard to using the address of the Ḥazíra for all mail going to the Benelux National Assembly, or rather all mail going to the secretary of the Benelux National Assembly.

The purpose of the Ḥazíra is to become the focal point of the Administrative activities and certainly now that the Regional National Assembly has been established for the Benelux countries, their Ḥazíra should become the center from which all activities radiate. It may be of course that due to the new birth of your National Assembly and the problems involved, the Guardian would not insist on the Secretary using this address for mail. Therefore I have submitted the matter to him and will let you know as soon as he gives me advice.

Your request for additional copies of the Guardian's messages creates a problem, because most of these messages are forwarded directly to the National Spiritual Assembly in the United States and redistributed by them. It might be, if you write to Mr. Holley, secretary of the N.S.A. in the United States, he would be able to send you two copies in the future instead of one.

The list of all the National Spiritual Assemblies throughout the world is not entirely complete so far as our records here are concerned as we have not had reports from all of the newly elected bodies. However attached is a memorandum which gives the addresses which we have.

I likewise give you below the address of the Bahá'ís in Yugoslavia which I have. It would be very desirable if the secretary of the Brussels Assembly was able to contact these Friends when in Yugoslavia. However, the utmost caution must be used so as not to attract attention of the local authorities

153. See also letters 3 September 1955 and 23 July 1957.

and certainly no publicity of any type should be sought concerning either the Bahá'í activities or the visit of the Bahá'í to that country.

When the secretary of the Brussels Assembly returns from the trip, I am sure the Guardian would be delighted to have a report of his contacts of his friends in Yugoslavia.

With loving Bahá'í Greetings, I am faithfully yours, Leroy Ioas

102 National Spiritual Assembly of the Benelux Countries,
Mrs. Léa Nys, Secretary, 5 July 1957

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your communications with their enclosure have all arrived safely, and the beloved Guardian has instructed me to answer you on his behalf and to acknowledge receipt of your letters dated: April 25, May 5, 7, 19 and 24, June 17, and a letter regarding the Benelux Bulletin.

The historic formation of the three new Regional Assemblies for Europe has been a source of great joy to his heart, and he feels sure that it marks the opening of an important new phase in the progress of the Faith. In the past, the goal countries of Europe have been under the direct tutelage of the European Teaching Committee, acting for the American National Assembly. It was like a child who has a loving governess who lays the foundation of its education. Now the child has grown up and become a young man, and independent. He feels sure that this new development will be characterized by a marked step forward in the teaching work.

The whole purpose of the Bahá'í administrative bodies at this time is to teach, to increase the membership, to increase the Assemblies and to increase the Groups, not to create rules and regulations and impede the work through unnecessary red tape, but to insure that a great breath of spiritual vitality and inspiration goes out to the friends from their new National Body. Your Assembly should constantly bear this in mind, encourage and stimulate the friends in the teaching field, smooth out

difficulties and misunderstandings and hurt feelings through love, understanding and wisdom, refrain from harsh measures, and, above all, from over-organization of the affairs of the Communities. There is a definite tendency of people everywhere to try and over-administer, so to speak, and the beloved Guardian points this out to your Assembly during the very first year of its existence in order to put it on its guard against this danger, which will stifle the spiritual life of the Community. You may be sure that many, many times he has issued this same warning to such old and tried national bodies as that of America, Germany, England etc.

It is not necessary for your Assembly to acknowledge by cable, communications, whether letter or cable, or to cable him after each National Assembly meeting. This only adds unnecessarily to the drain on your limited resources, all of which are needed for the all-important work of spreading the Faith in the three countries you represent.

The believers must be encouraged to teach individually in their own homes. Bahá'u'lláh has enjoined upon the Bahá'ís the sacred obligation of teaching. We have no priests, therefore the service once rendered by priests to their religions is the service every single Bahá'í is expected to render individually to his religion. He must be the one who enlightens new souls, confirms them, heals the wounded and the weary upon the road of life, and gives them to quaff from the chalice of everlasting life - the knowledge of the Manifestation of God in His Day.

The friends should also be encouraged within their own countries to go out and establish new centres by moving from places where there are already fifteen Bahá'ís. Although this may seem a daring act at so early a stage in the development of these communities, without audacity and courage the work will not go forward. We must not concentrate on our limitations, but on the boundless possibilities of the bounty of God, which will be vouchsafed to those who arise to propagate His Faith.

He is very pleased to see the practical way you have gone about executing your Six-Year Plan by biting off, so to speak, the work for one year, and fully approves of the goals you have set yourselves.

He noticed in one of your letters a reference to the translation and publication of literature: Although your Assembly will naturally have to assume full responsibility for Dutch and Flemish translations and publications, the ones in the French language are a different matter in view of the fact that French literature is not only needed in Belgium and Luxembourg, but also for France and Switzerland, and can be used widely throughout Europe and other countries. In view of this, your Assembly should avoid all duplication of effort which is a waste of time and money, and keep in close touch with the Paris Assembly and the Italo-Swiss National Spiritual Assembly, in order to find out what translations they are working on and what prospective publications they have in mind. In this way, time, effort and money will be saved.

He was very happy to see that you are planning a Summer School in Holland. Such activities stimulate the friends, and are also a means of confirming interested contacts who may attend. He hopes it will be a great success.

He also hopes the Benelux Bulletin will be a means of encouraging and stimulating the believers throughout that area.

You may be sure that he will remember you all in his prayers in the holy Shrines, and supplicate that Bahá'u'lláh may watch over your work, bless your efforts, and protect and strengthen you, in every way.

With warmest Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

Dear and valued co-workers:

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.

The efforts, so nobly exerted in the past by the band of pioneers, resident believers and itinerant teachers in each of these states, must, in consequence

of the auspicious opening of a new phase in the establishment of this Divine Order, be multiplied a hundredfold, and the standard of consecration and of service to His Cause must be raised to still greater heights. No obstacle, however formidable, no test or trial however severe, should deflect them for a moment from the task they have pledged themselves to fulfil.

The Six-Year Plan, on which they have joyously and confidently embarked, must be made the object of their constant solicitude and their earnest deliberations in the years immediately ahead. No sacrifice can be deemed too great, no labour too arduous. For the purpose of achieving its goals all must arise, whether young or old, however limited their resources or experience, to contribute their share to the consummation of this collective historic task. A concerted effort, unexampled in its range and intensity, must needs be exerted to augment, to an unprecedented degree, the number of the avowed and active supporters of the Faith in each of these three countries, whose people stand in such dire need of its life-giving principles and ideals as well as its divinely appointed institutions. Simultaneously, effective measures must be undertaken, by the elected representatives of these communities, as well as by the rank and file of the believers, to multiply rapidly the number of isolated centres, groups and local assemblies, constituting the bedrock on which a divinely conceived order must rest. Every firmly-grounded spiritual assembly must, moreover, be incorporated for the purpose of reinforcing this foundation. Steps must also be taken to secure from the civil authorities concerned the recognition of the Bahá'í marriage certificate as well as of the Bahá'í Holy Days. The translation of Bahá'í literature into Dutch, French and Flemish, and its publication and dissemination, must likewise be energetically undertaken and carried out. The number of Summer-Schools must, gradually, increase and their scope be continually widened. And, last but not least, a plot should be selected and purchased in the outskirts of the capital city of Belgium to serve as a site for the first *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* of the Benelux countries.

The task confronting these newly emerged, wholly dedicated, steadily unfolding, highly promising communities is admittedly strenuous and

calls for a prolonged effort, the utmost consecration, vigilance and self-sacrifice. The interval during which this vast enterprise is to be consummated is exceedingly short. The resources at the disposal of the prosecutors of this far-reaching Plan are extremely limited. The spirit, however that so powerfully animates them in the discharge of their sacred and inescapable duties is such as to ensure, if they persevere along the path they now tread, their complete and total victory.

That they may prove themselves worthy of their high calling; that they may rise to such heights as to excite the unqualified admiration of their brethren not only in the European continent but throughout both the Eastern and Western Hemispheres; that they may, through the range and quality of their concerted exertions, draw forth a measure of Divine bounty adequate to meet the pressing needs and manifold requirements of their glorious Mission, is my ardent and constant prayer for them all as I lay my head on the threshold of His Most Holy Shrine. Shoghi

103 National Spiritual Assembly of the Benelux Countries,
Mrs. Léa Nys, Secretary, 13 July 1957

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

In answer to the question of the N.S.A. contained in your recent letter the beloved Guardian has instructed me to inform you that the land for the future Bahá'í Temple there need not to be large or expensive. An area of three to four acres is quite enough.

At a future date, if the land purchased now is not suitable when the time draws near to actually build a Temple, it can be sold or exchanged and a more suitable site be acquired. The main thing to do is to look around carefully and purchase in the near future a piece of land.

He sends you and the N.S.A. members his loving greetings and assures you of his prayers for your success.

With loving greetings, R. Rabbání

104 Léa Nys, 18 July 1957

GUARDIAN CABLES THAT PERSIAN FRIENDS WERE PROVI-
DENTLY PROTECTED IN EARTHQUAKE AREA¹⁵⁴ PLEASE AC-
KNOWLEDGE RECEIPT THIS INFORMATION TO GUARDIAN -
HOLLEY SECRETARY¹⁵⁵

105 Local Spiritual Assembly of Brussels,
Mrs. Léa Nys, Chairman, 23 July 1957

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

The beloved Guardian has received your letter of June 25th, and this is just a brief note in reply on his behalf, to tell you he greatly appreciates the action of your Assembly in sending the cable to the Sháh of Persia.¹⁵⁶

With warm Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

May the Almighty bless your meritorious services, guide you in your valued activities, and assist you to win great victories in the service of His Faith. Your true brother, Shoghi

154. On 2 June 1957, an earthquake had hit the province of Mázindarán in northern Iran causing some 1200 casualties.

155. Horace H. Holley (1887-1960) was Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States from 1924 to 1959. Shoghi Effendi appointed him a Hand of the Cause in December 1951.

156. See also cable 3 September 1955.

106 National Spiritual Assembly of the Benelux Countries,
Mrs. Léa Nys, Secretary, 29 August 1957

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

The Beloved Guardian has instructed me to answer on his behalf a question you raised in your recent letter regarding the Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds in The Hague: He does not feel that it should be sold or mortgaged; repairs can be carried out economically and as circumstances permit. It is already a great step forward for the friends to have a Ḥaẓíra, and now they should economize and improve it gradually.

With loving greetings, R. Rabbání

107 National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís
of the Benelux Countries, 9 September 1957

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The Beloved Guardian is very anxious to learn of the number of Spiritual Assemblies, Groups and Isolated Centers in the various countries coming under the jurisdiction of your National Body.¹⁵⁷

Would it be possible for you to assemble this information at an early date, sending it on to me for the Guardian.

It is not necessary to give the names of each of the Centers, but simply the number under each grouping.

The Guardian sends you his loving Greetings.

Faithfully yours, Leroy Ioas

Also can you advise the number of Bahá'ís in each country?

157. In September 1957, the Bahá'í community in Belgium numbered some 35 believers and one assembly in Brussels; the Netherlands had assemblies in Amsterdam and The Hague and about 45 believers. Luxembourg had one assembly in Luxembourg-Ville and 13 believers.

Dear Bahá'í Brother:¹⁵⁸

Your letter dated September 7th, with enclosure, has been received, and the beloved Guardian has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

Many of the suggestions you made in your letter appeal to him very much; he thinks the National Ḥazíra should be used as often as possible for all kinds of Bahá'í activity and teaching work, youth and adults, direct, and, if time and space permit, indirect teaching as well. These buildings were purchased at much expense and self-sacrifice, and they should be animated centres of Bahá'í life.

All means of publicizing the Faith are also welcome; but economy must be considered, as the resources of the Regional Assemblies are very limited. In fact, the urgent tasks facing the Bahá'í world, such as building three Temples – which give the Faith a greater prestige and publicity, aside from their spiritual importance – and the other Goals of the Plan, preclude at this time such projects as you suggest, like the training school for teachers, the adoption plan and things of this nature; the Bahá'ís will not be able to carry them on. They must concentrate now directly on the World Crusade, for this is our instrument for aiding humanity at this turning point in history.

He urges you to go on with your dynamic efforts to promote the teaching work through the present channels, and deeply appreciates your spirit of service.

You may be sure he will pray for your success.

With warm Bahá'í greetings, R. Rabbání

May the Beloved bless, guide and sustain you, and enable you to serve effectively the vital interests of His Faith. Your true brother, Shoghi

158. Hermanus (Herman) Johannes Cornelis Christiaan van Duyne (1914-1976) became a Bahá'í in The Hague in 1953. He was the husband of Sophia (Fippie)

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your loving letter of October 16th has just come to hand. The situation which you present with regard to Mr. [...] is very interesting. I have presented it to the Beloved Guardian for his instructions. As soon as he give[s] them to me I will send them on to you. In the meantime I think it would be just as well not to invite Mr. [...] to join the Friends in Brussels. Perhaps yourself and Mr. Zahrai might keep in touch with him until the Guardian has issued his ruling.

You do not state from whom he received the letter of introduction from the Bahá'í in Paris. Perhaps this individual would have more detailed knowledge of Mr. [...] than is outlined in your letter. It might be well for you to write this person and ask for such information as he has. Was this letter from an individual Bahá'í or was it from an Officer of an Assembly. That would make a great deal of difference. When you find out from the individual in Paris, will you also please send that information to me.

With loving Bahá'í greetings, I am faithfully yours, Leroy Ioas

110 National Spiritual Assembly of the Benelux Countries,
Mrs. Léa Nys, Secretary, 7 November 1957

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Referring further to your letter of recent date with regard to Mr. [...], who has called on you in Brussels.

The Guardian feels that you and all of the friends should avoid Mr. [...]. He has known of the Cause for many years and has not seen fit to associate himself with it. Now that there may be some gratification in being Bahá'í, and some personal benefits to be gained, he will seek to associate

Cornelia Hendrika Ouborg (1905-1980), who became a believer in April 1952. Both served in the Local Spiritual Assembly of The Hague at the time.

with the Friends. However, they should avoid him in every way. Will you please send a copy of this letter to the Paris Spiritual Assembly telling them of the situation and asking them to properly inform the individual who wrote the letter of introduction in behalf of Mr. [...].

With loving Bahá'í greetings, I am faithfully yours, Leroy Ioas

P.S. This is one of the few letters I received instructions from the Guardian to write shortly before his Ascension.

**111 National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís
of the Benelux Countries, 5 December 1957**

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

Shortly before the great calamity which has come upon us, in the passing of our Beloved Guardian,¹⁵⁹ he instructed me to send photographs of the Temples to be built in Sydney and Kampala¹⁶⁰ to National Assemblies where publicity might be gained, concerning this very important project, particularly at the time that the construction work would be under way.

So we are informed that construction work is now going forward in both Kampala and Sydney on the Mother Temples of those areas. I am sending you, under separate cover, photographs in black and white, glossy, which you may use for publicity purposes and for use in Bahá'í News, etc. as you wish.

I am asking the German National Spiritual Assembly to send photographs of their Temple¹⁶¹ to each of your National bodies, as I do not have the plate of their Temple here.

159. Shoghi Effendi passed away in the night of 4 November 1957. He was in London at the time to purchase some furniture for the interior of the Bahá'í International Archives Building.

160. The construction work on these buildings started in 1958. Both temples were dedicated in 1961.

161. The construction of the Bahá'í House of Worship in Langenhain near Frankfurt, Germany, started in 1960. The building was dedicated in July 1964.

The purpose of this letter therefore is to inform you that you should now, to the extent possible, and in accordance with proper wisdom, secure publicity of the building of these two Temples in these two diverse parts of the world; namely one in Kampala in Uganda, Africa, and in Sydney, Australia.

I send you loving Greetings from all of the Hands of the Faith here in the Holy Land.

Any correspondence which you wish to have with the Holy Land concerning this matter should now be addressed to the Hands of the Faith residing in the Holy Land¹⁶², P.O.B. 155 Haifa, Israëil; and not to me.

Sincerely yours, Leroy Ioas

162. Since the Guardian had left no heir and made no appointment of another Guardian, the Hands of the Cause now constituted the highest authority in the Bahá'í community. On 25 November, they chose nine from among themselves to serve as 'Custodians of the Bahá'í World Faith' who would reside in the Holy Land and oversee the continued progress of Shoghi Effendi's Ten Year Plan. Leroy Ioas, the signatory of the above letter, was one of these Custodians. This interregnum ended in 1963 with the first election of the Universal House of Justice.

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