

# Germany, France, Italy, and Switzerland

by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi

Compiled by Research Department of the Universal House of Justice

Published in Bahá'í Studies Review 4:1

Association for Bahá'í Studies of English-Speaking Europe, 1994

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## Introduction

This compilation from the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi discloses new perspectives on the future of European civilization, "a civilization to some of whose beneficent features the pen of Bahá'u'lláh has paid significant tribute."<sup>1</sup> No wonder

that Europeans are so proud of their past. And yet their heritage may be considered both a glory and a burden. The glory comes from the remnants of its resplendent past, manifest in the beauty of artistic masterpieces, and in the profundity of the thoughts of great men, which are preserved in the pages of precious books as well as in the minds of their modern heirs, and realized in the best qualities of the European peoples. The burden comes from a culture, grown up within this heritage, which had made of Europe—as Shoghi Effendi wrote in 1947—the “darkest, most severely tested, spiritually depleted continent of the globe.”<sup>2</sup> This culture, characterised as it was in its worst aspects in the 1940s by a “crass materialism...an aggressive racialism...a haughty intellectualism...a blind and militant nationalism...a narrow and intolerant ecclesiasticism,”<sup>3</sup> had transformed European peoples into “a materially highly advanced yet spiritually famished, much tormented, fear-ridden, hopelessly-sundered, heterogeneous conglomeration of races, nations, sects and classes.”<sup>4</sup>

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1 Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith. Messages to America 1947-1957* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1970) 26.

2 Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel* 1.

3 Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World: 1950-1957* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971) 37.

4 Shoghi Effendi, *Messages* 33.

It was in those years that the first Bahá'í pioneers, the “vanguard of the torch-bearers of a world-redeeming civilization”<sup>5</sup> arrived in Europe. Their arrival was “as unnoticed as the landing, two millenniums ago, of the apostles of Christ on the southern shores of the European continent,”<sup>6</sup> and yet it opened a new age in the history of all European nations. In this compilation, four nations are specifically mentioned: Germany, France, Switzerland and Italy.

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5 Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel* 26.

6 Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel* 26.

Great importance is given to Germany. The “vast measure of celestial grace”<sup>7</sup> bestowed upon that community through the visits of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to a number of its cities and His correspondence with some of its most outstanding representatives may be viewed as both the cause of, and the divine response to, the spiritual receptivity of those “individuals...endued with perceptive eyes and attentive ears” who were “attracted to the principles of the oneness of mankind” and treated “all the peoples and kindreds of the earth in a spirit of concord and fellowship.”<sup>8</sup> But in the dialectic of crisis and victory those blessings were followed by a long period of trials. The “narrow and brutal nationalism”<sup>9</sup> of the Nazi government disbanded the Bahá'í administrative institutions and reduced the Bahá'ís to silence for many years. And yet throughout these ordeals, the members of the “great-hearted, indefatigable, much

admired German Bahá'í community"<sup>10</sup> displayed “virility” and “tenacity.” And when “the shackles imposed” upon them were removed, they immediately put at the service of the Faith the best qualities “distinguishing the race to which they belong”: “painstaking thoroughness, scientific exactitude and dispassionate criticism.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi foresaw for them a “glorious future under the banner of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh”: “to champion the Cause of God in Europe,” to “spread out into Eastern and Southern Europe, and...into the heart of Northern Asia, as far as the China Sea,” to give their contribution “in research and scholarship,” to “lead all the nations and peoples of Europe spiritually.”

<sup>7</sup> ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Compilation [Ed. - sel 15].

<sup>8</sup> ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Compilation [Ed. - sel 8].

<sup>9</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1955) 35.

<sup>10</sup>All the following quotations are from the Compilation unless otherwise stated.

Not less thrilling, although on a smaller scale, are the expectations from the other nations. France, which the Master visited thrice, was the seat of the earliest European Bahá'í community, founded at the end of last century through the efforts of May Maxwell. Many of the spiritual giants of the Bahá'í world—Laura Barney, Hippolite Dreyfus, Thomas Breakwell, Herbert Hopper, Agnes Alexander, and others—were transformed by the love of the Faith at that centre. France is described by the Master as a country endowed with “capacity,” but in its cities “the power of nature is still triumphant over the power of religion.” And yet He anticipates that as soon as its present love for material pleasure is turned into “a mighty passion in heavenly pleasure,” and “souls profound in science and learning, of lofty aspirations, not bound by that which perisheth nor seeking the body’s ease” will become attracted towards the love of Bahá'u'lláh, its cities will become “celebrated in every corner of the world and that clime [will] become a garden of delight.”

The Italo-Swiss National Spiritual Assembly, elected in Florence in 1953, is described by Shoghi Effendi as “the fairest fruit of the great European enterprise launched in pursuance of the second Seven Year Plan formulated by the American Bahá'í community.” Switzerland is presented as a “peace-loving, high-minded, firmly-knit...nation.” The Italian people are described “by virtue of their qualities of mind and heart, ...as one of the most distinguished on the European continent.” Shoghi Effendi admonishes that, since the peoples of these two countries are “intensely conservative by nature, steeped in tradition, bound, for the most part, by the ties of religious orthodoxy, sunk in materialism, and fully content with the standard they have achieved,” the development of the Cause there will be “painfully slow, extremely arduous, and often highly discouraging.” And yet he foresees for the Bahá'ís in those

countries “a very great future” when, “at no distant date,” they will be carried “upward from the shadowed valleys of obscurity to the sunny uplands of fame, prosperity and triumph.”

Shoghi Effendi wrote in 1947 that “The hatreds that inflame, the rivalries that agitate, the controversies that confuse, the miseries that afflict, [European] races, nations and classes are bitter and of long standing.”<sup>11</sup> It seems that differences among races, cultures, and nations in Europe have been a cause of great problems. However, this compilation provides a key for the members of the now consolidated European Bahá’í communities to understand how these differences can be made a cause of progress, how each European can be enabled to hand down to posterity a contribution from his own national genius. This key can be summarized in four points recommended by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “to firmly adhere to the Covenant of God and His Testament”; “to manifest the utmost affection and kindness toward one another, to love each other with heart and soul, to make the utmost endeavour to come to the assistance of each other”; “to manifest exceeding love and fellowship toward all the people of the earth”; to “never rest, but strive day and night to guide the people.” This seems to be the way that Bahá’ís can help to change “the confusion, the anxieties, the rivalries, and the current crisis” which still afflict “the spiritually impoverished...morally disoriented masses” of the European continent into the future that Shoghi Effendi described as “bidding fair to eclipse the radiance of those past ages which have successfully witnessed the introduction of the Christian Faith into the continent’s northern climes, the efflorescence of Islamic culture that shed such radiance along its southern shores, and the rise of the Reformation in its very heart.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Shoghi Effendi, Citadel 21.

<sup>12</sup> Shoghi Effendi, Citadel 26.

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## **Germany, France, Italy, and Switzerland**

A Compilation of Bahá’í Writings  
Prepared by the Research Department of the  
Universal House of Justice

## 1. Germany

### From the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

- 1 Thou hadst written concerning the growth in stature of the Cause of God in thy country. There is no doubt that the Faith of God will progress from day to day in that land, for it will be aided by the strengthening power of the Holy Spirit and the confirmation of the Word of God. Nor is there any doubt that members of the Christian clergy will rise up against it in implacable hostility, wishing to injure and oppress you, and seeking to assail you with doubts; for the spread of the Cause of God will lead to the waning of their fortunes—as the fortunes of the Pharisees had waned before them— and entail the loss of the dignity and standing that they now enjoy amongst men.

Reflect upon the time of Jesus and the deeds wrought by the Jewish divines and Pharisees. Such deeds will, in this day, be repeated at the hands of these Christian clergymen. Be not perturbed, however; be firm and constant, for it is certain that a company of souls shall, with infinite love, arise to enter into the Kingdom of God. These souls shall recompense you for the vexations, the humiliations, and disdain to which you are subjected by the clergy: to the injuries inflicted by these latter they shall respond with acts of kindness, until eventually, as the experience of former times hath shown, the children of the Kingdom shall gain the ascendancy, and victory shall be theirs. Rest ye confident of this.

(From a Tablet to an individual believer - translated from the Persian, published in "Crisis and Victory", compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (Oakham: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988), section 50, pp. 24-25)

- 2 I beseech for you divine confirmation and imperishable glory, so that ye may be so strengthened by His grace as to become wholly detached and freed from everything that pertaineth to the world of nature, so that your earthly cares and attachments may be turned into ease and tranquillity. I shall never forget this city, inasmuch as divine fragrances are inhaled from its citizens. Unlike the people of certain cities, the inhabitants of this place are not immersed in the sea of materialism. They are endowed with constancy and spiritual perception. However, there are some cities whose residents are so deeply absorbed in the world of nature that they are wholly bereft of spiritual perception. They occupy themselves with eating, resting, dancing and amusement. They are entirely unaware of the kingdom of heaven. But Stuttgart

is not such a city. Therefore, I earnestly hope that it may become illumined.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

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- 3 I shall never forget the days I passed in Stuttgart in thy company, for the whole time was given to the diffusion of the reviving breaths of the Holy Spirit. Those wonderful meetings were charged with the surging spirit of divine confirmation which radiated from the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. The light of the Kingdom was shining forth from the Realm of Glory, His invisible assistance was unceasingly vouchsafed, the hearts were filled with gladness, the spirits rejoiced through the revelation of heavenly glad-tidings, and each of the beloved friends was radiant like a candle. Therefore those days shall never be forgotten. Now I fervently hope that following my departure the fire of the love of God may burst into flame more intensely than ever, and that thou mayest raise a heavenly melody at every meeting. I am well pleased with and deeply grateful to the loved ones of God in Stuttgart. They are blessed souls indeed. I will never forget them. Remembrance of them is always a source of joy to me. Convey on my behalf warmest Abhá greetings to all the friends there.

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

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

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

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

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

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- 6 Praised be God, ye are all like unto brilliant candles and as the trees of the Abhá Kingdom. 'Abdu'l-Bahá doth cherish tender affection toward the loved ones of God in Stuttgart. His nostrils are perfumed by the fragrance of those flowers, and His heart is filled with blissful joy at the charm and beauty of those blessed souls. There is no doubt that the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh will spread far and wide in those regions and that souls, shining resplendent like brilliant candles, will shed illumination upon the surrounding regions. Wherefore, let me announce these joyful tidings unto you: The glances of God's loving-kindness are directed towards you, and the splendours of the Sun of Truth adorn your hearts.

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

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- 7 In brief, Germany will shine resplendent, inasmuch as its citizens are religiously minded. They are not subservient to the world of nature, for souls who are immersed in the material world are like mouldering corpses and remain unaffected by the quickening breath of the Spirit.

Praised be to God, ye have been enabled to achieve an outstanding service and to reveal the light of guidance before the gaze of all men. I fervently hope that your efforts may produce significant results. Indeed, the German friends are brightly kindled with the fire of love and are firm and steadfast in the Cause of God. Therefore their influence will wax great.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

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

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

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

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- 14 I dearly love the Stuttgart friends. Wherever I went in the course of this journey, I affirmed that the German friends were very sincere and steadfast, they were highly attracted to the Faith. Therefore the hour is approaching when the Cause of God will have gained ascendancy in their country. As soon as I arrived in Stuttgart I inhaled the breeze of divine sweetness there.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

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

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

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- 16 Because of your spiritual receptivity God hath sent me to Stuttgart in order to proclaim the Kingdom of Bahá'u'lláh. How immeasurably glorious is this day. Oh, delighted am I to meet you. Consider this marvellous time of the year in which we have arrived. It is the beginning of the springtime when all the gardens and fields are verdant and flourishing. As soon as I arrived here I felt very happy indeed. This is a clear indication that this city shall become illumined.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

- 17 The people of Stuttgart and Esslingen are very warm-hearted, sincere and genuinely attracted to the Cause. They will surpass all other Europeans and will cause great excitement throughout Europe; they will stir the whole continent.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

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### From Letters Written by Shoghi Effendi

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

Your ceaseless activities since His departure from our midst have been steadily extended as your tribulations and anxieties have multiplied, and I feel hopeful that ere long the true Faith of God will blaze forth in that land, and will herald publicly the Message of Salvation to that distracted continent.

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

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- 19 I trust you have received my cable to you concerning the need for publishing any future Bahá'í Bulletin in Geneva in the 3 dominant languages in Europe, i.e. English, French and German. I strongly feel and it is my firm and personal conviction, influenced by no one whomsoever, that the German language should not under any circumstances be omitted from any officially recognized report on world Bahá'í activity issued from the International Bahá'í Bureau at Geneva. I even feel that we should exert the utmost effort to include the German language in our report on the progress of local Bahá'í work in Geneva. The growing number of German Bahá'í centres and adherents, the glorious words spoken by our Beloved regarding their destined and dominant part in the future spiritual awakening of Europe, and the qualities of hard work, earnestness and thoroughness which they invariably display in their labours, make it imperative that we recognize officially their language....

(30 August 1926)

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20 KINDLY TRANSMIT TO BAHÁ'ÍS THROUGHOUT GERMANY MY FERVENT PLEA FOR WATCHFULNESS LOYALTY STEADFASTNESS AND UNITY AT THIS CRITICAL STAGE OF EVOLUTION BAHÁ'Í FAITH. 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ IS PROVING HIS VALIANT CHERISHED FOLLOWERS IN THAT LAND. THOSE TESTS HE PREDICTED FOR THEIR GOOD UPON THEM NOW. MAY GERMANY ARISE TO FULFILL BELOVED'S EXPECTATIONS, EMERGE TRIUMPHANT AND SHED ILLUMINATION AS PREDICTED BY 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ UPON ALL EUROPE.

(31 January 1930)

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

It is the shedding of the sacred blood of the martyrs in Persia which has turned the lofty heart of Her Majesty the Queen<sup>13</sup> toward this new-sprung plant of God, and caused her, through her successive and stirring messages, to awaken and alert a whole world.

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

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

It is the shedding of the sacred blood of the martyrs in Persia which, in Germany, has raised up those who have held fast to the strong handle of faith, with such constancy and firmness that, mountain-solid in face of the bitter blasts of tests and the fiery storms of delirious outcries from the foes—which except in America had never blown so fiercely across the West—they withstood every mischief-maker and

their feet never stumbled on the narrow path. Nay rather, their fervour, their boldness, their endurance, their help to one another, only increased, and they toiled more than ever to extend in their country the scope of the Cause of God and the range of Bahá'í publications, and to consolidate the institutions of the Faith.

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

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<sup>13</sup>Queen Marie of Romania.

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<sup>22</sup> I was so pleased to receive your letter. I long to hear more fully and more frequently from you. You are a tower of strength and a pillar of His Faith in that land. Germany has a glorious future under the banner of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. Its mission is to champion the Cause of God in Europe and establish it firmly in the heart of that continent. The tests and trials which have beset the Faith in that land were necessary and providential. It is for the German believers, who have weathered the storm, to arise and promote the Cause, to proclaim the non-political character of their Faith, to establish its nascent institutions and prove by their words and acts their freedom from every taint of particularism and prejudice....

(16 May 1933, appended in the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi to a letter written on his behalf to an individual believer, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 1, pp. 47-48)

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<sup>23</sup> I would strongly advise you to include Germany among the countries you wish to visit in Europe as the German believers are destined to take a leading part in the spread and eventual triumph of the Cause of God in that continent. Your past distinguished services I can never forget....

(2 July 1934, appended in the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi to a letter written on his behalf to an individual)

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<sup>24</sup> In the heart of the European continent a community which, as predicted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, is destined, by virtue of its spiritual potentialities and geographical situation, to radiate the splendour of the light of the Faith on the countries that surround it, has been momentarily eclipsed through the restrictions which a regime that has sorely misapprehended its purpose and function has chosen to impose upon it. Its voice, alas, is now silenced, its institutions dissolved, its literature banned, its archives confiscated, and its meetings suspended.

(25 December 1938 to the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, published as "The Advent of Divine Justice", p. 3)

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

(21 December 1945 appended in the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi to a letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Messages to America: Selected Letters and Cablegrams Addressed to the Bahá'ís of North America 1932-1946", p. 84)

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

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

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- 27 It is such a joy, mingled with feelings of deep thankfulness to Bahá'u'lláh, to be able to resume direct correspondence with the elected national representatives of a community that has achieved so much in the past for our Faith, that has been so dearly loved by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and is destined to spread, as He foretold, the light of God's sacred Revelation not only in the heart of Europe but throughout that dark, war-devastated, spiritually famished continent. Now that the shackles imposed upon that community have been removed, and its chief and central administrative institution is again vigorously functioning, a consecrated, sustained and systematic effort must be made, not only by its members, but by the rank and file of its supporters throughout that land, to expand, multiply and consolidate the community's nascent institutions, widen, considerably and rapidly, the range of its literature, establish, firmly and definitely, in however rudimentary a form, its national headquarters in Frankfurt, situated in the heart of that country, reinforce and develop the work assigned to its national committees, revitalize its summer schools and other subsidiary institutions, maintain and develop its contact, through correspondence, with national and local administrative bodies throughout the Bahá'í world, devise effective measures for the proclamation, boldly and determinedly, of the Message to the masses, fortify and enrich its corporate life and lay an unassailable

foundation for its future development. The task is immense, the opportunities are priceless and manifold, the hour is critical and challenging, the promises given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá are clear, unmistakable, and soul-refreshing, His assistance ready and unfailing. All that is required, in thanksgiving for the protection vouchsafed to this community by Bahá’u’lláh, is to arise with courage, high resolve and clear vision, to carry out the immediate task in its entirety, and thus prepare the way for the opening of a new and still more glorious chapter in the history of the evolution of the Faith in that land. I pray from all my heart for the speedy and complete realization of the high hopes I cherish for that dearly-beloved, long-suffering, richly blessed community.

(22 November 1946, appended in the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi to a letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 1, pp. 113-114)

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28 I am delighted to learn of the energetic steps that have been taken in recent months in connection with the establishment of the Ḥazíratu’l-Quds in Frankfurt. This institution, the centre round which all national Bahá’í activities must revolve, should be made the object of the special care and solicitude of the entire community of the German believers in the years immediately ahead. Upon it will depend the co-ordination, consolidation and expansion of the collective efforts of the members of this community, which occupies so vital and pivotal a position in the heart of the European continent....

(18 October 1948, appended in the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi to a letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 1, p. 141)

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

Its successful termination will be but a signal for a series of enterprises, each more glorious than the one preceding it, which will carry the fame of this community,

already tested in the crucible of afflictive trials, and richly endowed by the tender favours of its Founder, Who blessed with His Presence its leading centre, to regions far beyond the confines of its homeland and as far as the Eastern fringes of the Asiatic continent.

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

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

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

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

As the Centenary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission approaches, as the Plan formulated by this community draws to a close, a supreme effort, unprecedented in its scope and intensity, must be exerted collectively by its members young and old, an effort that will arouse the admiration of the entire world, that will proclaim its worthiness and capacity to shoulder so immense a task in the future, and which will carry to a triumphant conclusion this initial undertaking embarked upon by the German and Austrian followers of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the heart of the European continent.

(30 October 1951, appended in the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi to a letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 1, pp. 178-80)

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

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



and effective manner, the impulse destined to sustain its growth, guide its steps and lead it to ultimate victory.

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

(30 May 1952, appended in the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi to a letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 1, pp. 185-86)

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31 ...to the members of the equally small yet virile and highly promising community, planted in the heart of the European continent, whose mission is to spread the light of the Faith throughout the regions that lie in its neighbourhood and project its radiance as far as the heart of the Asiatic continent....

(30 June 1952, appended in the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi to a letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

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32 The expansion and consolidation of the institutions of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, as a result of the operation of the Plan initiated by your Assembly, on the morrow of one of the severest ordeals which has ever afflicted the German Bahá'í Community, marks a chapter of the highest importance in the annals of the Faith in both Germany and Austria and will be regarded by posterity as a milestone of historic significance in the evolution of the Faith on the European continent. I greatly value the exertions of both the German and Austrian Bahá'í Communities which have, in recent years, contributed so decisively to the rise and establishment of the Bahá'í Administrative Order in the heart of that continent, which is destined to play a notable part in the prosecution of the world spiritual Crusade recently launched under such auspicious circumstances by the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in both the Eastern and Western Hemispheres.

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

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

....

On the home front the most vital, the most strenuous and glorious task confronting them—a task that will have far-reaching repercussions on not only the fortunes of the Faith in their homeland but on the whole continent as well, and is bound to exercise a far-reaching influence on the destinies of the Faith throughout the world—is the initiation of prompt and effective measures for the selection and purchase of the site of the first *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* in Europe, to be followed by the adoption of a suitable design and the necessary steps for its execution.

....

While these primary and urgent tasks are being diligently prosecuted, the utmost effort should be exerted to stimulate the all-important process of multiplying and consolidating the newly-established Assemblies, groups and isolated centres in both Germany and Austria as the essential prerequisite to the early formation of independent National Assemblies in both countries occupying so central a position in the European continent, and destined to play so vital a part in the promotion of the interests of the Faith in the heart and in the eastern as well as the southern regions of that continent.

(21 June 1953, appended in the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi to a letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 1, pp. 199-202)

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33 The greatest, the most pressing and sacred enterprise, challenging the spirit and resources of all the members of both of these communities—the purchase of the land

for the first *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* of Europe and the prompt initiation of measures for its construction—demands, during this present phase of the Crusade, the utmost concentration of effort, the most sublime sacrifice on the part of the German and Austrian believers—an effort and sacrifice in which their brethren, in both the East and the West, will gladly participate, as a token of their appreciation of the historic significance of this mighty institution destined to be firmly established and radiate its beneficent influence in the very heart of that continent.

....

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

(25 June 1954, appended in the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi to a letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 1, p. 219)

34 By virtue of the important position they occupy in the heart of the European continent; singled out for special favours by the Centre of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant among their sister communities in that same continent; distinguished through the appointment of two Hands of the Cause from among their members; entrusted with the tremendous and sacred responsibility of erecting the first Bahá'í House of Worship on European soil; displaying, on the morrow of the ordeals which have for so long and so cruelly afflicted them, a virility, a courage, a fidelity worthy of emulation by their sister communities not only in neighbouring lands but throughout the Bahá'í world, these twin communities, destined through their common language, racial characteristics and traditions to play a notable and distinct part in the world-wide progress of the Faith in both the European and Asiatic continents, must continue to forge ahead, with inflexible resolve, unshakeable faith, undimmed vision, and unabated vigour, along the road leading them to the fulfilment of their high destiny.

The steady increase in the number of the adherents of the Faith in both countries and the multiplication of isolated centres, groups and Local Assemblies is a task of primary importance to which they must direct special attention during the last year

of the second phase of this world-embracing Spiritual Crusade. Equally vital in sacredness and importance is the definite settlement of the issue that has arisen in connection with the purchase of the site of the future Temple in the neighbourhood of Frankfurt, as well as the selection of its design, as essential preliminaries to the excavation of its foundations and the erection of its structure. Both of these require the concentrated and sustained attention of the elected representatives of these communities, whose task is to expedite this pre-eminent undertaking destined to exert a far-reaching spiritual influence on the fortunes of the Faith not only in Germany and Austria but throughout the European continent and even far beyond its borders.

Still another obligation that must under no circumstances be lost sight of or neglected is the incorporation of definitely established Local Assemblies in these two adjoining countries, a process that will greatly consolidate the administrative foundations of the Faith and enhance its prestige in the European continent.

(2 August 1955, appended in the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi to a letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 1, pp. 237-38)

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

(21 June 1956, appended in the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi to a letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 1, p. 268)

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36 The German Bahá'í community, the leading stronghold of the Faith on the European mainland, must not, cannot fail. All its resources, spiritual as well as material, must be mobilized at this hour to ensure the speedy attainment of some of the most glorious objectives of a glorious Crusade.

(14 August 1957, appended in the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi to a letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 1, p. 306)

## From Letters Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi

- 37 The geographical position of Germany has given her a unique position in the spread of the Cause in Europe. She stands actually in the centre of that continent and from it can branch out tentacles which will gradually unite the whole of Europe. The signs that she can undertake such a task are clear. We see there the largest number of the European Bahá'ís, most active and promising. The only thing is, that the more united they are, the more devoted and steadfast in their faith they become, the sooner they will attain their goal and bring their task to a successful and glorious ending.

(28 June 1926 to the Bahá'ís of Esslingen, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 1, p. 31)

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- 38 The Cause is surely making wonderful progress in Germany. Shoghi Effendi hopes that the present changes that have taken place will not divert the interest of the people from spiritual matters and that the number of the friends will steadily increase. Occupying a central position geographically in Europe, it could also become the centre of its spiritual life and radiate the light of Bahá'u'lláh to all the different nations in that continent.

(22 April 1933)

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

(15 March 1934)

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- 40 The Guardian has read with care and interest your views regarding conditions at the Esslingen Summer School. Miss... has already given him quite a realistic description of the Bahá'í Home. He is surely of the opinion that if the Summer School at Esslingen is to develop into an important and somewhat international Bahá'í centre in Europe it must be kept from reflecting too strongly some of the influences and tendencies that characterize the Germany of today. The atmosphere at the Bahá'í Home must be primarily Bahá'í, though it must retain some of its German character. The Cause does not wish to suppress national characteristics. It abhors too much uniformity, and stands for the principle of unity in diversity, which principle we

believe can alone provide a solution for the unification of mankind.

Now with regard to the Bahá'í Home and to the alterations it calls for. The Guardian thinks that any suggestion in this connection should preferably be made by one of the German members of the National Spiritual Assembly so as to avoid giving the impression that there is any national or racial prejudice behind it. The situation, as you rightly suggest, may become serious if not carefully studied and remedied at once. But there is every hope of reaching a solution in this matter.

(25 June 1935)

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41 The Guardian also hopes that your going to Esslingen will have the advantage of taking you out of the spiritual isolation in which you live for the most part of the year. It is your privilege to live near such a country as Germany where the believers surpass all their fellow-brethren throughout Europe not only in number, but in devotion, zeal and loyalty to the Cause.

(5 November 1935)

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42 What has particularly rejoiced and cheered his heart is the realization that the Esslingen Summer School is steadily developing and is speedily attaining the character of an international meeting place for all Bahá'í residents as well as travellers throughout Europe. The success that has attended your school this year, as evidenced by both the wide range and number of the attendants, is truly encouraging and augurs well for the future of that institution, which, we have every reason to hope, is destined to develop into a leading Bahá'í University throughout the West.

The Guardian's hope is that the German National Spiritual Assembly will, as in the last few years, continue extending to that school the moral as well as the financial assistance which it needs for its further expansion, and for a still wider and more effective penetration of its influence in every Bahá'í centre throughout Europe.

(10 September 1936 to the Esslingen Summer School, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 1, pp. 84-85)

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43 The German Bahá'í community, which is certainly the most prosperous and promising of its kind in Europe, has by consolidating its internal unity and by extending the basis of its national Bahá'í institutions increasingly attracted the attention and excited the envy and admiration of its sister communities throughout

Europe. Esslingen rightly deserves the attention and interest which it is now receiving from believers outside Germany. The Guardian's hope is that this interest will be further deepened during the next few years, and that an increasing number of visitors will annually flow to that centre, not only to deepen their understanding of the Cause, but to acquire, through contact with the German believers, those essential qualities and attributes which constitute the key to the notable and in many ways unique success accomplished by the German Bahá'í community.

(11 September 1936)

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44 He considers the work of the Cause in Germany of primary importance; the German believers not only have the fertile field of their own people's minds to cultivate, but must, eventually, do a large part of the teaching work to be carried out in the future in Central and Eastern Europe. So he is very anxious to have your affairs running on a smooth administrative basis, and to also have you receive the necessary literature or means of printing it.

(30 July 1946, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 2, p. 53)

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45 The Guardian assures you he is delighted to hear of the translations you have already made and are at present engaged upon; the German literature of the Faith is of the utmost importance, both because of the great future the Cause has there, and the fact that so many other Europeans read German....

(18 January 1947, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 2, p. 56)

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46 The Bahá'ís of Germany and Austria have a very great responsibility in connection with the development of the Ten Year Crusade. 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself visited your countries. He spoke often and lovingly of the German Friends. Their countries are the heart of Europe, and the heart must be strong and vigorous....

(10 June 1953 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 1, pp. 195-96)

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47 In building the Temple, one must be careful not to be carried away with the ideals and emotions of the situation, but keep oneself firmly on the ground, and realize they are buildings of steel and stone. That which will produce a House of Worship that is pleasing and attractive is what is required—not a replica of the Shrine of the Báb, or

the Temple in Wilmette. We are not seeking outstanding examples of architecture, but rather the release that will come from the construction of the first spiritual edifice in Europe.

(9 November 1956 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria)

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- 48 Needless to say, he is very disturbed with the recent developments with regard to the Temple land and building. This matter has gone along for a long period of time, and he feels it is now reaching the point where it reflects on the Faith. He feels very definitely that if there should be a failure in connection with the Temple to be built in Frankfurt, it would be a great set-back to the Faith, not only in Germany, but in all Europe.

The Guardian suggests your Assembly read carefully the many statements and letters to the American National Assembly as to the importance of the Temple and its construction. He even says it will be the most important teacher of the Faith, and with its completion, a new spiritual movement will take place in America. Whatever the Master has said with regard to the Temple in America applies with equal force to Germany. Surely we cannot allow the negative influences at work in Frankfurt and Germany, in connection with our Temple project, to stop our forward progress.

(1 January 1957 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol.1, p. 283)

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- 49 The influence that this Mother Temple of the whole Pacific area will exert when constructed is incalculable and mysterious. The beloved Master told the American friends that their Temple would be the greatest silent teacher, and there is no doubt that this one building has exerted a profound influence on the spread of the Faith, not only in the United States and the Western Hemisphere, but throughout the world. We can therefore expect that the construction of another "Mother Temple" in the heart of Australasia, and one in the centre of Africa, as well as one in the heart of Europe, will exert a tremendous influence, both locally and internationally.

(19 July 1957 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia, published in "Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand, 1923-1957" (Sydney: National Spiritual Assembly of Australia, 1970), pp. 135-36)

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## 2. France

### From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

50 The call of Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá can be heard far and wide. It is my hope that this soul-stirring melody of the Abhá Kingdom may also be raised high in Paris, for Paris is tumultuous in all things. I pray the Almighty that the music and singing of the beloved of God will be so loud that the vibrations thereof may cause the limbs of Paris to quake. I await very joyful tidings from the friends in Paris. Unquestionably the divine melody will in the future be raised in that city, but I long that this may happen in these days of the Covenant, and that ye will be the enchanting songsters and the sweet-singing nightingales of that land.

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

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51 Breathe into them a new spirit. Paris is still cold and frozen; through thine efforts haply she may begin to stir!

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

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

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

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53 I hope that ye will strive heart and soul in Paris that a candle of God's love may be lit in that town and the lights of the Covenant may shine forth, that that clime may begin to stir and be freed from its cold apathy. Please God, may the fire of the love of God blaze up in Paris, as it hath in other lands!

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

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

Let Paris become precious. Let the standard of supreme guidance be hoisted therein. Let a tumult break out in the town. Let the morning-star of the oneness of the world of man shine forth. Let the call of God rise up, and the song of the Kingdom be in the ears of the spiritual. For this I am waiting! How long ere some soul entereth this arena and seizeth this distinction for himself? Such then is my hope.

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

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

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

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- 56 Please God, Paris will become precious and the Holy Spirit breathe into it the breath of sanctity. May the people of that city foster the spirit of fellowship and take their portion of heavenly grace, of the radiance of the divine Kingdom, and of inspiration from on high.

Now the people of France are submerged in the pleasures of the senses. Haply, through the efforts of the friends and guidance of God, a breeze from the Abhá Paradise may waft over them and bestow upon them spiritual senses. If, through the endeavours of the friends, such a bestowal be obtained, the people of France will advance rapidly in heavenly perfections, will find new life through the breaths of the Holy Spirit and will seek a new bestowal. Strive thou that the banner of the oneness of the world of humanity may be raised and wave above Paris. Day and night, my thought is ever of this.

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

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57 We have reached Paris and cherish the hope that through the aid and loving-kindness of Bahá'u'lláh a lamp may be lit in this deep darkness. The people of Paris are drowned in a sea of materialism and know nothing of the World of God. Like the birds, they know naught save water, seed, and nest. Let us see what God will do! Perhaps some shock will shake these hard rocks. Thence a spark will be struck, and the power of God will flow through all things!

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

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58 Praise be to God, in Paris certain souls have appeared, precious companions! The Cause of God hath given new life to a decaying body, and the divine teachings have been established. I fain would hope that in this centre of materialists, the people of God will flourish and be victorious, that the divine foundation may be laid down, and that the standard of "Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá" may be unfurled.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

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59 Such purity and sanctity must be shown forth in Paris that thereby souls may be thoroughly cleansed from the defilement of lust and corrupt desire, for the people of that town are far gone in heedlessness, lost in their pursuit of selfish passions. Should the power of the Kingdom be made manifest, great will be its potency! Through the breath of the Holy Spirit, it will quicken these souls.

Strive, therefore, with all thy soul to quicken the dead, give sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf...

I hope that God will make thee a means through which the light of sanctity may shine forth in Paris.

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

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### From Letters written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi to individual believers

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

(1 July 1946)

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

(30 November 1948)

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

(31 October 1949)

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63 The work in Lyon offers many peculiar difficulties, which are largely due to its being the very heart of conservative France, and a stronghold of Catholicism. But precisely these same difficulties render the work infinitely more interesting and important than perhaps in any other centre. The Guardian would therefore urge you to persevere, and to be confident that no matter how strong the forces of opposition, that whole region is destined to experience sooner or later a general stirring which would result in a great triumph for our beloved Faith.

(3 November 1937 to an individual believer)

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64 He will also pray that the way may open for you to serve it in ever wider fields, even some day, God willing, in your beloved France. The French people have a great capacity for religious feeling, and the Guardian hopes that after their great sufferings during this war their hearts will gradually become receptive to this Divine Message which alone can heal the ills of all mankind.

(6 August 1944 to an individual believer)

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### 3. Italy and Switzerland

#### From Letters Written by Shoghi Effendi

65 The convocation of the epoch-making Convention in the city of Florence, coinciding with the climax of the festivities commemorating the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission, is an event which posterity will recognize as a landmark of the utmost significance in the second Epoch of the Formative Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation. This historic gathering culminated in the erection of yet another pillar designed to contribute its share to the establishment of the Supreme Legislative Body of the Administrative Order of the Faith. It may be rightly acclaimed as the fairest fruit of the great European enterprise launched in pursuance of the second Seven Year Plan formulated by the American Bahá'í community for the purpose of carrying a stage further the provisions of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan for the systematic propagation of His Father's Faith. It has set in motion forces which, in the course of a few years, will hasten the emergence of two independent National Spiritual Assemblies, one in the capital city of the peace-loving, high-minded, firmly-knit Swiss nation, and the other within the heart and stronghold of the leading, the most ancient and powerful Church of Christendom, and the seat of the government of a country whose people, by virtue of their qualities of mind and heart, may well rank as one of the most distinguished on the European continent. It has provided, through the formation of the twelfth National Assembly in the Bahá'í world, yet another instrument that will, no doubt, lend a great impetus, despite its having been so recently fashioned, to the progress of a world Crusade, destined to exert so great an influence on the immediate destinies of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

(19 June 1953, appended in the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi to a letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of Italy and Switzerland)

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66 In their constant concern to illuminate the hearts of their countrymen with the radiance of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, and in their daily contact with peoples intensely conservative by nature, steeped in tradition, bound, for the most part, by the ties of religious orthodoxy, sunk in materialism, and fully content with the standard they have achieved, the members of these communities must, of necessity, find the work to which they have dedicated themselves painfully slow, extremely arduous, and often highly discouraging. The seeds, however, they are now sowing—and to this particular task they must, in the days to come, address themselves with

redoubled vigour and renewed consecration, despite their daily preoccupations and constant concern with the expansion and consolidation of the administrative machinery of the Faith—will, under the watchful care of Providence, and in consequence of the tribulations which a heedless generation is bound sooner or later to experience, germinate, at the appointed time, and yield a harvest of such proportions as will fill them with astonishment.

....

As the World Spiritual Crusade moves swiftly along its destined course, and approaches its mid-point, the attention of the indefatigable members of these wide-awake communities must be focused on ways and means that will not only ensure the awakening, to an unprecedented degree, of the interest of the masses in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, but will bring about a substantial increase in the number of adherents who will willingly arise to proclaim its truths, whole-heartedly support its institutions and effectively promote their interests.

A sustained concentration, on the part of the entire company of the faithful, and particularly their elected representatives, whether local or regional, on this pre-eminent duty, of transcendental importance, and of extreme urgency, cannot fail at this hour, to draw forth from the Source of invisible Power in the Abhá Kingdom a measure of blessings that will abundantly support the bearers of the glad-tidings of the New Day to the peoples and races of a sorely afflicted continent, and enable them to reap, in this particular field the possibilities of which, alas, have not been sufficiently exploited, such a harvest as will amaze not only themselves, but their countrymen as well.

A rapid, a decisive and brilliant success in a vast field stretching from the southern confines of Germany to the southern extremity of the Italian Peninsula, embracing within its scope Corsica and Sardinia to the west, Sicily to the south, and Rhodes to the east of that Peninsula, is bound, through its repercussions, at no distant date, to rouse the potential adversaries of the Faith, belonging to both the catholic and protestant communions, from their lethargy, and precipitate a spiritual contest which by its very nature, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá has repeatedly assured the American believers, will be the signal for the launching of a publicity campaign which the combined resources at the disposal of these communities could never enable them to initiate and conduct, paralleled by a corresponding and an extraordinary upsurge of the mysterious forces latent in the Faith, which will carry them upward from the shadowed valleys of obscurity to the sunny uplands of fame, prosperity and triumph.

....

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

(12 August 1957 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Italy and Switzerland)

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### From a Letter Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi

67 The Bahá'ís of Italy and Switzerland have a very great future. They come from one of the great peace-loving peoples of the world, and from the country of the seat of the strongest administrative centre of Christendom....

(10 June 1953 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Italy and Switzerland)

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