



Proclamation of Shoghi Effendi

(Key to the Continuity of The Guardianship)

Proclaim National Assemblies (of) East (and) West weighty epoch-making decision (of) formation (of) first International Bahá'í Council, forerunner (of) supreme administrative institution destined (to) emerge (in) fullness (of) time within precincts beneath shadow (of) World Spiritual Center (of) Faith already established (in) twin cities (of) 'Akká (and) Haifa. Fulfillment (of) prophecies uttered (by) Founder (of) Faith (and) Center (of) His Covenant culminating (in) establishment (of) Jewish State, signaling birth after lapse (of) two thousand years (of an) independent nation (in the) Holy Land, (the) swift unfoldment (of) historic undertaking associated (with) construction (of) superstructure (of the) Báb's Sepulchre (on) Mount Carmel, (the) present adequate maturity (of) nine vigorously functioning national administrative institutions throughout Bahá'í World, combine (to) induce me (to) arrive (at) this historic decision marking most significant milestone (in) evolution (of) Administrative Order (of the) Faith (of) Bahá'u'lláh (in) course (of) last thirty years. Nascent Institution now created (is) invested (with) threefold function: first, (to) forge link (with) authorities (of) newly emerged State; second, (to) assist me (to) discharge responsibilities involved (in) erection (of) mighty superstructure (of the) Báb's Holy Shrine; third, (to) conduct negotiations related (to) matters (of) personal status (with) civil authorities. To these will be added further functions (in) course (of) evolution (of) this first embryonic International Institution, marking its development into officially recognized Bahá'í Court, its transformation into duly elected body, its efflorescence into Universal House (of) Justice, (and) its final fruition through erection (of) manifold auxiliary institutions constituting (the) World Administrative Center destined (to) arise (and) function (and) remain permanently established (in) close neighborhood (of) Twin Holy Shrines. Hail (with) thankful, joyous heart (at) long last (the) constitution (of) International Council which history will acclaim (as the) greatest event shedding lustre (upon) second epoch (of) Formative Age (of) Bahá'í Dispensation potentially unsurpassed (by) any enterprise undertaken since inception (of) Administrative

Order (of) Faith (on) morrow (of) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Ascension, ranking second only (to) glorious immortal events associated (with) Ministries (of the) Three Central Figures (of) Faith (in) course (of) First Age (of) most glorious Dispensation (of the) five thousand century Bahá’í Cycle. Advise publicize announcement through Public Relations Committee.

—SHOGHI

[Cablegram, January 9, 1951]



**COMMENTARY
ON THE PROCLAMATION
OF
SHOGHI EFFENDI,
9 JANUARY, 1951**

In a series of historic cabled messages to the Bahá’í World during the period April 1950 to October 1957 (the last of these messages being dispatched but one month prior to his passing in November 1957), Shoghi Effendi, the beloved first Guardian of the Bahá’í Faith, announced and, in a single unprecedented instance, proclaimed momentous decisions pertaining to the establishment and development of the international institutions of the Faith at its World Center in the Holy Land.

In retrospect, the message that took precedence over all of these historic messages was the cablegram dispatched on 9 January 1951 containing the only

Proclamation issued by Shoghi Effendi during his 36-year ministry which significantly and appropriately was addressed to the Bahá'í national administrative bodies throughout the world. It opened with the following words:

"Proclaim to National Assemblies of East and West weighty epoch-making decision of formation of first International Bahá'í Council..."

Again, in retrospect, if one considers the impact that this Proclamation had on the Bahá'ís at the time it would appear that they were not even aware that a Proclamation had been issued (undoubtedly because it had been contained in a cablegram). It became obvious as time went on and particularly after the passing of Shoghi Effendi that the Bahá'ís lost sight of the significance of the International Bahá'í Council established by this Proclamation and never accorded it the recognition it deserved as **"the forerunner of the supreme administrative institution"** in the Bahá'í Administrative Order (The Universal House of Justice). Certainly, there is no evidence to suggest that the Bahá'ís considered the formation of **"this first embryonic International Institution"** and the appointment of its President by Shoghi Effendi as the supreme act taken by Shoghi Effendi during his ministry pertaining to the establishment of the Bahá'í Administrative Order.

How can one account for the lack of importance which the Bahá'ís attached to the formation of the embryonic Universal House of Justice? It would appear that the answer is to be found in the events enumerated below:

- During the years that immediately followed the formation of the International Bahá'í Council and Shoghi Effendi's appointment of its President Charles Mason Remey (who had been previously summoned by him to take up permanent residence in Haifa), he explains in his writings, that he awaited instructions from Shoghi Effendi to convene the Council into a functioning administrative body but no such instructions were forthcoming during the remaining years of his ministry. This fact was the cause of puzzlement at the time and the reason therefore only became clear some two and a half years after the passing of Shoghi Effendi when the President of the Council issued his own [Proclamation at Ridván 1960](#). As the Council was not activated as an administrative body during this embryonic state prior to Shoghi Effendi's passing (with only individual members of the Council performing assignments under the direction of the Guardian) the import of the establishment of the Council as the embryonic Universal House of Justice – the supreme Bahá'í administrative body in the world – was soon lost sight of by the believers.
- The **"epoch-making decision of the formation of the first International Bahá'í Council"** was soon over-taken and even overshadowed by a series

of other momentous events following in rapid succession that were announced to the Bahá'í World by Shoghi Effendi and claimed the attention of the Bahá'ís during the concluding years of his ministry. Such events, for example, were the Guardian's appointment of three successive contingents of living Hands of the Cause (heretofore Hands had been named only posthumously), the construction on Mount Carmel of the superstructure of the Shrine of the Báb, the launching of the Ten Year Global Crusade to implant the banner of the Faith in the remaining countries, dependencies and islands of the world as outlined by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the **"Tablets of the Divine Plan"** (which together with His Will and Testament constituted the two Charters bequeathed by Him to the Bahá'ís), the convening of five Intercontinental Conferences in the five continents of the globe and the acquisition of historic sites associated with The Three Central Figures of the Faith.

- The ever-increasing attention and publicity centered upon the world-wide activities of the Hands of the Cause such as their participation as representatives of the Guardian in the aforementioned Inter-continental Conferences. Next to the Guardian of the Faith the believers more and more showered upon them, particularly his widow, Rúhíyyih Khánum (also named a Hand), adulation and veneration. This was intensified shortly before the passing of Shoghi Effendi as the result of a cablegram in which he referred to them as **"the Chief Stewards of Bahá'u'lláh's embryonic Commonwealth."**

The events cited above followed by unprecedented victories as goal after goal of the Ten Year Global Crusade was successively won thrilled the believers and so captured their minds and hearts that the importance that Shoghi Effendi had placed on the establishment of the International Bahá'í Council some seven years earlier (and since then inactive as a body) was all but forgotten.

Flushed with the brilliant successes won during the Ten Year Global Crusade pursued under the direction of a Guardian whose ministry showed every promise of continuing for many years to come, the Bahá'ís were ill-prepared for the tragic, sudden and completely unexpected passing of Shoghi Effendi at the mid-point of the Crusade. Dismayed, shocked and grieved as they were by this terrible loss, the believers sustained a further shock when the Hands of the Cause announced to the Bahá'í World in a Proclamation some three weeks following the passing of Shoghi Effendi (at the conclusion of a conclave they had held at the World Center) that Shoghi Effendi had not appointed a successor as no will and testament had been found and he had left no heir.

As the Hands of the Cause led by Rúhíyyih Khánum had taken charge of affairs in the Faith upon Shoghi Effendi's passing and convened a conclave in 'Accá for

the purpose of determining the Guardian's successor (although no such conclave is called for under the terms of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament, nor is it necessary as there is no interregnum in the Guardianship) the believers quite understandably turned to these Hands for guidance and direction when they were informed that there was no successor. The Hands of the Cause (with a single notable exception) mistakenly believing that the Faith had been left without a Guardian quickly seized upon the appellation that Shoghi Effendi had given them as "**Chief Stewards**" and construed this to mean that they should assume authority for the direction of the affairs of the Faith. They then promulgated their insidious doctrine that God had changed His Plan (i.e. had ended the Guardianship) which meant, although not admitted by them, that the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh would be deprived not only of the Guardian but its supreme administrative institution as well and therefore could never become a reality. Only the President of the International Bahá'í Council (whose supreme station in The Faith no one recognized) refused to accept this doctrine (known as "**BADA**") and endeavored over some two and a half years until the issuance of his own Proclamation to get them to reconsider their stand against the continuity of the Guardianship, to no avail).

The Hands, at this stage, relegated the International Bahá'í Council to an insignificant role subordinate to themselves but, curiously enough, in their announced plans for the future administration of the Faith they called for the election of a successor body to the Council to be held in 1963 which, although headless, as they would depose Mason Remey, Shoghi Effendi's appointed President, they had the audacity to label "**The Universal House of Justice**." They proposed that this headless body would then take over the administration of the affairs of the Faith, and yet they had not permitted the embryonic Universal House of Justice created by Shoghi Effendi to exercise any authority whatsoever having usurped the powers and authority that belongs solely to this body and to the Guardianship (the Hands have no administrative authority according to the terms of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá). To this dismemberment of the major institutions delineated in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament (even the Hands, as they died out would no longer exist as only a Guardian can appoint them) the Bahá'ís, with scarcely a murmur of dissent throughout the world, blindly acceded. In this way the greatest violation of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh that the Faith has ever experienced had its fateful inception.

This sad turn of events which held such dire consequences for the future of the Faith may not have come to pass if the Bahá'ís, including those who had been so recently elevated to the rank of Hand of the Cause had:

- retained their faith in the immutability, inviolability and immortality of the provisions of the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá – the Charter of the New World Order of Bahá’u’lláh.
- been able to free themselves from the preconceived idea that Shoghi Effendi’s successor would be appointed in a traditional-type testamentary document.
- perceived the fallacy of their view that only a son of the Guardian or at least a descendent of the Holy Family would be eligible and worthy to inherit the Guardianship.
- closely restudied the language of the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá which makes it indisputably clear that the Guardians are barred from appointing their successors in a testamentary document for each must *"appoint in his own lifetime him that shall become his successor that differences may not arise after his passing. "*
- carefully reviewed the acts and pronouncements of Shoghi Effendi with the objective of determining in what way he had fulfilled his sacred obligations under the terms of the Will and Testament to appoint a successor in his own lifetime>

If they had as a result of the foregoing come to the point in their understanding where they had become convinced that they must see for the Guardian’s successor in the decisions taken and pronouncements made during his lifetime, the Bahá’ís might have then taken a new look at Shoghi Effendi’s Proclamation of 9 January 1951 and there discovered to their surprise and delight the key to the continuity of the Guardianship in the appointment by Shoghi Effendi of the President of the International Bahá’í Council – the embryonic Universal House of Justice. For the head of this body, when activated, could be none other than the Guardian of the Faith according to the terms of the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Let us now consider this historic Proclamation in detail. As already noted the Proclamation was addressed to the **"National Spiritual Assemblies of East and West"** and not **"to the friends of East and West"** or **"to the Bahá’í communities of East and West"** as were most of his cabled messages at the time. It was singularly appropriate that Shoghi Effendi should have addressed this Proclamation in this manner as he was proclaiming the establishment of the supreme administrative institution of the Faith – the embryonic Universal House of Justice – to those bodies (i.e. the National Spiritual Assemblies which in the fullness of time would become the National Houses of Justice) that were immediately subordinate to it in the Bahá’í Administrative structure. In fact, Shoghi Effendi emphasized this relationship in subsequent passages of his Proclamation when he stated that one of the conditions that induced him to arrive at the historic decision to form the International Bahá’í Council was **"the present**

adequate maturity of nine vigorously functioning national administrative institutions."

At the outset Shoghi Effendi indicated that this was the **"first International Bahá'í Council."** It follows that it would be succeeded by successive International Councils although, as indicated in later passages of the Proclamation, they would be variously designated as this body evolved until reaching its maturity in the years to come when it would perform all of its functions as the Universal House of Justice. It was clear, therefore, that the International Bahá'í Council was not some transitory, or one-time, body formed outside the Bahá'í Administrative Order destined to be later supplanted by an Institution of that Order. On the contrary, **"this first embryonic International Institution,"** once conceived, was destined to develop through the successive stages enumerated by Shoghi Effendi until it reached its full maturity and efflorescence as the Universal House of Justice. It can be perceived that this embryonic organism possessed from the first all of the potentialities that it would later manifest as the Universal House of Justice. For as 'Abdu'l-Bahá has declared: **"the embryo possesses from the first all perfections."** And, significantly, the head of the embryo is there from the first (it is not added later) and the head of this embryo, in the case of the embryonic Universal House of Justice, was the Guardian-to-be.

Understanding now that Shoghi Effendi had, **"at long last,"** been able to create the Universal House of Justice in its embryonic form, it is clear why he had proclaimed this event as **"the most significant milestone in the evolution of the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the course of the last thirty years"** (that is, since the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1921 and his accession to the Guardianship). Further, Shoghi Effendi points out that this decision had awaited the following events in the Holy Land:

- "The fulfilment of the prophecies uttered by the Founder of the Faith and the Center of His Covenant culminating in the establishment of the Jewish State."
- "The birth after a lapse of two thousand years of an independent nation in the Holy Land. "

Shoghi Effendi further emphasises in the following words that the Council is an Institution of the Faith permanently created with assigned functions commensurate with its embryonic stage of development:

- "Nascent Institution now created is invested with a threefold function, namely:
- "first, to forge link with the authorities of newly emerged State." (of Israel)

- "second, to assist him "to discharge responsibilities involved in the erection of the mighty superstructure of the Báb's Holy Shrine."
- "third, to conduct negotiations related to matters of personal status with the civil authorities."

Following the enumeration of these threefold functions, Shoghi Effendi once again stresses the embryonic character of this Institution in stating: "**to these will be added further functions in the course of the evolution of this first embryonic international institution.**" (note that while the National and Local Houses of Justice had already been created some years before in their embryonic form and designated National and Local Spiritual Assemblies respectively, the International Bahá'í Council was the first embryonic international institution).

Next, Shoghi Effendi traces four steps in the evolution of the International Bahá'í Council, namely:

- "its development into an officially recognized Bahá'í Court."
- "its transformation into a duly elected body" with the exception of its appointed President or "sacred head" who can only be the living Guardian of the Faith.
- "its efflorescence into the Universal House of Justice."
- "its final fruition through the erection of the manifold auxiliary institutions constituting the World Administrative Center."

In closing his Proclamation, Shoghi Effendi pays tribute to this auspicious event in the following words:

- "Hail with thankful, joyous heart, at long last, the constitution of the International Council."
- "History will acclaim" the constitution of the International Bahá'í Council "as the greatest event shedding lustre upon the second epoch of the Formative Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation."

And, finally, Shoghi Effendi further eulogises this event by stating that it was *"potentially unsurpassed by any enterprise undertaken since the inception of the Administrative Order on the morrow of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Ascension, ranking second only to the glorious immortal events associated with the Ministries of the Three Central Figures of the Faith in the course of the First Age of the most glorious Dispensation of the five thousand century Bahá'í Cycle."*

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