

## Notes on the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions in Russia and its Territories

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### Abstract

The impact of the emergence of the Bábí and Bahá'í religions in nineteenth-century Iran was almost immediately felt in neighboring countries, including Russia and the territories under Russian rule. Those who followed these movements most closely were diplomats, academics, and intellectuals. Bahá'í communities emerged in Russia mostly through Persian migration. Despite their suppression during Soviet rule, scattered remnants of these communities survived until recent political and social changes in the former Soviet Union allowed their full re-emergence. This phenomenon of persecution followed by emancipation was alluded to in the writings of Shoghi Effendi from the 1920s.

### Résumé

L'impact de l'émergence, en Perse, des religions bábí et bahá'íe au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle s'est fait sentir presque immédiatement dans les pays avoisinants, dont la Russie et les territoires sous sa tutelle. Ceux qui, à l'époque, observaient de plus près ces mouvements se recrutaient parmi les diplomates, les érudits et les intellectuels. Des communautés bahá'ies ont pris naissance en Russie, principalement par suite de l'émigration de croyants persans vers ce pays. En dépit de leur suppression sous le règne soviétique, il est resté çà et là des vestiges de ces communautés qui ont pu réémerger complètement à la faveur des événements politiques et sociaux survenus récemment dans l'ex-U.R.S.S. Déjà, pendant les années 20, Shoghi Effendi avait fait allusion dans ses écrits à ce phénomène, c'est-à-dire à l'emancipation qui allait suivre cette période de persécution.

### Resumen

El impacto del surgimiento de las religiones bábí y bahá'í en el siglo diecinueve se sintió casi inmediatamente en los países vecinos, incluyendo a Rusia y los territorios bajo su dominio. Aquellos que más siguieron de cerca estos movimientos fueron los diplomáticos, los académicos, y los intelectuales. Las comunidades bahá'ís en Rusia surgieron mayormente a causa de emigración Persa. No obstante in supresión de las mismas durante el mando Soviético, los remanentes esparcidos de estas comunidades sobrevivieron hasta que los cambios políticos y sociales recientes en la anterior Union Soviética permitieron su pleno resurgimiento. Shoghi Effendi aludió a este fenómeno de la persecución seguida por emancipación ensus escritos de 1920 en adelante.

The proximity of Russia to Persia, as well as the presence of representatives of the Russian government in Persia during both the ministries of Siyyid 'Alí Muhammad (the Báb, 1819–1850) and Mírzá Husayn 'Alí (Bahá'u'lláh 1817–1892), resulted in the involvement of officials and other observers from that country in crucial episodes in the evolution of the Bábí and Bahá'í religions. In Persia, Russian officials were among those foreigners who, in certain instances, protected persecuted Bábís, just as they offered protection to Bahá'u'lláh and his followers both in Persia and later during their exile. In this same period Russia contributed to the downfall of the Ottoman regime and its rulers, who had been responsible for Bahá'u'lláh's further imprisonment, exiles, and final incarceration in 'Akká. The subsequent overthrow of the Czarist government by the Communists, and the consolidation of Bolshevik power, witnessed fluctuations in the fortunes of the Bahá'í communities that came under Czarist authority, then Communist subjugation. This article traces these episodes in the emergence of Bahá'í communities in Russia and territories under Russian domination, from their origins until recent times.<sup>1</sup>

In 1844, when the Báb declared his mission, the Russian legation was one of only two European diplomatic missions in Tehran.<sup>2</sup> Thus the Russian government was one of the best informed as to the progress of the Bábí movement. Bahá'u'lláh's brother-in-law, Mírzá Majíd-i-Áhí (who was married to Bahá'u'lláh's full sister Nisá' *Khánum*), although not a Bábí, was a secretary at the Russian legation and was quite possibly a source of much information (Momen, *Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* n. 6), and the Russian diplomat Prince Dimitri Ivanovich Dolgorukov was energetic in reporting affairs in Persia.<sup>3</sup> Persia was at this time the object of political intrigue and contest between Britain and Russia.<sup>4</sup> Slightly earlier, during the reign of Fath- 'Alí *Sháh* (1798–1834), the clergy had brought calamity to the Qájár Dynasty by declaring holy war on Russia—which war only yielded defeat at the

hands of the Czar's forces, and the damaging Treaties of Gulistán (1813) and Turkumancháy (1828). Years later, in *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, Bahá'u'lláh commented on the folly of this "war that hath involved the two Nations," in which both sides had "renounced their possessions and their lives" and in which many villages were "completely wiped out!" (14). For another century the inattention of Persia's Qájár shahs allowed Russia the opportunity to press south into Persia. Transcapia, the region that included 'Ishqábád, home to so many Bahá'ís, was secured by Russia in the 1880s, and Persia's northern provinces were occupied at the outbreak of the First World War (Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain*).

### **The Russian Crown and the Judgment of Bahá'u'lláh**

The most significant contact between Russian diplomats and Persian Bahá'ís occurred in the years after the Báb's martyrdom in 1850. In 1869, when a Bahá'í named Badi' was tortured and executed at the order of Násiri'd-Dín Sháh for having attempted to hand him a letter written by Bahá'u'lláh, the text was acquired by Russian consular officials in Persia and sent to the Institute of Oriental Languages in St. Petersburg.<sup>5</sup> Badi' had walked the entire distance from 'Akká in Palestine to Persia, knowing full well that the act he was destined to perform would mean his martyrdom. Through the diligence of Russian officials and scholars, notably Garnazov and Baron Victor Rosen, the words he conveyed to the shah were preserved and widely circulated (Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh* 298). It was Rosen who forwarded a catalogue containing this tablet to Cambridge Orientalist E. G. Browne, awakening that English scholar's interest in the Bábí movement.

Other scholars of this early period included Mírzá Aleksandr Kazem-Beg, a Persian-born Orientalist and professor of Persian literature at the University of St. Petersburg 1849–1860. Kazem-Beg reported the experience of Siyyid 'Abdu'l-Karím-i-Urdúbádi, who had become a Bábí after travelling in Iraq, but who had been arrested by the Russian government and exiled to Smolensk after having converted several people in the Caucasus to his new religion. Kazem-Beg also produced the first Russian-language publication on the Bábí religion, which was translated and published in French in 1866.<sup>6</sup> Another Orientalist of this period, Bernard Dorn, published several articles on the Bábí Faith, from St. Petersburg, in German.<sup>7</sup>

While Orientalists commenced corresponding on what they regarded as an intriguing contemporary religious movement, Bahá'u'lláh and his accompanying relatives and followers were exiled by stages, through the province of Iraq to the penal colony of 'Akká in Palestine. There Bahá'u'lláh wrote to the Russian monarch, Czar Alexander II (1855–1881), a tablet known as *Lawh-i-Malik-i-Rus*, warning the sovereign not to ignore his message and intimating that he had heard a prayer for military victory over the Ottomans that the Czar had earnestly offered.<sup>8</sup> This evidently refers to Alexander II's war with the Ottoman Empire, 1877–78, a war which the Czar had entered in an attempt to avenge the defeat suffered by his father in the Crimean War. With his armies almost defeated, Alexander had turned to God in prayer. Bahá'u'lláh intimated his awareness of the Czar's secretly uttered prayer and attributed the subsequent Russian victory to divine assistance. Further, he suggested the Czar received divine assistance after one of his ministers had sought to aid Bahá'u'lláh during his unjust confinement in Tehran in 1852. Finally, Bahá'u'lláh's tablet warned Czar Alexander not to "barter away" God's pleasure by ignoring God's summons.<sup>9</sup>

In examining the course of subsequent events, historical explanation and religious interpretation intertwine. Shoghi Effendi has suggested the "persistent and decisive intervention of the Russian Minister, Prince Dolgorouki," who "left no stone unturned to establish the innocence of Bahá'u'lláh" was one of several important factors among those that secured Bahá'u'lláh's release from prison (*God Passes By* 104; Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh* 99–100). Informed that Bahá'u'lláh was to be exiled, the Russian Minister

expressed the desire to take Bahá'u'lláh under the protection of his government, and offered to extend every facility for His removal to Russia. This invitation, so spontaneously extended, Bahá'u'lláh declined, preferring, in pursuance of an unerring instinct, to establish His abode in Turkish territory, in the city of Baghdad. (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 106)<sup>10</sup>

There were several factors that may have influenced the efforts of Dolgoroukov. His daughter is known to have especially pleaded for this intervention, and Bahá'u'lláh's brother-in-law's employment with the Russian legation may have carried some weight.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, it is well known that foreign missions extended favors to those in need in order to cultivate future support from a cross-section of Persian interests.<sup>12</sup> Russian diplomats continued to extend protection to Bahá'ís in later years, prior to the revolution. In Isfahan in 1903, for instance, Bahá'ís took refuge from mobs in the Russian Consulate, and M. Baronowsky, the Russian acting consul, petitioned Persian authorities on their behalf (Momen, *Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* 376, 378–85). Such humanitarian assistance has been interpreted as "Russian support for the Bahá'ís."<sup>13</sup> If this had been the case, however, more would surely

have been done, or at least said, by Russian officials, to prevent the deaths of so many thousands of Bábís and Bahá'ís at the hands of their Persian enemies.<sup>14</sup>

The vast unravelling that led to the ultimate dissolution of the Ottoman Empire commenced in this period. Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz was murdered in 1876. When Adrianople was occupied by the Russians during the war of 1877–78, “no less than eleven million people were freed from the cruelties of that tyrannical regime” (Tahezadeh, *Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh* 3:123).<sup>15</sup> Matching the fate of the Ottoman Sultan, Czar Alexander II, “the omnipotent Czar of the vast Russian Empire” (Shoghi Effendi, *Promised Day* 20) was assassinated in 1881.

The character of the last days of Czarist rule has been assessed by Shoghi Effendi. Alexander II's policies, Shoghi Effendi has suggested, were “retrogressive,” and “proved fatal to both himself and his dynasty.” They had caused “widespread disillusionment, gave rise to Nihilism,” which, then, “ushered in a period of terrorism of unexampled violence, leading in its turn to several attempts on his life, and culminating in his assassination” (*Promised Day* 56). The Czar's successor, Alexander III, continued repressive policies, and “assumed an attitude of defiant hostility to innovators and liberals’.” Finally, Shoghi Effendi continued,

The tradition of unqualified absolutism, of extreme religious orthodoxy was maintained by the still more severe Nicholas II, the last of the Czars, who, guided by the counsels of a man who was “the very incarnation of a narrow-minded, stiff-necked despotism,” and aided by a corrupt bureaucracy, and humiliated by the disastrous effects of a foreign war, increased the general discontent of the masses, both intellectuals and peasants. Driven for a time into subterranean channels, and intensified by military reverses, it exploded at last in the midst of the Great War, in the form of a Revolution which, in the principles it challenged, the institutions it subverted, and the havoc it wrought, has scarcely a parallel in modern history. (*Promised Day* 56)

Shoghi Effendi continued this analysis of the downfall of the Russian monarchy in his later work *God Passes By*. The continuation of repressive policies under Alexander III, in his view,

paved the way for a revolution which, in the reign of Nicholas II, swept away on a bloody tide the empire of the Czars, brought in its wake war, disease and famine, and established a militant proletariat which massacred the nobility, persecuted the clergy, drove away the intellectuals, disendowed the state religion, ... and extinguished the dynasty of the Romanoffs. (*God Passes By* 227)

The Russian state's harsh domestic policies were accompanied by continuing imperialist aspirations, and control over border regions, including some inside Persia, grew.

### **‘Ishqábád**

Bahá'ís were not favored by Russian authorities in the Romanoff period, neither were they discriminated against: it was this neutrality that attracted Persian Bahá'ís north into Russian-held territory. Several generations of Muslims, numbering more than ten million, had lived in Russian-controlled territories to the north of Persia by the time Persian Bahá'ís migrated to ‘Ishqábád in the 1880s. Many of the Bahá'ís were builders or traders, well suited to earning their living in a frontier town (Momen, “Bahá'í Community of Ashkhabad” 282). In 1881, the area in which the new city was located formally became part of the Russian territory of Transcaspia, later Turkestan. A “prosperous community” of Bahá'ís evolved in ‘Ishqábád, observed Shoghi Effendi, “assured of the good will of a sympathetic government...” (*God Passes By* 195). When, in subsequent years, the Shah complained to Russian diplomats about what he regarded as too favorable treatment of the Bahá'ís, the official Russian response was that no such favorable treatment was being given the community (Momen, *Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* 299–300). This neutrality of interest was quite possibly a major influence on migration north by hundreds if not several thousand Persian Bahá'ís, and by the 1890s the Bahá'í community in ‘Ishqábád had grown to more than a thousand.<sup>16</sup> There may have been additional factors contributing to the relative freedom experienced by the Bahá'ís in Russian territories: Bennigsen and Queluejay have suggested that Sunni and Shí'í communities demonstrated a unity in the context of common Russian oppression that was so comprehensive that it recognized even the Bahá'í communities in ‘Ishqábád and Astrakhan’ (and also the Ismailis who had fled persecution in Afghanistan) to be part of the Muslim *Umma*, the “commonwealth” of Islam (*Islam in the Soviet Union* 19).<sup>17</sup>

Momen has made several pertinent observations about this community: it remained predominantly Persian; the extent of its contact with Turkmen was limited by linguistic and cultural barriers; “there was no attempt made to convert Russians, since Russian law made it a capital offence for a Russian citizen to convert from Christianity”; and the Bahá'í community was, consequently, “rather introverted” (“Bahá'í Community of Ashkhabad” 284). The

impression of Andrew Kalmykow, a Russian diplomat in ‘Ishqábád at this time, was that the Bahá’ís (whom he continued to describe as Bábís) formed a “closely knit community of honest, law-abiding people, somewhat reminiscent of the early Christian churches in the first century after Christ”:

Although the Babis in Ashkhabad kept the outward appearance of old-fashioned Moslems, their conceptions were entirely different. Babi women visited European families and enjoyed a freedom unknown at that time in Moslem countries. The Babis had a small book called *Kitabi Siossieh (The Book of Behaviour)*. They considered that each man had a divine spark which must be kept pure during his lifetime in order to ascend to heaven. The Babis in Ashkhabad presented various stages of evolution, ranging from a purely Oriental to a European way of life. However, they retained their Persian attire, whereas in European Russia they wore western clothes. (*Memoirs* 152)

Under a Christian government, the Bahá’ís had hoped for a life free from Shí’í persecution, but the murder of Háji Muhammad Ridá in 1889 threw the community into prominence. In *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, Bahá’u’lláh praised the actions of his followers, who refused to seek revenge:

...none of the faithful transgressed My commandment, nor raised his hand in resistance. Come what might, they refused to allow their own inclinations to supersede that which the Book hath decreed, though a considerable number of this people have resided, and still reside, in that city. (77)<sup>18</sup>

Shoghi Effendi’s summary of this incident pointed to the ferocity of the crime and the existence of a system of justice that had been denied to the Bahá’ís in their own homeland:

...in the city of ‘Ishqábád the newly established Shí’ah community, envious of the rising prestige of the followers of Bahá’u’lláh who were living in their midst, instigated two ruffians to assault the seventy-year old Háji Muhammad Ridáy-i-Isfáhání, whom, in broad day and in the midst of the bazaar, they stabbed in no less than thirty-two places, exposing his liver, lacerating his stomach and tearing open his breast. A military court dispatched by the Czar to ‘Ishqábád established, after prolonged investigation, the guilt of the Shí’ahs, sentencing two to death and banishing six others—a sentence which neither Násiri’-d-Dín Sháh, nor the ‘ulamás of Tihrán, of Mashhad and of Tabríz, who were appealed to, could mitigate, but which the representatives of the aggrieved community, through their magnanimous intercession which greatly surprised the Russian authorities, succeeded in having commuted to a lighter punishment. (*God Passes By* 202–3; Momen, *Bábí and Bahá’í Religions* 296)

This dramatic episode attracted the attention of Russian Orientalists V. R. Rosen and Alexander Tumanski, and its details appeared also in the correspondence of British diplomats.<sup>19</sup> Thus, however ethnically insular the Bahá’ís of ‘Ishqábád may have been, they were not obscure. The construction of the first ever Mashriqu’l-Adhkár by the Bahá’ís fully demonstrated their extraordinary vision, resources, and capacity.

### **The Mashriqu’l-Adhkár**

Háji Mirzá Muhammad-Taqíy-i-Afnán, a cousin of the Báb, and a man of considerable wealth, had purchased some land in the region and had been instructed by Bahá’u’lláh to use a portion of it for the construction of a Mashriqu’l-Adhkár.<sup>20</sup> Having been consular agent for Russia, England, and France in his native town for many years, Taqíy moved from Yazd in 1902—in the recollection of Russian diplomat Andrew Kalmykow—to escape the persecution in that city. He settled in ‘Ishqábád and, as the “crowning act of his long religious life,” embarked on the building of the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár: “He lived in a very simple manner but spared no money for the completion of the temple or the cause of his religion” (Kalmykow, *Memoirs* 152).

The general design for the edifice was selected by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and “Volkov, a Russian architect, planned and executed the details of construction” (Balyuzi, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 110). The cornerstone was laid on 2 December 1902 in the “presence of General Krupatkin, the governor-general of Turkistán, who had been delegated by the Czar to represent him at the ceremony (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 300).<sup>21</sup> Stories of the sacrifices involved in its construction became legend.<sup>22</sup> Erection of this temple ranked, in the estimation of Shoghi Effendi, as “one of the most brilliant and enduring achievements in the history of the first Bahá’í century” (*God Passes By* 300). The Chicago Bahá’ís, upon hearing that a Mashriqu’l-Adhkár was to be built, wrote to the ‘Ishqábád Bahá’ís to obtain a copy of its plan.<sup>23</sup>

The energy with which the 'Ishqábád Bahá'ís shaped their community and institutions in accordance with principles in the Bahá'í writings quickly won the admiration of Bahá'ís in the West. In 1908, Charles Mason Remey, an American Bahá'í, visited 'Ishqábád and reported on progress in construction of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in *Star of the West*.<sup>24</sup> The following year he published a lengthier account of his travels in Palestine, Iran, and Turkestan. When mounting his first survey of the international Bahá'í community, Horace Holley suggested that administratively, the 'Ishqábád community operated at a "high degree of perfection" ("Survey of Current Bahá'í Activities," *Bahá'í World* 2:31). It was one of the first Bahá'í communities anywhere in the world to operate schools, medical facilities, and a cemetery, and maintained a printing press devoted entirely to publication of Bahá'í literature.<sup>25</sup>

The 'Ishqábád community included such prominent members as Shaykh Muhammad-'Alí, that "eloquent and learned champion of the Faith in Russian Turkistán" later named by Shoghi Effendi one of the nineteen "Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh";<sup>26</sup> Hájí Mírzá Muhammad-Taqíy, the cousin of the Báb already mentioned as being responsible for the construction of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár; and Áqá Mírzá Ja'far-i-Hadioff, originally from Shíráz, who paid for construction of the pilgrim house next to the Shrine of the Báb on Mount Carmel (Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá* 132). The presence of such intellectuals as Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl Gulpaygani,<sup>27</sup> Sayyid Mahdí, Shaykh Muhammad Qá'iní and Shaykh Muhammad 'Alí made 'Ishqábád "a major centre of learning and intellectual life in the Bahá'í world" (Momen, "The Bahá'í Community of Ashkhabad" 287), just as the fearlessness of its leadership made it one of the most courageous in the face of later opposition.

### Asiatic Russia

The history of Central Asia has been characterized by conflict between "centrifugal tendencies of budding local nationalism and the unifying current of pan-Turkism" (Bennigsen and Queluejay, *Evolution* 8). The absence of ethnic and linguistic unity, and of territorial and social unity, however, was partially compensated for by a degree of religious unity. Most Muslims were Sunnis of the Hanafí sect, and the cultures of diverse peoples were based on a common Arabo-Iranic-Turkic base. The dominant languages were classical Arabic, Persian, and Chagatay. Persian, according to Bennigsen, was taught in the religious schools and written and spoken by the Turkic and Iranian intelligentsia in the towns of Central Asia and also in Kazan and Bákú. In the form of Tadhik, Persian was the spoken, but not the written, language of the Iranian population of the eastern parts of the emirate of Bukhara.

Perhaps the existence of a common tongue facilitated the spread of the Bahá'í teachings in the cities and towns of Asiatic Russia. Within the lifetime of Bahá'u'lláh, his teachings appear to have spread through the Caucasus, often through Persian merchants travelling in search of markets for their Persian wares.<sup>28</sup> Apart from communities of believers in Turkistan and Caucasus, others were established in Uzbekistan, in "far-off Samarqand and Bukhárá, in the heart of the Asiatic continent, in consequence of the discourses and writings of the erudite Fádil-i-Qá'iní and the learned apologist Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl" (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 195). The latter's influence while in the region emerges from diverse sources. An early biography states that while in Samarkand, Abu'l-Fadl wrote a book, *Fassl-ul-Khitab* (Conclusive Proof), in response to the questions of Mírzá Haydar-'Alí of Tabriz. It was in Samarkand, too, that Abu'l-Fadl debated a well-known Protestant teacher Dr. Marcard Assadorian (Abul-Fazl, *Bahá'í Proofs* 12). Alexander Tumanski, then professor of Arabic language at Tiflis, valued greatly the friendship of Abu'l Fadl among other Bahá'ís with whom he was in contact there.<sup>29</sup> Abu'l Fadl had arrived in 'Ishqábád sometime after being released from his third imprisonment in Persia in February, 1886. Eventually, he travelled as far as Moscow and eastward as far as China and Kashgaria (Chinese Turkistan) (Mehrabkhani, "Highlights in the Life" 626). Among other notable Bahá'ís resident in the region were "Fadil of Ghaem, who was buried at Bukhárá and later removed to 'Ishqábád by verbal instructions of 'Abdu'l-Bahá" (*Bahá'í World* 7: 101); and Áqá Muhammad-i-Qá'iní, Nabíl-i-Akbar, who passed through 'Ishqábád and Bukhárá in July, 1892.

When 'Abdu'l-Bahá assumed leadership of the Bahá'í community upon the death of Bahá'u'lláh in 1892, there were adherents not only in Persia and the Ottoman Empire but also as far east as India and Burma. In Russia, the movement was known to officials and intellectuals, some of whom were attracted to the heroism and idealism of the early adherents. But whereas Bábí and Bahá'í ideas were being debated by the thinking class, they remained generally unknown to the masses, who allowed themselves to be swayed by a more rebellious and politically oriented project of social upheaval and to be led into dislocation on a massive scale.

Although the number of Bahá'í communities in Asiatic Russia appears to have been increasing in the early years of the twentieth century, the exact numbers are unclear. Furthermore, more research will be required to ascertain the extent of non-Persian adherence. In 1910, a group of Persians was meeting in Merv, while in Samarkand the Bahá'ís had established a local spiritual assembly and a school, and had applied to the government for permission to purchase land on which to build a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.<sup>30</sup> Four meetings were being held each week (*Bahá'í News* 1.17 [Jan. 19, 1911]: 18).

In Bákú, few Russians had been attracted into the Bahá'í community, and there were some dangers involved in admitting to such affiliation. When writing to New York Bahá'ís in 1902, Bákú's "Board of Consultation" described the difficulties of spreading the Bahá'í teachings among an uninformed people:

Although in these countries the just Government is protecting us in every respect, yet on the other hand, we have no satisfactory tranquility on account of the people. Therefore the beloved of God are exercising the utmost wisdom and precaution in teaching the Truth. For most of the people are illiterate and ignorant, and are not informed of their own beliefs, how much less of other's beliefs. There are very few who are informed of facts, therefore the Believers have to take great pains in teaching every individual.<sup>31</sup>

In the face of such restrictions, the Bákú Bahá'ís maintained an international outlook. They were in communication with Western Bahá'ís such as Thornton Chase and Arthur Pilsbury Dodge. They sent contributions to the North American Bahá'í Temple Unity Fund (*Bahá'í Yearbook 1925–26* 69–70), and published Bahá'í materials in several languages.<sup>32</sup> They received a visit from American Bahá'ís Susan Moody and Sydney Sprague.<sup>33</sup>

Other Bahá'í centers included Sharud, Kongand, Batoum,<sup>34</sup> Cocand, Tiflis Shamatchi, and Salcya. In September, 1911, the North American Bahá'í magazine *Star of the West* reported that fifty-six letters in Persian had been received from these centers in the past year, and that 176 subscriptions to the journal had been taken up (*Star of the West* 2.10 [Sept. 8, 1911]: 2). This suggests a considerable level of communication existed between Western Bahá'ís and those in the outer territories, if not in Russia itself. There was, too, opposition from political movements, including pan-Turkism, which sought solidarity through nationalism rather than religion, and castigated Azerbaijani Turks in Persia who sacrificed themselves for the religion of the Báb.<sup>35</sup>

The First World War undoubtedly disrupted communication between 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Bahá'ís in Russia, as it did with his correspondence elsewhere. When British forces were entering Palestine in 1917, Wellesley Tudor-Pole, the British Major and admirer of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, received inquiries from Russia concerning 'Abdu'l-Bahá's safety (Momen, *Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* 333). In late 1921, 'Ishqábád remained so isolated by geographical and political circumstances that news of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's death was only telegraphed to the Bahá'ís with the assistance of the American Red Cross and the British Trade Mission at Moscow (Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá* 454).

In *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, written during the war years, 'Abdu'l-Bahá mentioned Russia, White Russia (or Russia-Europe, now Bielorussia), and Asiatic Russia among the regions to which he hoped Bahá'ís would travel to teach the message of Bahá'u'lláh (*Star of the West* 10.17 [Jan. 19, 1920]: 309). There was, however, little immediate response from the Western Bahá'ís, and another four decades passed before Shoghi Effendi used 'Abdu'l-Bahá's *Tablets of the Divine Plan* as the basis of his decade-long and world-embracing "Crusade."

In the 1920s, new lines of communication were established linking Bahá'ís in Russia with others expatriate in England. Mr. Ziaullah Asgarzadeh, whose family had moved from Milan in Persian Azerbaijan to 'Ishqábád in 1905, migrated to London in the 1920s. He became a carpet merchant there and maintained contact with the Russian Bahá'ís through Mr. Dhabíhu'lláh Nám-dár.<sup>36</sup> Mr. Asgarzadeh married in England and there reared a family. He served on the National Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the British Isles for periods between 1925 and 1941. In September, 1953, he moved to Channel Island, where he died in April, 1956.<sup>37</sup>

### Russian Intellectuals

Beyond Turkistan and Caucasia, knowledge of the Bábí and Bahá'í religions was spreading among Russian intellectual and artistic circles. *The Early Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh* was published by the Oriental Department of the Imperial Russian University in St. Petersburg, under the supervision of Baron Victor Rosen (Shoghi Effendi, *Unfolding Destiny* 424), whose earlier work has already been mentioned, and who also mentioned the Bahá'í Faith in the 1889 publication *Zapiski. The Will and Testament of Bahá'u'lláh* was also printed in Russian.<sup>38</sup>

Little is known about Isabel Grinevskaya, who published a dramatic poem in five acts in St. Petersburg in May, 1903. Her drama, entitled "The Báb," is reported as having caught the attention of the educated classes when it played in the St. Petersburg Soavorinsky Theatre in January, 1904, and again, following the February Revolution, in the Folk Theatre in Leningrad in April, 1917 (Momen, *Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* 50). By Grinevskaya's account, published in a newspaper in Odessa during her journey to Palestine, the play was "soon prohibited by the censors," but brought her into contact with Bahá'ís:

The life of Bahá'u'lláh and his teachings served as theme for my poem. My first play under the name of "Bab" was translated into French and Tartar languages 'and attracted greatly the attention of the Mahomedan world and a correspondence soon started between the Bahá'ís and myself. ("A New Play" U.S. National Bahá'í Archives, Albert R. Windust Papers, ms Russia 27/7)

Those Grinevskaya met included, at Bákú, Mírzá ‘Alí-Akbar Nakhjavání. In 1910, she addressed the Oratorical Club—and possibly other forums—on the subject of the Bahá’ís, and favorable reports of her meetings appeared in *Star of the West*:

“On November 20th she gave a public lecture on the Bahá’í Revelation before a noteworthy gathering of authors, writers, poets, philosophers, and a number of Russian princes. Her eloquent words and forceful utterances created among her listeners a powerful effect. On the following day many articles appeared in the newspapers commenting favorably upon her speech.” (Quoted in *Bahá’í News* 1.17 [January 19, 1911]: 17)

When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá learned the details of Grinevskaya’s work he asked her to correct some inaccuracies, and in 1911 invited her to visit:

When the Bahá’ís learned about my new play, they with their head and master, Bahá’u’lláh’s son—‘Abdu’l-Bahá—most cordially invited me to Palestine to visit Sendian Dakr—not far from Haifa—the very center of the Bahá’ís. This trip presents me with an enormous interest because of a closer connection with the members of the movement, which will enable me to study their methods to live up to their principles. (Grinevskaya, “A New Play”)

It is not clear whether Grinevskaya visited Palestine as well as Egypt. It was her journey to the latter country that provided the setting for her later essay, “Journey in the Countries of the Sun.” A subsequent play, entitled “Bahá’u’lláh,” was published in Leningrad in 1912 but was never performed. The Russian writer and journalist Gabriel de Wesselitsky and the famed Russian novelist Leo Tolstoi were among those who praised the literary quality of her work (Momen, *Bábí and Bahá’í Religions* 50–51).

Although for some time Grinevskaya corresponded with Martha Root, who wrote a brief essay on her own involvement with the Bahá’ís of Russia and Persia (Root, “Russia’s Cultural Contribution”), the Russian poet’s later years were filled with isolation. Her work was not translated into other languages as she had hoped, and the Western Bahá’ís did not correspond with her to the extent that she wished:

Not having here any relatives, I forgot my lonelines [*sic*]. I did not receive a single word from anybody of the Bahá’ís during the last years. That proves they have no interest for my personal life. That afflicted me greatly. I had only some circular letters. We care ordinary [ordinarily?] even about inanimate things, which are of some use for us and here is the author of Báb and Bahá’u’lláh who has been neglected by the followers of His teaching, though I got the highest approbation from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. (21 October 1935 letter to Martha Root)

### **Leo Tolstoi**

Tolstoi had encountered the Bábí movement as early as 1894 and maintained sporadic contact with Bahá’ís from 1901 until his death in 1910.<sup>40</sup> A. M. Ghadirian has recounted Tolstoi’s vision of ideal religion and his encounters with Bahá’ís, beginning with Isabel Grinevskaya and later ‘Aziz’ulláh Jazzah Khorasani, who was apparently dispatched from ‘Akká by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to speak to Tolstoi during a period of house arrest that followed his excommunication from the Orthodox church (Ghadirian, “Count Leo Tolstoy” 19). William Collins and Jan Jasion, having recently reviewed eighty published sources on Tolstoi and the Bábí and Bahá’í religions, have cautioned that the novelist’s attitude to both religions was ambivalent, moving between the sympathies he expressed to Grinevskaya,<sup>41</sup> and even to “Caucasian Mohammedans,”<sup>42</sup> and others more negative. They suggest it is more appropriate to view the positive statements Tolstoi made on the Bahá’í Faith as

testimony to some moments of perspicacity about the future of a religion which was at that time only beginning to make inroads in the West and undeveloped countries. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá notes that Tolstoi was a well-wisher of humanity but that he was still caught up in politics and opinion. (Collins and Jasion, “Lev Tolstoi” 4)

The brief references to Bábism and Bahá’í in Tolstoi’s personal diary are enigmatic and throw scant light on the subject, apart from demonstrating Tolstoi’s known interest in comparative religion.<sup>43</sup>

If Tolstoi had intended writing in detail about Bahá'í beliefs, he did not live to do so. Ironically, a number of other Russian writers investigated the Bábí and Bahá'í movements in far more detail than did Tolstoi, but received far less attention for their efforts. These included Umanets, Mubagajian, Bakulin, Batyushkov, Kazembrek, and Zhukovski.<sup>44</sup> The Bahá'is were also referred to in the works of Krymsky,<sup>45</sup> and minor references appeared in the *Bulletin de la Academic Imperiale de St. Petersburg*, volumes eight and nine, and in *Universala Unigo*, vol. 1, 1913. *Bah'iyat*, by M. Blanovsky, was printed in Moscow in 1914. Captain A. H. Tumansky edited two volumes of Bahá'u'lláh's writings in Russian, *Kitabe-Akdes* and *Works of Bahá'u'lláh*,<sup>46</sup> in addition to another major work published in St Petersburg.<sup>47</sup> The Bahá'is themselves printed a limited range of Russian-language materials during this period in both 'Ishqábád and Bákú.<sup>48</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablet to the Hague was printed in Russian in London in 1922. Collins lists five "major" publications on the Bahá'í Faith in Russian, four written prior to the revolution, and another, by Ivanov, in 1939.<sup>49</sup>

### **The Impact of Communism**

In the year before his death, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had predicted that "The Movement of the Left" would spread (quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order* 30). It was to be a full decade after the revolution, however, that the Bahá'is in Russian territories felt the full impact of the Communist regime. The Bolsheviks had brought the Romanoff dynasty to an end in 1917, and they eventually reversed the fortunes of all religious communities in Russia and territories under Soviet rule. Bolshevism, in the summation of Shoghi Effendi, "shook the throne of the Czars and overthrew it":

A great trembling seized and rocked the foundations of that country. The light of religion was dimmed. Ecclesiastical institutions of every denomination were swept away. The state religion was disendowed, persecuted, and abolished. A far-flung empire was dismembered. A militant, triumphant proletariat exiled the intellectuals, and plundered and massacred the nobility. Civil war and disease decimated a population, already in the throes of agony and despair. And, finally, the Chief Magistrate of a mighty dominion, together with his consort, and his family, and his dynasty, were swept into the vortex of this great convulsion, and perished. (*Promised Day* 55–56)

The decline of orthodoxy at the hands of revolution became one of Shoghi Effendi's enduring themes. Russia's churches, he wrote, suffered "humiliating blows" under Communist rule (*The World Order* 156), to the extent of their disestablishment and dismemberment (*The World Order* 183). Writing to the Bahá'is of the West, Shoghi Effendi described communism as a creed that negated "God, His Laws and Principles..." and whose emergence in the heart of Asia "threaten[ed] to disrupt the foundations of human society" (*The World Order* 31). It was one of "Three False Gods" hastening the decline of religion and responsible for the slaughter of "multitudes" (*Promised Day* 107, 113–14). The "aggressive policies initiated and the persistent efforts exerted by the inspirers and organizers of the Communist movement," he wrote, contributed to the "de-Christianization of the masses" (*The World Order* 182). Communism spread from Soviet Russia into Europe and America, east into Persia, India, China, and Japan with a "conscious, avowed, organized attack against religion in general and Christianity in particular" that was "something new in history" (*The World Order* 182). It was "an economic theory, definitely harnessed to disbelief in God... a religious irreligion" that had a "passionate sense of mission" and was in Russia and elsewhere "carrying on its anti-God campaign at the Church's base..." (*The World Order* 181).

A review of but a few of the "anti-religious" measures adopted in the years immediately after the installation of the Communist regime depict something of the upheaval Shoghi Effendi describes. On December 4, 1917, all land was nationalized, including that of churches and monasteries. A sweeping decree nationalized all Church-owned property, without compensation.<sup>50</sup> Religious activities were curtailed by numerous rules and conditions. In 1918, religious instruction in state schools was prohibited, and a new Family Code refused to recognize religious marriages and divorces (Conquest, *Religion in the USSR* 13–33).

### **Between Revolution and Persecution, 1917–1928**

Despite the harsh anti-religious laws passed by the Bolshevik authorities soon after their putsch, the activities of Bahá'í communities in Russia and the southern regions flourished for another decade. They had been left free in matters of worship, administration, and purely nonpolitical activities. Horace Holley, secretary of the United States National Spiritual Assembly, attributed this tolerance to the authorities' knowledge of the strictly nonpolitical nature of Bahá'í affairs ("Survey of Current Bahá'í Activities," *Bahá'í World* 2:30). Whereas the Bahá'is believed their loyalty to government and noninvolvement in the tense politics of the time were the reasons for their continued toleration, it is clear that the government's first moves against the churches—to strip them of assets and privileges

enjoyed under the previous regime—were more damaging to the wealthy Orthodox and Catholic churches than to small and insignificant groups such as the Bahá'ís. In the south, furthermore, the Islamic factor may have at first shielded the Bahá'ís of 'Ishqábád and elsewhere in Turkistan and the Caucasus from official sanction. The Soviet Communist Party, Robert Conquest has suggested, at first “subordinated its basic hostility to Islam, as a form of religious belief, to the needs of its internal and external policies” (*Religion in the USSR* 67). It was only later, with the civil war won, with Soviet rule consolidated, and when the need for tolerance had passed, that the Commissariat for Nationalities was reorganized, the Commissariat for Muslim Affairs abolished, and a campaign launched by the state to constrain the influence of Islam.

Notwithstanding the uncertainties and reversals of the time, the 'Ishqábád Bahá'ís were engaged in vigorous dialogue with Muslim opponents. A report in *Star of the West* early in 1923 suggested “a large number of Russians, Tartars and other tribes” had become Bahá'ís and that meetings of up to 3,000 people were being held. A Bahá'í newspaper *The Sun of the Orient* was being distributed widely (Fazel, “Growth of the Bahai Cause” 310). A report in April praised the public performances of Agha Mohammed Sabst and Agha Seyid Mehdi Gulpayagani, and indicated that separate meetings were being held for Muslim and Tartar inquirers, among whom there were “a number of firm believers” (“From Eshkabad, Russia”).<sup>51</sup>

Prospects for the Bahá'í Faith in Russian Turkistan were “promising,” and there were too few teachers to instruct the number of inquirers (*Star of the West* 14.12 [March, 1924]: 374).<sup>52</sup> National spiritual assemblies had been formed in the Caucasus and in Turkistan by 1925, although these were of a preliminary nature, as Bahá'í electoral processes had not yet been adopted in the region (Rabbani, *Priceless Pearl* 313). In the Caucasus, the establishment of an Assembly in Bákú—a city visited by increasing numbers of Bahá'í pilgrims on their way from Persia to the Holy Land via Turkey—was followed by the establishment of new communities, which cooperated with the Bahá'ís in both Turkistan and Persia (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 302). More Western Bahá'ís visited, including Mrs. Lord Schopflocher from Canada, who visited Persia and Iraq as well as Russia in 1925 (*Herald of the South* September, 1925).

From 'Ishqábád, young Bahá'ís travelled to Khurasan, Mazindaran, and Gilan in Iran, and to Khiva, and isolated areas of Turkistan and Caucasus, to teach their Faith (“Bahai News and Notes,” *Star of the West* 14.4 [July, 1923]: 120). They published a Bahá'í magazine *Khurshid-i-Khavar*.<sup>54</sup> The 'Ishqábád Bahá'ís had conducted a school for boys from 1897, and added another for girls.<sup>55</sup> Some students subsequently travelled to London for further studies. Elsewhere in Turkestan, in Tashkánd, where a community of Bahá'ís had expanded from about the turn of the century, a library and Persian and Russian language schools had been established, and meetings of up to 2,000 inquirers were being advertised with the permission of government authorities.<sup>56</sup> Bahá'í literature published in Tashkánd included 'Abdu'l-Bahá's *Vahdat* (in the Tartar language) in 1918 (*Bahá'í World* 6:549), and *Lawh-i-Ahmad* (n.d.) and *A Traveller's Narrative* (1916) in Persian.

In Moscow, no less than in the more distant centers, Bahá'í activities continued in the early 1920s. A correspondent from Moscow reported in *Star of the West* in October, 1923, a gathering of some three-hundred followers of the late Leo Tolstói:

Aghá Habibullah and Aghá Yasim addressed them, the former relating the history of the Bahá'í Movement, and the latter, the teachings and principles. After the addresses were finished the audience asked questions for an hour and a half and they all were interested in the Cause. (“Bahá'í News and Notes” 214)<sup>57</sup>

At about this time, Gulpaygani, a relative of Mírzá Abu'l Fadl, and an active Bahá'í speaker throughout Turkistan, was due to visit Moscow for a series of lectures (*Star of the West* 14.5 [August, 1923]: 154). 'Alí Akbar Furútan, whose family had moved from Sabzivár in Iran to 'Ishqábád in 1914, arrived in Moscow in 1926 to commence his studies in education, and remained for several years before returning to Iran (see Furútan, *Story of My Heart*). It seems that there were few Bahá'ís resident in Russia beyond the major cities. Hossein Touty, possibly a merchant, moved to Vladivostok from Shanghai in 1919 or 1920, but left for Mindanao in the Philippines in January, 1921.

### **Persecution and Dispersal, 1928–1938**

In common with all other citizens of the Russian state, the Bahá'ís experienced civil strife and external war, partial expropriation of property, excessive taxation, and the curtailment of certain individual rights. In 1928, this “highly unfortunate and perplexing” situation deteriorated further still. In that year, as Stalin initiated plans for the Soviet Union's forced industrialization, a renewed attack on religion commenced on an “extended front” (Conquest, *Religion in the USSR* 20). An official statement hostile to the Bahá'ís had appeared in the gazette of the Soviet government as early as 1922, but no serious action had been taken at that time.<sup>58</sup> Now, Bahá'ís in Turkistan,

Caucasus, and Russia, experienced systematic harassment and deprivation. Their homes were searched, mail intercepted, meetings disrupted, schools closed,<sup>59</sup> and the constitutions of local spiritual assemblies abrogated. In February, 1928, Husayn beg Qudsi, a Russian Bahá'í who had corresponded with Shoghi Effendi and who had taken the Bahá'í teachings to other parts of Russia, was the first to be arrested. In October, two members of the 'Ishqábád Spiritual Assembly were arrested and held for three months; another twenty-four Bahá'ís were detained the following July. One of these, Ashraf beg, was not heard of again and presumed murdered; a further sixteen were released after six months. During the same period, Bahá'ís from Tashkent, Bákú, and Bardá were either interrogated or imprisoned. Zargaroff and Massoumoff of Bákú were banished for three years to the Arctic Circle, while Aqa Habibullah Baqiroff of Tashkent was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment "in the neighborhood of the North Sea and the polar forests" (*Bahá'í World* 5:41). Letters from survivors of this persecution were reproduced in the 1928–1930 volume of *Bahá'í World*.

In addition, state authorities "enforced their right of ownership and control" over the 'Ishqábád Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. On the 22nd of June, 1928, the 'Ishqábád Assembly cabled Shoghi Effendi:

IN ACCORDANCE GENERAL AGREEMENT 1917 SOVIET GOVERNMENT HAS NATIONALIZED ALL TEMPLES BUT UNDER SPECIAL CONDITIONS HAS PROVIDED FREE RENTAL TO RESPECTIVE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES REGARDING MASHRIQU'L-ADHKAR GOVERNMENT HAS PROVIDED SAME CONDITIONS AGREEMENT TO ASSEMBLY SUPPLICATE GUIDANCE BY TELEGRAM.

On receiving this message, Shoghi Effendi cabled the Moscow Assembly to "intercede energetically" to the authorities to prevent the expropriation of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and to inquire about the situation in 'Ishqábád, and informed the Assembly of 'Ishqábád that he had asked the Moscow Assembly to petition the authorities and to act firmly on behalf of all Russian Bahá'ís (Rabbani, *Priceless Pearl* 313).

At the same time, state orders were transmitted to Bahá'í communities in Bákú, Ganjih, and other towns in the Caucasus, both orally and in writing, suspending all meetings and suppressing all local and national administration. Prohibitions were placed on the raising of funds, and Bahá'í youth and children's clubs were ordered closed. Correspondence was strictly censored, bulletins and magazines were disbanded, and "leading personalities in the Cause whether as public teachers and speakers or officers of Bahá'í Assemblies" were deported. Shoghi Effendi explained:

The insistent and repeated representations made by the Bahá'ís, dutifully submitted and stressed by their local and national representatives, and duly reinforced by the action of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Persia, emphasizing the international character and spiritual significance of the Edifice and its close material as well as spiritual connection with the divers Bahá'í communities throughout the East and West, have alas! proved of no avail. The beloved Temple which had been seized and expropriated and for three months closed under the seal of the Municipal authorities was reopened and meetings were allowed to be conducted within its walls only after the acceptance and signature by the Bahá'í Spiritual Assembly of 'Ishqábád of an elaborate contract drawn by the Soviet authorities and recognizing the right of undisputed ownership by the State of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and its dependencies. (*Bahá'í Administration* 161)

The contract allowed for rental of the Temple by the Bahá'ís for a five-year period, and provided for fines and penalties for infringement of any of its provisions (*Bahá'í World* 5:35). The Bahá'ís complied with these actions of the State—even though quite conscious of their grievous impact—through the principle of loyalty to those in authority.

In 1929, Shoghi Effendi had hoped for amelioration of conditions under which the Persian and Russian Bahá'í communities existed, and he felt that these limitations were "the only remaining obstacle" to the establishment of the Universal House of Justice. He felt that

given favorable circumstances, under which the Bahá'ís of Persia and of the adjoining countries under Soviet rule, may be enabled to elect their national representatives, in accordance with the guiding principles laid down in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's writings, the only remaining obstacle in the way of the definite formation of the International House of Justice will have been removed. (*The World Order* 7)

After the Bolsheviks acquired the organs of the Russian state and gradually extended their control over the territories of the former Czarist empire, the position of the Bahá'ís—as well as that of the larger religious communities—

steadily deteriorated. Although the “avowed purpose and action” of Soviet authorities was one of “uncompromising opposition to all forms of organized religious propaganda,” the Bahá’ís had, for almost a decade, and “by some miraculous interposition of Providence... been spared the strict application to their institutions of the central principle that directs and animates the policy of the Soviet state” (Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá’í Administration* 160). They now faced, Shoghi Effendi wrote in March, 1930, a “ferocious and insidious campaign of repression and cruelty (*The World Order* 26). Although Horace Holley reported that “all known Bahá’ís” had been imprisoned and exiled (“Survey of Bahá’í Activities,” *Bahá’í World* 4:97), it is more likely that the most prominent were dispersed, leaving the remaining members of the community in disarray.<sup>60</sup> In explaining the origins of hostility toward the Bahá’ís, Kolarz has suggested:

Russian Orthodox missionaries were somewhat jealous of Bahá’í successes and uttered warnings against the new movement, asserting that it violated ‘the feelings of loyalty towards the Russian White Czar’. Notwithstanding such charges, the Bahá’í sect continued to flourish under Czarist rule and even during the first years of the Soviet régime it seemed to prosper. A Bahá’í youth organisation which the communists nicknamed ‘Bekhamol’ was set up in Ashkhabad. On account of its extensive cultural activities and supra-national tendencies it was a serious competitor of the Komsomol. (*Religion* 471)

Bahá’í beliefs, suggests Kolarz, contradict the Communist thesis about the backwardness of religion: its adherents were broadminded, tolerant, and international in outlook. For these reasons, he suggests, the Bahá’í religion “attracted the attention of the Soviet communists to a much greater degree than might be warranted by the numerical strength of its supporters” (Kolarz, *Religion* 470). Anti-Bahá’í literature emerged in 1930 with the publication of the pamphlets “Baháism a New Religion of the East” by the Leningrad Oriental Institute, and “Baháism,” authored by A. M. Arsharuni and published by the Bezbozhnik publishing house.<sup>61</sup> Kolarz explains how these two pamphlets described Bahá’í belief as the “ideology of the Persian trading bourgeoisie”:

They saw its particular harmfulness in the alleged Bahá’í claim that socialist teachings could be traced back to Bahá’íism. The article on Bahá’íism which the *Small Soviet Encyclopaedia* published in 1933 took the same line of denouncing ‘the new religion’ for allegedly camouflaging itself as ‘socialism,’ Bahá’íism, the *Encyclopaedia* added, was one of the ‘fashionable religious philosophical systems which the bourgeoisie uses in its fight against the ideas of Socialism and Communism.’ (Quoted in Kolarz, *Religion* 472)

Little is known in the West about the fate of the Russian Bahá’ís. In the late 1920s correspondence was directed to Kázim Zade Kázim Rúhání, a Persian living in Moscow (*Bahá’í World* 3:218).<sup>62</sup> In the 1930s, successive volumes of *The Bahá’í World* listed Isabel Grinevskaya (the noted playwright–poet, discussed above), of Prospect Nahimson, No. 10, log. 32, Leningrad, as Moscow correspondent (*Bahá’í World* 7: 559).<sup>63</sup> A Mr. Mazsud Nerou visited England and Haifa en route to Russia in 1930 (*Bahá’í News* 42 [July, 1930]: 8).

Some Bahá’í writings continued to appear in translation, and Russian orientalists continued their interest in Bábí and Bahá’í history. Bahá’ís were referred to in the works of Klimovich (*Sotsialisticheskoe Stroitelstvo na Vostoke i Religiya* [Socialist construction in the east and religion] 140), Ivanov,<sup>64</sup> and others.<sup>65</sup> In Riga, *The Hidden Words of Bahá’u’lláh* was printed in Russian in 1934, and the *Kitáb-i-Iqán* in 1933 (*Bahá’í World* 8:732). In the 1940s, Bahá’í literature in Russian was being distributed from the International Bahá’í Bureau in Geneva, although apparently there was some dissatisfaction with the quality of the translation into Russian of Esslemont’s *Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era* (Shoghi Effendi, *Unfolding Destiny* 181–82, 190).

In 1930, Shoghi Effendi called on the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada to appeal to the Russian authorities stressing the international character of the *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár* in ‘Ishqábád, but their efforts did nothing to deter Soviet policy.<sup>66</sup> Pilgrims to Haifa from ‘Ishqábád brought news of the repression of the Bahá’ís and the expulsion of some of them from Turkistan,<sup>67</sup> a region in which seventeen distinct Bahá’í communities had emerged by 1930.<sup>68</sup> On the strength of reports received in Haifa, Shoghi Effendi wrote of Central Asia:

... in the city enjoying the unique distinction of having been chosen by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as the home of the first *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár* of the Bahá’í world, as well as in the towns and villages of the province to which it belongs, the sore-pressed Faith of Bahá’u’lláh, as a result of the extraordinary and unique vitality which, in the course of several decades, it has consistently manifested, finds itself at the mercy of forces which, alarmed at its rising power, are now bent on reducing it to utter impotence. Its Temple, though still used for purposes of Bahá’í worship, has been expropriated, its Assemblies and committees disbanded, its teaching

activities crippled, its chief promoters deported, and not a few of its most enthusiastic supporters, both men and women, imprisoned. (*Advent of Divine Justice* 3–4)

### **Predicting Communism's Decline**

Shoghi Effendi's view of Communist ideology and Communist governments was at all times and in all places consistent: where a government held power, its legitimacy was recognized and its laws were obeyed to the extent that they did not contradict Bahá'í principles. At the same time, the attitude toward materialist philosophies and political ideologies elaborated in the Bahá'í writings was clearly one of rejection.<sup>69</sup> The Bahá'í view was that ultimately communism would prove unable to resolve humanity's crises. There was thus in the writings of Shoghi Effendi a line of argument pointing to some inevitable end to Communist rule. He had recorded in 1929 that the Bahá'ís, then under persecution

with a hope that no earthly power can dim, and a resignation that is truly sublime, committed the interests of their Cause to the keeping of that vigilant, that all-powerful Divine Deliverer, who, they feel confident, will in time lift the veil that now obscures the vision of their rulers, and reveal the nobility of aim, the innocence of purpose, the rectitude of conduct, and the humanitarian ideals that characterize the as yet small yet potentially powerful Bahá'í communities in every land and under any government. (*Bahá'í Administration* 163)

Again, at the beginning of 1930, Shoghi Effendi had placed contemporary adversities in the context of future victories:

Russia will in the future become a delectable paradise, and the teaching work in that land will be carried out on an unprecedented scale. The House of Worship established in its very heart will shine forth with dazzling splendour, and the call of the Most Great Name will reverberate in its temples, its churches, and its places of worship. We need to show forth patience and forbearance. In these momentous convulsions there lie concealed mighty and consummate mysteries, which will be revealed to men's eyes in the days to come.<sup>70</sup>

Despite communism's spread, Shoghi Effendi noted in the 1930s, the "inability of the leaders and exponents of the Communist movement to vindicate the much-vaunted principle of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat..." was one example of the impotence of its institutions (*The World Order* 190). At the time, however, and at the average level of vision, a much darker horizon was discernible, apart from a temporary lessening of government intimidation between 1934 and 1936. In 1935, religious buildings were restored to their owners, and the Bahá'ís came into full possession once more of the 'Ishqábád Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, having first fulfilled the requirement that extensive repairs be made within six months. Assembly elections and teaching activities were also recommenced, with only "slight and occasional civil interference" (*Bahá'í World* 6: 73). Persian residents in Soviet Republics faced the choice of changing nationality or returning to Iran, and many returned to Khurásán. At the beginning of 1938, whatever leniency remained in the Soviet regime came to an end. The members of the 'Ishqábád Spiritual Assembly, as well as about five- hundred other Bahá'í men, were arrested on 5 February, and all Bahá'í records were confiscated. Six-hundred women and children fled south, most to Mashhad; others moved to Buṣhrú'íyyih, Tabas, Turbat, Káshih, Sabzivar, Tihrán and Ádhirbáyján ("Survey of Current Bahá'í Activities," *Bahá'í World* 8: 87–90, 179–81, 184). The National Spiritual Assemblies of the Caucasus and Turkistan were disbanded;<sup>71</sup> the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár was once more confiscated and turned into an art gallery.<sup>72</sup>

A pamphlet appeared claiming Bahá'í leaders were "closely linked with the leaders of Trotskyie-Bukharinist and Dashnak-Mussavat bands" (Boris Kandidov, quoted in Kolarz, *Religion* 472). Kolarz surmises from this "monstrous accusation" that the Bahá'ís were persecuted not only in Turkmenistan but also in Transcaucasia, where the Dashnaks and Mussavatists had been active. The details of this period are still unknown. Over five-hundred Bahá'ís were arrested; some were exiled to "Siberia, the polar forests and other places in the vicinity of the Arctic Ocean," others deported to Iran (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 361). By 1946, only the Bákú, Batum, and Tiflis communities remained in the Caucasus; while in Turkistan, only 'Ishqábád, Samarkand, and Tashkánd communities continued.<sup>74</sup>

### **The Baltic States**

In the Baltic states—Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania—which had been under Russian rule until 1918 and which were again to come under Soviet domination between 1940 and 1990, the barest impression was made by Bahá'ís, apart

from visits in 1927, 1934, and 1925 by Martha Root, principally under the patronage of the Esperanto movement.<sup>75</sup> All three states were independent at this time although at least one, Lithuania, was under military administration. There were no Bahá'í communities, and Miss Root's helpers in organizing public Lectures, press interviews, and visits to public officials, during which she presented the Bahá'í teachings, were Esperantists (Garis, *Martha Root* 272–74).<sup>76</sup> Although Bahá'í activities in the Baltic states remained limited in subsequent years, Esslemont's *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* was printed in Latvia in 1930, and an article—possibly about Martha Root—appeared in Lithuania in 1935.<sup>77</sup> The American traveller Nellie French reported the presence of Latvian Bahá'ís at a summer school at Esslingen, Germany, in 1937 (quoted in Holley, “Survey of Current Bahá'í Activities,” *Bahá'í World* 7:36). The Soviet Union's forced union with the Baltic states in 1940 closed opportunities for promotion of religious ideas for several decades.

**Table 1: Bahá'í Localities in Russia, Turkistan, and Caucasus to 1938\***

|                                   | <b>Russia</b>    |               |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| <b>Local Spiritual Assemblies</b> |                  | <b>Groups</b> |
| Moscow                            |                  | Leningrad     |
|                                   | <b>Turkistan</b> |               |
| <b>Local Spiritual Assemblies</b> |                  | <b>Groups</b> |
| Bukhárá                           |                  | Andíján       |
| Gul-Tapíh                         |                  | Áryúl         |
| ‘Ishqábád                         |                  | Ártiq         |
| Marv                              |                  | Bírám-‘Alí    |
| Qahqahíh                          |                  | Cháhar Júb    |
| Samarqand                         |                  | Khawqand      |
| Táshkand                          |                  | Kislavodski   |
| Tajan                             |                  | Marqílán      |
|                                   |                  | Takht-i-Bázár |
|                                   |                  | Yúltán        |
|                                   | <b>Caucasus</b>  |               |
| <b>Local Spiritual Assemblies</b> |                  | <b>Groups</b> |
| Bákú                              |                  | Bátúm         |
| Bálá-Khání                        |                  | Chíní         |
| Burdá                             |                  | Darband       |
| Ganjíh                            |                  | Erivan        |
| Sáliyán                           |                  | Khíllí        |
| Tiflis                            |                  | Kúgcháy       |
|                                   |                  | Naftálán      |
|                                   |                  | Petrovki      |
|                                   |                  | Shakkí        |
|                                   |                  | Shamákhí      |
|                                   |                  | Shíraván      |

\* From information in the 1925–26, 1926–28, 1928–30, 1930–32, 1932–1936–38 volumes of *The Bahá'í World*.

### The World Crusade

By 1953, there were Bahá'ís in no more than five of the Soviet Union's sixteen republics. Nor were there any in three additional countries in the Soviet “Orbit” (Albania, Mongolia, and Romania). Soviet rule provided one of the major obstacles to the global spread of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings during Shoghi Effendi's ministry. His vision for the Bahá'í world, however, transcended the political and socioreligious limitations and boundaries of the 1950s, and required courage on the part of those individuals who would deploy in a “Ten Year World Crusade” to all parts of the globe, and in their united effort

penetrate the jungles of the Amazon, scale the mountain-fastnesses of Tibet, establish direct contact with the teeming and hapless multitudes in the interior of China, Mongolia and Japan, sit with the leprosy,

consort with the outcasts in their penal colonies, traverse the steppes of Russia or scatter throughout the wastes of Siberia... (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World* 37)

Such zeal did exist, and it fuelled the dispersal of Bahá'í pioneers to the remotest regions of every continent. In the Soviet Union, however, Communist power remained firmly entrenched, and the superpowers were approaching the darkest years of the cold war. Although there were no organized Bahá'í communities in the Soviet Republics, Bahá'í beliefs were disparaged in Soviet literature, and earlier histories of both the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths were subject to Soviet revisionism.

Kolarz has suggested that the article on Bahá'í in the *Large Soviet Encyclopaedia*—which propagated the view that Bahá'ís had received considerable support from “British and American imperialists”—opposed the religion because it

denied the principle of national independence and of state sovereignty. It supported the anti-national idea of the abolition of national boundaries and the creation of a ‘united world state.’ This was an idea beneficial to reaction. (Quoted in Kolarz, *Religion* 472)

A. N. Smirnov evaluated Russian scholarship on the Bábí and Bahá'í religions in his Marxist—theoretical review of works on Islam in Russia. Believing that the missions of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh were totally different—the one directed against the “unjust feudal regime” of the Qájárs, the other excluding “every kind of political element from its preaching” and advocating “class-peace and an uncomplaining subordination to the authorities”—Smirnov downplayed the usefulness of the works of Batyushkov, Umanets, Zhukovski, and Bakulin.<sup>78</sup> The works of Arsharuni, Darov, and Ivanov, however, were regarded more favorably, presumably because they accorded with the objective set for Soviet studies of Islamic movements, namely exposure of the “reactionary nature which they share in equal measure with Islam itself” (Smirnov, *Islam and Russia* 44).<sup>79</sup> Vucinich adds Tomara to the list of Russian authors who criticized the Bábí and Bahá'í movements “for their middle-class ideology” (“Soviet Studies” 228). A similar critique continued in the work of N. A. Kuznetzova (“K Istorii Izucheniya” 89–133).

Despite official opposition to organized religion in the U.S.S.R. and the serious limitations on Bahá'í communities that this implied, Shoghi Effendi outlined objectives in the East, West, South, as well as in the very heart of the Empire.<sup>80</sup> Globally, twelve national spiritual assemblies participated in a program of expansion, which was aimed at taking the message of Bahá'u'lláh to all the unreached corners of the earth. Three of the twelve national spiritual assemblies were allocated tasks within the U.S.S.R. (*Bahá'í World* 13: part III).

The Persian Bahá'ís were to consolidate the Bahá'í communities that already existed in five of the Republics of the Soviet Union: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. There may have been Bahá'ís in each of these areas since before the passing of Bahá'u'lláh in 1892.<sup>81</sup> By 1963, there was one isolated centre at Bákú in Azerbaijan, two isolated centres—Yerevan and Artez—in Armenia; and an isolated Bahá'í at Tiflis in Georgia. In Turkmenistan, the center of so much activity up until the 1930s, there remained in 1963 five Bahá'í groups. Against formidable odds, the Persian Bahá'ís endeavored in the decade to send Bahá'ís to Kirgizia and Tádzhikistán. Shoghi Effendi referred to the arrival of Bahá'ís in these two Republics in his Ridván Message in 1957, but the names of those involved are not established (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages* 105). By 1963, there were isolated Bahá'ís living in Kirgizia, in Tádzhikistán, and in Stalingrad (now Volgograd). Shoghi Effendi also referred in his message of Ridván 1955 to the arrival of Bahá'ís in Uzbekistan, but he did not mention their names. By 1963, there were in Uzbekistan a Bahá'í group in Tashkent and an isolated Bahá'í at Fergana.

The Bahá'ís of Germany and Austria were challenged to consolidate the existing Bahá'í community in Russian S.F.S.R. (Soviet Federated Socialist Republic).<sup>82</sup> Bahá'ís had first moved there during the ministry of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, and by 1963, there remained an isolated Bahá'í at Penza. In addition, the German and Austrian Bahá'ís were to open Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bielorussia (referred to as White Russia), a task that did not prove possible by the completion of the World Crusade in April, 1963. American Bahá'ís were unable to settle any pioneers in the Ukraine (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages* 77, 173), although Bahá'ís, whose names are not known, had entered Kazakhstan by April, 1956.

At the close of the World Crusade, 251 Knights of Bahá'u'lláh had been named worldwide, and five were added between 1963 and 1990. The current list of 256 Knights of Bahá'u'lláh remains incomplete, however, since for a variety of reasons no Knights were named for ten territories that were part of the Soviet Union.<sup>83</sup> Thus the position with regard to Knights of Bahá'u'lláh for Estonia, Finno-Karelia, Latvia, Lithuania, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstán, Tádzhikistán, and the Ukraine remains unclear. There had been a Bahá'í, Refo Capari, in Albania in the 1930s. Estonia was opened by travelling teachers but was not settled during the Crusade, and no Knights of Bahá'u'lláh were named. Helmut Winkelbach pioneered to White Russia in December, 1978; while Abbas Katirai

and Rezvanieh Katirai became Knights of Bahá'u'lláh to the Sakhalin Islands in March, 1990.<sup>84</sup> Although the number of pioneers to Russian territories remained small, and response to their presence necessarily limited, their largely inadequately documented stories comprise a crucial episode in the unfoldment of the Bahá'í community.

A second theme of slow and imperceptible development during the years of the World Crusade concerned the production of Bahá'í literature. If restrictions on travel prevented the easy passage of Bahá'ís to Soviet-controlled lands, the translation of literature would prepare the way for future opportunities.

In Germany, Bahá'í-Verlag published *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* and the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* in Russian. *Bahá'í: Sissejuhav Brošüür* appeared in Estonian. By 1963, publications in Ukrainian included *Communion with God, Praised be Thou O Lord* (prayers taken from *Communion with God*), *One God, One Mankind, One Religion*, and *Purification* (chapter 3 of David Hofman's *Renewal of Civilization*). These works were translated by Peter Pihichyn. The Ukrainian Teaching Committee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada produced a bulletin entitled *New Word*. Although the number of languages into which Bahá'í material was translated increased through the pursuit of stated objectives in the World Crusade, their lengths varied from translations of brief prayers to translations of larger works.

**Table 2: Territories in the U.S.S.R to be Opened in the World Crusade**

| Territory    | LSAs | Groups by 1963 | Localities | NSA with Task 1953—1963 |
|--------------|------|----------------|------------|-------------------------|
| Sakhalin     | -    | -              | -          | USA                     |
| Kirgizia     | -    | -              | 1          | Persia                  |
| Tadzhikistan | -    | -              | 1          | Persia                  |
| Uzbekistan   | -    | 1              | 2          | Persia                  |
| Armenia      | -    | -              | 2          | Persia                  |
| Ukraine      | -    | -              | -          | USA                     |
| Kazakhstan   | -    | -              | 1          | USA                     |
| Estonia      | -    | -              | -          | Germany & Austria       |
| Latvia       | -    | -              | -          | Germany & Austria       |
| Lithuania    | -    | -              | -          | Germany & Austria       |
| Moldavia     | -    | -              | -          | Germany & Austria       |
| White Russia | -    | -              | -          | Germany & Austria       |

**Table 3: Territories in the U.S.S.R to be Consolidated in the World Crusade**

| Territory        | LSAs | Groups by 1963 | Localities | NSA with Task 1953—1963 |
|------------------|------|----------------|------------|-------------------------|
| Georgia          | -    | -              | 1          | Persia                  |
| Azerbaijan       | -    | -              | 1          | Persia                  |
| Turkmenistan     | -    | 5              | 5          | Persia                  |
| Russian S.F.S.R. | -    | -              | 1          | Germany & Austria       |

**Table 4: Languages in Soviet Countries into which Bahá'í Literature was to be Translated in the Period 1953–1963<sup>85</sup>**

| Language  | Territory       | Translation Achieved <sup>86</sup> |
|-----------|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| Cheremiss | Kazan, Russia   | No                                 |
| Estonian  | Estonia         | Yes                                |
| Georgian  | Caucasus        | No                                 |
| Mordoff   | Central Russia  | No                                 |
| Perm      | Perm, Russia    | Yes                                |
| Vogul     | West Siberia    | No                                 |
| Ziryen    | Russian S.F.S.R | Yes                                |

### The Silent Years

Despite severe limitations on religious activities during the Communist period, in some Republics of the Soviet Union opportunities to promote the Bahá'í teachings were explored in subsequent plans.

The Swedish Bahá'ís assisted in establishing Bahá'í communities in Latvia and Lithuania as part of their Five-Year Plan (1974–1979), although no additional progress was reported in the subsequent Seven-Year Plan (1979–1986) (Universal House of Justice, *Analysis* 102; *Seven Year Plan* 107). The first Lithuanian Bahá'í was reported in July, 1977, and Bahá'í communities were established in both countries (*Five Year Plan* 83, 115). Elsewhere, a local spiritual assembly was established in Kazakhstan, and a locality in the Ukraine, both territories assigned to the North American Bahá'í community (*Five Year Plan* 99). Of the three territories assigned to the German Bahá'ís during this period—Moldavia, Russian S.F.S.R., and White Russia—a locality was only established in the latter (*Five Year Plan* 113). Small gains were reported for the Seven-Year Plan (1979–1986) (*Seven Year Plan* 156)<sup>87</sup> While travel to the Republics of the Soviet Union was not possible, translation and publication of Bahá'í literature into regional languages proceeded. From Germany, translations were made into Bielorrussian (White Russian); from Sweden and Finland, into Estonian, Lithuanian, and Latvian; from Iran and Sweden into Russian (*Five Year Plan* 42–43). During the Nine-Year Plan, literature was to be translated into Kazakh, White Russian, and Estonian languages, under the auspices of the North American, German, and Finnish National Spiritual Assemblies respectively (*Bahá'í World* 14:111–12).

**Table 5: Territories in the U.S.S.R to be Opened in the Nine Year Plan (by 1973)**  
(G = Goal A = Achieved)

| Territory    | LSAs |   | Groups by 1963 |   | Localities |   | NSA with Task 1953–1963 |
|--------------|------|---|----------------|---|------------|---|-------------------------|
|              | G    | A | G              | A | G          | A |                         |
| Sakhalin     | -    | - | 1              | - | 1          | - | Northeast Asia          |
| Estonia      | -    | - | 1              | - | 1          | - | Finland                 |
| Latvia       | -    | - | 1              | 1 | 1          | 1 | Germany                 |
| Lithuania    | -    | - | 1              | - | 1          | - | Germany                 |
| Moldavia     | -    | - | 1              | - | 1          | - | Germany                 |
| White Russia | -    | - | 1              | - | 1          | - | Germany                 |
| Ukraine      | 1    | - | -              | 1 | 1          | 1 | United States           |

**Table 6: Territories in the U.S.S.R to be Consolidated in the Nine Year Plan (by 1973)**

| Territory    | LSAs |   | Groups by 1963 |   | Localities |   | NSA with Task 1953–1963 |
|--------------|------|---|----------------|---|------------|---|-------------------------|
|              | G    | A | G              | A | G          | A |                         |
| Armenia      | 1    | - | -              | 1 | 1          | 1 | Persia                  |
| Georgia      | 1    | - | -              | 1 | 1          | 1 | Persia                  |
| Kazakhstan   | -    | - | 1              | 1 | 1          | 1 | United States           |
| Kirgizia     | 1    | - | -              | 1 | 1          | 1 | Persia                  |
| Russian SFSR | 1    | - | -              | 2 | 1          | 2 | Germany                 |
| Tadzhikistan | 1    | - | -              | 1 | 1          | 1 | Persia                  |
| Turkmenistan | 1    | - | -              | 1 | 5          | 1 | Persia                  |
| Uzbekistan   | 1    | - | -              | 1 | 2          | 1 | Persia                  |

In 1975, Bennigsen noted that “some Bahá'ís live in the cities of Central Asia and in Astrakhan,” and added that “different heterodox sects, such as the Ismailis, the Bahá'ís, the Yezidis and the Alli-Ilahis of Trans-Caucasia have no recognized administration. Nothing is known abroad of the internal life of these four bodies...” (“Islam in the Soviet Union: Religious” 92–93). Several years later, the same author referred to a “small colony of Bahá'ís in Ashkabad,” and to “isolated groups of Ali Ilahis (heterodox Shiites), of Bahá'ís, and even of Yazidis (ultra-Shiites) in Soviet Armenia” (Bennigsen, “Islam in the Soviet Union” 118–19). The Bahá'ís were also briefly mentioned by Wheeler (“Islam in the U.S.S.R”).

## Recent Developments

The dismantlement of Communist rule from 1989, as envisaged in clear terms by Shoghi Effendi decades earlier, and the consequent removal of legal restrictions on religious activities in the Soviet Union and in other parts of Eastern Europe, allowed dormant Bahá'í communities to reemerge. The Bahá'í communities of Germany, Finland, and other European countries assisted in the rehabilitation of Bahá'í communities and spiritual assemblies. Groups of Bahá'ís rapidly emerged in the Baltics and as far east as Siberia. Hand of the Cause of God Mr. 'Alí Akbar Furútan returned to Moscow (from where he had been forced to depart many decades before) "...in triumphant fulfilment of a wish expressed to him by our beloved Guardian some sixty years ago" (Universal House of Justice, *Ridván Message*, 1990). Once more, the Bahá'í religion is being referred to in Russian literature ("Branches of One Tree"). Also, Bahá'í literature in Russian is being produced, both in Russia, and by such European publishers as Bahá'í-Verlag in Germany. A two-year plan of action was established by the Universal House of Justice, specifying goals which included the establishment of a national spiritual assembly in the Soviet Union in 1991.<sup>88</sup>

Hand of the Cause of God Mr. 'Alí Akbar Furtltan attended the first convention of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Russia as representative of the Universal House of Justice. In November, 1990, by which time fourteen local spiritual assemblies had been established in the former Soviet Union,<sup>89</sup> the Universal House of Justice announced that the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baltic States would be establishment at Ridván 1992. A subsequent cable, on 7 January 1992, announced that the National Spiritual Assembly of the USSR, "consequent upon the changed situation in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics," was renamed the Regional Spiritual Assembly of Russia, Georgia, and Armenia. Three additional Assemblies were formed at Ridván 1992:

- The Regional Spiritual Assembly of Ukraine, Bielarus, and Moldavia, with its seat in Kiev;
- The Regional Spiritual Assembly of Central Asia, with its seat in 'Ishqábád, comprising the republics of Kazakhstan, Kirgizia, Tadjikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan;
- The National Spiritual Assembly of Azerbaijan with its seat in Bákú.

A review of the origins of the Russian Bahá'í community, however brief, cannot help but reflect the degree of suffering that has afflicted the people of that land. More remarkable are the prophetic remarks of Shoghi Effendi, written in January, 1923, as to the course of future events, and the eventual emergence of a Bahá'í community following a reversal of the fortunes of the Communist regime:

There is no doubt that the day will come when the very people who are now engaged in destroying the foundations of faith in God and promoting this baseless doctrine of materialism will arise and, by their own hand, snuff out the flame of this commotion. They will sweep away the entire structure of their unrestrained godlessness and will arise with heart and soul, and with hitherto unmatched vigour, to atone for their past failures. They will join the ranks of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh and arise to promote His Cause. If the friends remain steadfast, and discharge their duties with loyalty and produce, the veils of God's inscrutable wisdom will be lifted and extraordinary events will be witnessed. The hosts of divine confirmation, fortified by the power of the Spirit will, in unimaginable ways and from unexpected quarters, provide the means for the triumph of the Cause of our Self-Subsisting Lord, and in so doing will brighten the eyes of the faithful throughout the world.<sup>90</sup>

## Notes

1. This article was written prior to a visit to St. Petersburg in April, 1992. The author acknowledges its limited scope, based as it is on English-language, secondary sources and some primary materials located in the National Bahá'í Archives in Wilmette, Illinois. Publications in Russian and languages other than English are referred to in footnotes, but not in the list of works cited. I wish to thank the anonymous referees, as well as Iraj Ayman, William Collins, Robert Stockman, Will. C. van den Hoonard, and O. Ahmadian for their valuable criticisms of earlier drafts.

2. A list of Russian ministers is provided in Momen, *Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* 483.

3. Some of his reports concerning the Bábís appear in "Excerpts from Dispatches" 17–24.

4. See Firuz Kazemzadeh, "Iranian Relations" 314–49.

5. The institute is now called the Institute of Oriental Studies.

6. Kazem-Beg, *Bab i Babidy: religiozno-politicheskiye smuty v Persii v 1844–52 godakh* (The Báb and the Bábís: religious and political disturbances in Persia in the years 1844–52), St. Petersburg, 1865. This was translated into French as "Bab et les Babis," and published in the *Journal Asiatique* in 1866 in "322 pages spread out between

the April–May, June, August–September, and October–November 1866 issues” (Momen, *Bábí and Bahá’í Religions* 26).

7. Dorn’s works are listed in Momen, *Bábí and Bahá’í Religions* 535. Smirnov’s bibliography lists Dorn’s “Beyan Baba,” *Melange Asiatique*, v. 1865.

8. The tablet reads in part: “O Czar of Russia! Incline thine ear unto the voice of God, the King, the Holy.... Beware that nothing deter thee from setting thy face towards thy Lord, the Compassionate, the Most Merciful. We, verily, have heard the thing for which thou didst supplicate thy Lord, whilst secretly communing with Him. Wherefore, the breeze of My loving-kindness wafted forth, and the sea of My mercy surged, and We answered thee in truth. Thy Lord, verily, is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. Whilst I lay, chained and fettered, in the prison of Tihrán, one of thy ministers extended Me his aid. Wherefore hath God ordained for thee a station which the knowledge of none can comprehend except His knowledge. Beware lest thou barter away this sublime station (Bahá’u’lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* 57). Beware lest thy sovereignty withhold thee from Him Who is the Supreme Sovereign” (quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *Promised Day* 33).

9. Taherzadeh suggests that in this tablet, the Manifestation “proclaims His station, identifies Himself as the Heavenly Father and calls on him [the Czar] to arise in His Name, proclaim His Mission and summon the nations to His Cause” (*Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh* 3: 118–19).

10. As recorded by Nabíl: “The Russian minister, as soon as he learned of the action which the government contemplated taking, volunteered to take Bahá’u’lláh under his protection, and invited Him to go to Russia. He refused the offer and chose instead to leave for ‘Iráq. Nine months after His return from Karbilá, on the first day of the month of Rabí’u’-th-Thání, in the year 1269 A.H., [January 12, A.D. 1853], Bahá’u’lláh, accompanied by the members of His family, among whom were the Most Great Branch [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] and Áqáy-i-Kalim [Mírzá Músá...], and escorted by a member of the imperial body-guard and an official representing the Russian legation, set out from Tihrán on His journey to Baghdád” (*Dawnbreakers* 650).

11. “As Bahá’u’lláh was leaving the village of Zarkandih, the minister’s daughter, who felt greatly distressed at the dangers which beset His life, was so overcome with emotion that she was unable to restrain her tears. ‘Of what use’, she was heard expostulating with her father, ‘is the authority with which you have been invested, if you are powerless to extend your protection to a guest whom you have received in your house?’ The minister, who had a great affection for his daughter, was moved by the sight of her tears, and sought to comfort her by his assurances that he would do all in his power to avert the danger that threatened the life of Bahá’u’lláh” (Nabíl-i-‘Azam, *Dawnbreakers* 604).

12. Amanat, for example, described the protection offered the disgraced *Amír-i Kabír*, Mírzá Taqí Khán, by British diplomat Justin Sheil as “a good example of how foreign missions used informal arrangements to secure smooth political transitions. Guaranteeing safe passage to ousted premiers, usually under the joint auspices of European envoys, was not without precedent.... Sheil’s mediation was motivated not merely by humanitarian concerns or self-gratification.... Sheil hoped to secure Amir Kabir’s future gratitude, if he was returned the favor. Moreover, a British mediation would have preempted a Russian grant of diplomatic immunity, an enticing alternative not to be missed by his Russian counterpart, Prince Dolgorouki...” (Amanat, “Downfall of Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir” 590).

13. As recently as 1988, Ira Lapidus, professor of history at the University of California, Berkeley, has written of agitation surrounding Iran’s constitutional revolution of 1905–6: “Tension due to the increasing indebtedness of the Shah to the Russians, Russian support for the Bahá’ís, and the appointment of a Belgian to the position of Minister of Post and Telegraph, led to protests in the bazaars” (*History of Islamic Societies* 178). Lapidus provides no evidence in support of the link he claims existed between Russian officials and the Persian Bahá’ís.

14. Hájí Mírzá Haydar-‘Alí, recalling the deaths of 195 believers in two months in Yazd, recorded in his memoirs, “During all these disturbances no one in the whole of Iran, or in the neighboring countries, would listen to the cries of the Bahá’ís for justice” (*Stories from the Delight of Hearts* 153). I am grateful to Mr. Ahmadian for pointing out this passage to me.

15. Shoghi Effendi noted that “Russian troops occupied Adrianople” in the course of the downfall of the Ottoman Empire (*Promised Day* 63).

16. The most recent and most comprehensive history of the ‘Ishqábád community is found in Momen, “The Bahá’í Community of Ashkhabad,” See also Lee, “The Rise of the Bahá’í Community of ‘Ishqábád.”

17. The authors describe the Bahá’ís as one of the non-Sunni Islamic groups in Russia, as “a modern syncretist sect, represented by some thousands of Iranian emigrants to Ashkhabad and Astrakhan” (43).

18. Hájí Muhammad Ridá was buried eight miles from ‘Ishqábád. In May 1935 his body was reinterred in the Bahá’í cemetery (*Bahá’í World* 7:101).

19. Moojan Momen lists the principal works of Rosen and Tumanski in *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* 40–43. Their publications concerning events in 'Ishqábád are listed on pages 297–99. Smirnov's bibliography includes V. R. Rozen's *Pervyy abornik poslaniy babida Bekhaullakha* (First collection of the epistles of Bahá'u'lláh) St. Petersburg, 1908.

20. The Vakílu'd-Dawlih, from Yazd. See 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Memorials of the Faithful* 126–29; Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá* 110; Taherzadeh, *Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh* 1:198–99.

21. Kalmykow, however, recalled that the cornerstone was laid by General Subotich: "I presented Hadji Mirza M. Taghi to the military governor of Transcopia, General D. I. Subotich, who agreed to lay the cornerstone of the Babi temple. It was an impressive ceremony, this Russian recognition of Babism as an established religion at a moment when hundreds of Babis were being slaughtered in Persia. The Babi community presented General Subotich with a picture of the famous calligrapher, Meshkin Kalam, representing a bird on a tree. The picture was formed with the letters composing the verse, 'On the Tree of Eternity sits the Bird of Truth repeating: "He (God) is one, is one, is one"' (Memoirs 152).

22. According to an article in *Star of the West*, "Women of Persia sold their jewelry to complete the last payment and furnish the gilding for its shining dome. One of the relatives of the Báb gave his whole fortune to build this Mashreq'Ul Azkar at Eskabad. A widow of Persia, earning fifty cents a day and on this sum supporting her children and herself gave half of her earnings to help build the divine edifice at Eskabad" ("The Universal Appeal of the Temple," *Star of the West* 13:10 [January 1923]: 263).

23. Spiritual Assembly of 'Ishqábád, 29 September 1903 to the Chicago House of Spirituality. U.S. Bahá'í Archives. Thornton Chase Papers. MF 1. D-G 1903–1911.

24. Charles Mason Remey, "The Mashrak-el-Azkar of Ishkabad," *Star of the West* 6:18 (February 7, 1916): 153–55. See also "Utterances of Abdul-Baha upon the Mashrak-el-Azkar," *Star of the West* 6:17 (January 19, 1916): 133–35. Remey's reports appeared in successive volumes of *The Bahá'í World*: "The Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár of 'Ishqábád," *Bahá'í Year Book* 1:79–81. A similarly worded article appeared as "The Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár of 'Ishqábád," *Bahá'í World* 2:121–22. His descriptions were later excerpted in Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 300–301.

25. Persian-language titles published at 'Ishqábád included Siyyid Mihdí Gulpáyigáni (comp.) *Kashfu'l-Ghitá'*, *Kitáb-i-Ahd, Bahá'ísm and Socialism*. Titles in Turkish included *Talk in New York* (1916).

26. *Bahá'í World* 3:81. Shaykh Muhammad 'Alí from Ghaem died in 'Ishqábád in 1923. A tomb was to be built for him (*Bahá'í World* 7:101).

27. See Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá* 112. In his memoirs, Haydar-'Alí refers briefly to his time in 'Ishqábád (*Stories from the Delight of Hearts* 141–42, 151–52). While in 'Ishqábád Abu'l-Fadl first met and befriended the Russian military officer and orientalist Alexander C. Toumansky (Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne and the Bahá'í Faith* 66).

28. For example, the brothers Áqá 'Azízulláh and Áqá Sháhvirídí, who travelled in the Caucasus, although the former was not yet a Bahá'í (Balyuzi, *Eminent Bahá'í* 180). In 1902, a Persian Bahá'í was sent to Shanghai, China, as representative of a business based in 'Ishqábád (*Bahá'í World* 4: 89). About 1914, Mírzá Mehdi Rashtí, Ali-Hasanoff, and Husayn Ouskouli moved to Shanghai as tea merchants for their Omid Trading Company, although only the latter remained after the outbreak of war (Sulaimani, "A Brief History").

29. Alexander Toumansky to Helen S. Goodall, 19 February 1919. Following the Bolshevik revolution, Toumansky was living at Batum. He sought the assistance of American Bahá'ís in emigrating to the United States in order to continue his studies in Arabic history. U.S. National Bahá'í Archives. Helen S. Goodall papers. 3/27. Alexander Toumansky.

30. *Bahai News* (Chicago) (4 November 1910) 9. Kolarz relies on Krymsky for information on the "unusually beautiful temple" and a special missionary school built by the 'Ishqábád Bahá'ís (Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union* 471).

31. Bákú Board of Consultation to New York, 10 June 1902. U.S. National Bahá'í Archives. Thornton Chase Papers. MF 1. D-G 1903–4911.

32. Publications in Turkish from Bákú included Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá (1915), *Talk about the Bahá'í Faith* (n.d.), *Talk in New York* (1922). Publications in Russian included *Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (1909).

33. A tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the Spiritual Assembly of Bákú, and a photograph of Dr. Susan Moody and Sydney Sprague with the Bahá'ís of Bákú are reprinted in *Star of the West* 2.6 (June 24, 1911): 3–4.

34. "Batoum.—A few days ago our eyes were brightened by the rays of the Occidental Messenger, which appeared from far off America; our love and affection for our Western brothers and sisters was increased an hundred fold through His loving and spiritual expressions, and we thanked God that they had arisen to serve the Cause in such a glorious manner. We in the East are deprived of the privilege of rendering such service, for the political laws

restrict the freedom of the press; but we are not sad thereby, for if the Western Bahá'ís are assisted to serve the Cause in this befitting manner, we also share in its glory and honor, as we are all one" (*Bahá'í News* 1. 14 [23 November 1910]: 5). Other references include *Bahá'í News* 1.17 (January 19, 1911): 17.

35. "How could a national consciousness have taken root among a people who are constantly preoccupied with religious quarrels," wrote Aghayev, "who have always lived under a foreign influence"?... When in Persia there appeared the teachings of the Báb, the Azerbaijani Turks, more than anybody else, sacrificed themselves for the new faith, despite the fact that the founders of Babism were Persians..." (*Türk Yurdu* 17 (1912): 547, cited in Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905–1920* 72).

36. See, for instance, Asgarzadeh's letter in *Star of the West* 14.5 (August, 1923): 154.

37. Channel Island was a "virgin territory" in the World Crusade, and Mr. Asgarzadeh ranks among the Knights of Bahá'u'lláh.

38. The Bákú Board of Consultation, writing to the Bahá'ís of New York 10 June 1902, mentioned translation activity in St. Petersburg by a "few people actuated by their personal wishes" (U.S. National Bahá'í Archives. Thornton Chase Papers. MF 1. D-G 1903–1911). In 1910, the Cambridge Orientalist E. G. Browne listed as Rosen's main works on Bábism, *Collections scientifiques de l'Institut de langues orientales*, vol. 1 (1877):179–212; vol. 3 (1886):1–51; vol. 6 (1891):141–255; and "Manuscripts Bábys;" noting there were other important works on the subject by this Russian scholar (Browne, "Bábism" 94–95).

39. Grinevskaya's play was also put on the stage in 'Ishqábád in 1922 (Momen, "The Bahá'í Community of Ashkhabad" 288).

40. See Luigi Stendardo, *Leo Tolstoy and the Bahá'í Faith*; Martha Root, "Count Leo Tolstoy"; and R. F. Christian, ed., *Tolstoy's Diaries*, vol.2: 1895–1910.

41. Tolstoi wrote on 22 October 1903 of his sympathy with Bábism, more than with Islamic reform movements of North Africa and India he was familiar with, because it had as its "principal object a changing of the outlook of the people..." (*Bahá'í World 1946–50* 442–43).

42. Writing to some "Caucasian Mohammedans" in 1908, Tolstoi indicated his awareness of the differentiation of Bábism and the Bahá'í Faith, and regarded their elaboration by Bahá'u'lláh as "the highest and purest form of religious teaching" (*Bahá'í World 1946–50* 443).

43. Tolstoi makes such references on just four occasions: writing on 22 January 1909, "...The Behai are very interesting..." (*Tolstoy's Diaries* 2:602); on 20 March 1909, "...All this morning I've been reading the legend of Krishna. And the very thing that I rejected with our circle in mind is excellent for the people: a legend similar to the Christian one, but among a different, foreign people. We decided on: (1) A sketch of India, its history and present position, (2) The legend of Krishna and (3) The sayings of Krishna. Then perhaps: (4) The sayings of the moderns—Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Then (5) A survey of China and the three religions, (6) Buddhism, (7) Confucianism, (8) Taoism, (9) The sayings of Mohammed, (10) Babism..." (*Tolstoy's Diaries* 2:607); on 10 June 1910, "On the 10th I was a bit better; I was able to work again on the foreword and read a lot about Babism with bad feelings towards myself..." (*Tolstoy's Diaries* 2:659); and on 24 August 1910, "Continue to feel well. In the morning I read *Le Bab*. It's very interesting and new to me" (*Tolstoy's Diaries* 2:666).

44. S. I. Umanets, *Sovremennyi Babizm* (Contemporary Bábism) (1904); Sargis Mubagajian, *Imamat: Strana Poklonnikov Imamov* (Imamat: The Country of the Worshipers of the Imáms) (1909); F. A. Bakulin, *Moy vzglad na babizm* (My opinion of Babism), manuscript published later by V. A. Zhnkovski, *Nedavniye kazni babidov* (Recent persecutions of the Babis) (1888); G. D. Batyushkov, *Babidy: Persidskaya sekta* (The Babis: a Persian sect) (1897); A. K. Kazembek, *Bab i babidy: religiozno-politicheskiye smuty v Persii v 1844–52 godakh* (The Bab and babis: religious and political disturbances in Persia in the years 1844–52) (1865). These works are referred to in Momen, *Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* 59 and Smimov, *Islam and Russia* 60–85.

45. Krymsky, *Istoriya Islama* 17–19.

46. *Kitabe-Akdes*, ed. A. H. Tumansky, *Mémoires de l'Académie Impériale de St. Petersburg* 1899 8 serie vol. 3, no. 6; *Works of Bahá'u'lláh*, ed. A. H. Tumansky, St. Petersburg, 1892 (*The Bahá'í World* 10: 607); In 1910 Browne referred to Tumansky's "excellent edition...with Russian translation, notes and introduction, of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas (the most important of Bahá's works)..." (Browne, "Bábism") 1910.

47. *Zapiski vostochnava otdyeleniya Imperatorskava Russkava Archeologichestava Obshchestva* (vols. 4–12, St. Petersburg, 1890–1900).

48. Small publications from Bákú included *Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (1909) and *Talk about the Bahá'í Faith* (n.d.). *Lessons in Religion* by Shayikh Muhammad-'Alí Qá'ini (1912) and *Talk of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in New York* (1922) were printed in 'Ishqábád.

49. These were M. Bulanovskii, *Begaity*, Moskva: Zelenaiia Palochka, 1913; Izabella Grinevskaya's three works, *Bab: Dramaticheskaiia Poema iz Istarii Persii*, S. Peterburg: T-vo Khudozhestvennoi Pechati, 1903, Isd. 2-e.

Petrograd: Koreka, 1916, and *Bekhaulla: Poema Tragediia v Stikhakh iz Istorii Persii*, St. Petersburg: Tip. I. G. Braude, 1912; and M. S. Ivanov, *Babidskie Vosstaniia v Irane, 1848–1852*, Moskva: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1939 (Collins, “A Partial Bibliography” 889).

50. “The Commissariat of Justice ordered the ‘painless but complete liquidation of the monasteries, as chief centres of the influence of the Churchmen’. By 1920, 673 had been ‘liquidated’, their 2<sup>1/4</sup> million acres and 4,248,000,000 roubles confiscated, and their 84 factories, 436 dairy farms, 602 cattle farms, 1,112 apartment houses and 704 hostels ‘nationalised’ “ (Conquest, *Religion in the USSR* 14).

51. Siyyid Mihdí Gulpaygan died in ‘Ishqábád in 1928. A tomb was to be built for him (*Bahá’í World* 7:101).

52. It was also reported that many of the Bahá’ís lacked the means to buy sufficient food, so that they lived “half starving” (*Star of the West* 14.5 [August, 1923]: 154).

53. Progress of the Bahá’ís of Báku was reported in Fazel, “The Growth of the Bahá’í Cause in the East.”

54. A photograph of the Bahá’ís of Tashkánd appears in *Bahá’í World* 2:274. Photos of the ‘Ishqábád Assembly and community appear in *Bahá’í World* 4:164, 299. Photos of the ‘Ishqábád *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár* appear in *Bahá’í World* 4:213, 215.

55. Photos of the boys’ and girls’ schools appear in *The Bahá’í Yearbook* 1:110, 116; and *The Bahá’í World* 2: 238, 245. Other photos of the schools appear in *Bahá’í World* 4:275 and *Bahá’í World* 5:479.

56. Meetings in Tashkánd were reported in *Star of the West*: “We have just received another interesting letter from Tashkand, Russian Turkestan, saying that many Russians have joined the Movement. The Bahá’is [*sic*] in public conferences have given irrefutable arguments that only true religion can bring real peace and joy to the troubled world today” (14.7 [October, 1923]: 215); “Well-known speakers were on the platform. Each spoke in turn. Some of the professors spoke on the Bahá’í teachings, the beauty of the historical facts of the movement; and some spoke against religion. At the end, Aga Ali Akbar Kamaloff spoke in detail upon the Bahá’í Movement and the value of the teachings of the Cause to all the different sects of the world. The talk was very useful and resulted well in the spreading of the Cause” (14.11 [February, 1924]: 346).

57. Z. Asgarzadeh had reported from London one month earlier that the Moscow Bahá’ís had been “offered a room in the Museum of Tolstoi for Bahá’í meetings and gatherings” (*Star of the West* 14.5 [August, 1923]: 154).

58. Sometime in the 1920s, the Bahá’ís of Turkistan presented a statement on the “aims and purpose of the Bahá’í Cause” to the heads of the Soviet government in Moscow, although the circumstances surrounding the presentation are not explained (Holley, “Survey of Current Bahá’í Activities,” *Bahá’í World* 2:31).

59. The closure of Bahá’í schools in ‘Ishqábád, Men’, and Qah Qahih from October, 1928, is detailed in *Bahá’í World* 5:37–40.

60. Reports from ‘Ishqábád suggested the Bahá’í youth had responded to the government crackdown by multiplying their activities, making it impossible for the authorities to conduct surveillance adequately (*Bahá’í World* 5:34).

61. Arsharuni also authored “Babizm i bekhaizm” (Babism and Bahá’ism), in the anthology *Islam* published by *Ateist*, 1931 (see Smirnov, *Islam and Russia*).

62. Kázim Zade was the father of Firuz Kazemzadeh, Yale University historian and member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States. A photograph of more than forty Moscow Bahá’ís appears in *The Bahá’í World* 2:166.

63. *Bahá’í World* 1930–1932, 1932–1934, and 1937–1938. *Bahá’í World* 1946–1950 (page 523) listed a Bahá’í group in Leningrad.

64. “In 1939, the Russian orientalist Mikhail Sergeevich Ivanov published his thesis... for the degree ‘Candidate in Historical Science’ (approximately a Ph.D.) *Babidskie vosstaniya v Irane* (1848–1852) [Bábi Uprisings in Iran 1848–1852]. The main part of the book sets out to describe the Bábi movement in terms of economic influences and Marxist–Leninist philosophy. Of more interest from the historical point of view is that the author had access to Russian Government records and has published in this book the relevant dispatches of Dolgorukov, the Russian Minister in Tihrán during the Bábi upheavals” (Momen, *Bábi and Bahá’í Religions* 56). See also Balyuzi, *The Bábi* 207. Thrower points out that Ivanov’s work was “one of the first attempts made by Soviet scholars at analysing ‘religions of protest’” (Thrower, *Marxist–Leninist “Scientific Atheism”* 448).

65. Undated or anonymous essays referred to by Smirnov include “Babizm i bekhaizm,” in *Zhizn’ Natsional’nostey* (1922); M. F. Akhundov, *Babidskiye ubezhdeniya* (Beliefs of the Babis); and Seid-Mekmedi Gulpagani (Kasymov), *Bekhaizm i sotsializm* (Bahá’ism and socialism).

66. In his essay “The Golden Age of the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh,” completed 21 March 1932, Shoghi Effendi referred to the “successful intervention” of the American Bahá’í community “on behalf of their persecuted fellow-workers in Russia (*The World Order* 53).

67. “We have also had some of our dear friends from Ishqabad among them Mirza Hussein Ali and his son Mr. Neyru. Their account of the suffering and imprisonment of many Bahá’ís in Russian Turkistan in which Ishqabad is situated was heart-rending and some of them were released from prison on the express condition of their leaving the country entirely. We are extremely grieved to learn of the unhappy conditions, which are in some cases desperate, in which they live and we cannot but remember the day when through their self-sacrifice they were the first to build a Bahá’í Temple throughout the world” (“Circular Letter from Assembly of Haifa,” *Bahá’í News* 43 [August, 1930]: 8).

68. Only one additional locality, Khawqand, appears to have been established in Turkistan in the subsequent decade.

69. See *The Bahá’í Faith and Marxism*. See also John Huddleston, “Marxism: A Bahá’í Perspective” and Nader Saiedi, “A Dialogue with Marxism.”

70. Shoghi Effendi to the Bahá’ís of ‘Ishqábád, 2 January 1930, quoted in the message of the Universal House of Justice to the Moscow Conference, 21 November 1990, *Australian Bahá’í Bulletin* (March, 1991): 4.

71. The National Spiritual Assemblies of Caucasus and Turkistan are listed in *Bahá’í World* for 1936–1938, but not for 1938–1940.

72. A photograph of the dome of the ‘Ishqábád Mashriq’l-Adhkár appears in *Bahá’í World* 6: 404, together with a photograph of the dome of the Wilmette Mashriq’l-Adhkár. On page 412, the interior ornamentation of ‘Ishqábád’s Mashriq’l-Adhkár is shown, and on page 415, an exterior view. The Mashriq’l-Adhkár was damaged during an earthquake in 1948 and completely demolished in 1963. See message of the Universal House of Justice of 25 August 1963, *Bahá’í News* 391 (October, 1963): 2.

73. A report in *Bahá’í News* stated: “The National Spiritual Assembly has learned with deep grief of the sufferings of the Bahá’í communities in Turkistan and Caucasus. Some years ago their Assemblies and Committees were dissolved, as reported at the time, and their literature and records confiscated. At present many of the friends have been imprisoned, including women, and some have died in incarceration, while the majority have been deported to Irán and a few to Siberia, Bahá’í activities and teaching are forbidden. The American Bahá’ís can assist at this time only through such contributions as the National Assembly may find it possible to offer for the relief of the Bahá’í refugees within Iran. As evidence of the unbroken and unbreakable solidarity of the believers throughout the world, it is hoped that sums adequate to the importance of the case, and commensurate with the number of those in want, may from time to time be dispatched with the love of the American friends. A contribution in the amount of one hundred pounds sterling for the relief of these believers was recently cabled to the Guardian as a donation from the American Bahá’ís through the National Spiritual Assembly” (“Sufferings of the Believers in Turkistan and Caucasus,” *Bahá’í News* 130 [October, 1939]: 2).

74. The 1938–39 Annual Report of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Irán said of the situation in the Caucasus: “... recent news is that throughout all that region Spiritual Assemblies and all administrative institutions have, as a result of terrific pressure from the Government, been done away with, and the Hazírat’ul-Quds have been taken over. Only in Bákú is there a Spiritual Assembly, and the Hazírat’ul-Quds there is in the hands of the Friends. The membership of the Bákú Assembly has in two years been elected three times, for this reason, that the first members were all arrested and exiled to Siberia, whereupon the Friends elected nine more believers and these too were seized and exiled. The third group to be elected, now serving on the Assembly, are mostly women. The Friends there are suffering terribly from lack of the means of livelihood and every sort of hardship, and they assist one another like members of one household” (*Bahá’í World* 8:18 1). The *Bahá’í World* 1944–46 lists Bahá’í communities in Bákú (Caucasus), Leningrad (Russia), and ‘Ishqábád (Turkistan) (10: 552, 559); see also *The Bahá’í World* 11: 520. Bennigsen and Queluejay, in pointing out that the USSR’s 1959 census included 21,000 Iranian Muslims, noted that “The ‘Iranians’ include the small colonies in Baku and Ashkhabad (Bahá’ís), as well as the *Iranis* of Bukhara and Samarkand and some immigrants from Persia” (*Evolution* 39).

75. In 1934, Martha Root visited Lithuania from 28 June to 3 July. Her notebook of this visit indicates that she made a third visit, in November, 1935 (U.S. National Bahá’í Archives. Martha Root Papers. 11/1–2 Finland and Baltic States).

76. Shoghi Effendi noted Miss Root’s interview with the Lithuanian Foreign Minister in *God Passes By* 388.

77. Salcius Mata, “Svecuose Pas 40 Tautu” (A guest of forty nations), vol. 2, chap. “The Bahá’í Sanctuary” 3: 174–77, chap. “Impressions of Bahá’ís in Hamadán and Tihrán.” 1935.

78. “Unaware that Babism and Baháism were two entirely different doctrines, Bakulin tried to prove that the murder of Shah Nasreddin could not have been the work of the Babis. After Bakulin’s death, Zhukovskiy collated and edited the material which Bakulin had collected on Baháism and which included a supposed autograph letter written by Kurret-al-Ain” (Smirnov, *Islam and Russia* 35).

79. Smirnov describes A. M. Arsharuni's brochure *Bahá'ism* (Moscow, 1930) as containing "a chapter on the pretensions of Bahá'ism to contain the essentials of Socialist doctrine; the author went 'too far' in his attempts to find a revolutionary note in some Bahaist slogans." I. Darov's *Bahá'ism—A new religion of the East* is "an examination of the speeches and letters of 'Abdu'l-Bahá," which concludes that "between Socialism and Bahá'ism there lies the same difference as between Socialism and Capitalism." Of Ivanov's work, *The Babi uprisings in Iran (1848–1852)*, Smirnov judges that too much is made of Bábí support among the peasantry, as opposed to support from merchants and traders (*Islam and Russia* 54).

80. See Shoghi Effendi's cables to the Bahá'í world of April, 1956, and April, 1957: "A determined effort must be made to insure, as speedily as possible.... the opening of the six Republics of the Soviet Union and the five territories included within the Soviet Orbit.... In particular a determined effort must be made, now that no less than nine of the fifteen republics constituting the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics are included within the pale of the Faith, and especially by those Bahá'í communities situated on the periphery of this vast territory, to establish a nucleus, however small, in each of the six remaining republics, all of which are now confined to the European continent, as well as in each of the two islands and of the three satellites included within the Soviet Orbit, thereby decisively contributing to the consummation of one of the most challenging objectives of this world-embracing Crusade" *Messages to the Bahá'í World* 99, 117, 119).

81. Armenians had become Bahá'ís in Egypt, although there is no indication of whether they were in contact with their homeland. See Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 302.

82. Consisting of the regions Bashkiria, Boryat Mongolia, Chuvashi, Daghestan, Karbardinia, Komi, Marü, Mordovia, N. Ossetia, Tatarstan, Udmurt, and Yakutia.

83. Communication from Research Department, Universal House of Justice, 24 December 1991.

84. The task of opening the Sakhalin Islands had been given to the Regional Spiritual Assembly of North East Asia in the Nine-Year Plan, 1964–73.

85. *Bahá'í World* 12:265–66.

86. Based on lists published in *Bahá'í World* 13:462–64.

87. *Seven Year Plan Ridván 1986*. By 1986, there was one locality in Estonia (under Finland). In territories allocated to Germany, localities established by 1986 included Armenia (1), Azerbaijan (1), Georgia (1), Moldavia (1), and Russian SFSR (5).

88. A teaching conference was held for the first time in Moscow 8–9 December 1990. The message sent it by the Universal House of Justice is reproduced in *The American Bahá'í* 22:2 (February, 1991): 1, 4.

89. Universal House of Justice cable 12 November 1990, *Australian Bahá'í Bulletin* (December 1990): 3. A local spiritual assembly was re-established at 'Ishqábád in 1989.

90. Shoghi Effendi to the believers in 'Ishqábád, 11 January 1923, quoted by the Universal House of Justice in their message to the Moscow conference, 21 November, 1990, *Australian Bahá'í Bulletin* (March 1991): 3.

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