

THE DESTINY OF AMERICA

SHOHI EFFENDI

THE creative energies, mysteriously generated by the first stirrings of the embryonic World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, have, as soon as released within a nation destined to become its cradle and champion, endowed that nation with the worthiness, and invested it with the powers and capacities, and equipped it spiritually, to play the part foreshadowed in these prophetic words.¹ The potencies which this God-given mission has infused into its people are, on the one hand, beginning to be manifested through the conscious efforts and the nation-wide accomplishments, in both the teaching and administrative spheres of Bahá'í activity, of the organized community of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in the North American continent. These same potencies, apart from, yet collateral with these efforts and accomplishments, are, on the other hand, insensibly shaping,

under the impact of world political and economic forces, the destiny of that nation, and are influencing the lives and actions of both its government and its people.

To the efforts and accomplishments of those who, aware of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, are now laboring in that continent, to their present and future course of activity, I have, in the foregoing pages sufficiently referred. A word, if the destiny of the American people, in its entirety, is to be correctly apprehended, should now be said regarding the orientation of that nation as a whole, and the trend of the affairs of its people. For no matter how ignorant of the Source from which those directing energies proceed, and however slow and laborious the process, it is becoming increasingly evident that the nation as a whole, whether through the agency of its government or otherwise, is gravitating, under the influence of forces that it can neither comprehend nor control, towards such associations and policies, wherein, as indicated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, her true destiny must lie. Both the community of the American believers, who are aware of that Source, and the great mass of their countrymen, who have not as

¹"May this American Democracy be the first nation to establish the foundation of international agreement. May it be the first nation to proclaim the unity of mankind. May it be the first to unfurl the Standard of the Most Great Peace." And again: "The American people are indeed worthy of being the first to build the Tabernacle of the Great Peace, and proclaim the oneness of mankind. . . . For America hath developed powers and capacities greater and more wonderful than other nations. . . . The American nation is equipped and empowered to accomplish that which will adorn the pages of history, to become the envy of the world, and be blest in both the East and the West for the triumph of its people. . . . The American continent gives signs and evidences of very great advancement. Its future is even more promising, for its influence and illumination are far-reaching. It will lead all nations spiritually."

yet recognized the Hand that directs their destiny, are contributing, each in its own way, to the realization of the hopes, and the fulfillment of the promises, voiced in the . . . words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

The world is moving on. Its events are unfolding ominously and with bewildering rapidity. The whirlwind of its passions is swift and alarmingly violent. The New World is being insensibly drawn into its vortex. The potential storm centers of the earth are already casting their shadows upon its shores. Dangers, undreamt of and unpredictable, threaten it both from within and from without. Its governments and peoples are being gradually enmeshed in the coils of the world's recurrent crises and fierce controversies. The Atlantic and Pacific Oceans are, with every acceleration in the march of science, steadily shrinking into mere channels. The Great Republic of the West finds itself particularly and increasingly involved. Distant rumblings echo menacingly in the ebullitions of its people. On its flanks are ranged the potential storm centers of the European continent and of the Far East. On its southern horizon there looms what might conceivably develop into another center of agitation and danger. The world is contracting into a neighborhood. America, willingly or unwillingly, must face and grapple with this new situation. For purposes of national security, she must assume the obligations imposed by this newly created neighborhood. Paradoxical as it may

seem, her only hope of extricating herself from the perils gathering around her is to become entangled in that very web of international association which the Hand of an inscrutable Providence is weaving. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's counsel to a highly placed official in its government comes to mind, with peculiar appropriateness and force. *"You can best serve your country if you strive, in your capacity as a citizen of the world, to assist in the eventual application of the principle of federalism, underlying the government of your own country, to the relationships now existing between the peoples and nations of the world."* The ideals that fired the imagination of America's tragically unappreciated President, whose high endeavors, however much nullified by a visionless generation, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, through His own pen, acclaimed as signaling the dawn of the Most Great Peace, though now lying in the dust, bitterly reproach a heedless generation for having so cruelly abandoned them.

That the world is beset with perils, that dangers are now accumulating and are actually threatening the American nation, no clear-eyed observer can possibly deny. The earth is now transformed into an armed camp. As much as fifty million men are either under arms or in reserve. No less than the sum of three billion pounds is being spent, in one year, on its armaments. The light of religion is dimmed and moral authority disintegrating. The nations of the world have, for the most part, fallen a prey to battling

ideologies that threaten to disrupt the very foundations of their dearly-won political unity. Agitated multitudes in these countries see them with discontent, are armed to the teeth, are stampeded with fear, and groan beneath the yoke of tribulations engendered by political strife, racial fanaticism, national hatreds, and religious animosities. *"The winds of despair,"* Bahá'u'lláh has unmistakably affirmed, *"are, alas, blowing from every direction, and the strife that divides and afflicts the human race is daily increasing. The signs of impending convulsions and chaos can now be discerned. . . ."* *"The ills,"* 'Abdu'l-Bahá, writing as far back as two decades ago, has prophesied, *"from which the world now suffers will multiply; the gloom which envelops it will deepen. The Balkans will remain discontented. Its restlessness will increase. The vanquished Powers will continue to agitate. They will resort to every measure that may rekindle the flame of war. Movements, newly-born and world-wide in their range, will exert their utmost for the advancement of their designs. The Movement of the Left will acquire great importance. Its influence will spread."* As to the American nation itself, the voice of its own President, emphatic and clear, warns his people that a possible attack upon their country has been brought infinitely closer by the development of aircraft and by other factors. Its Secretary of State, addressing at a recent Conference the assembled representatives of all the

American Republics, utters no less ominous a warning. "These resurgent forces loom threateningly throughout the world—their ominous shadow falls athwart our own Hemisphere." As to its Press, the same note of warning and of alarm at an approaching danger is struck. "We must be prepared to defend ourselves both from within and without. . . . Our defensive frontier is long. It reaches from Alaska's Point Barrow to Cape Horn, and ranges the Atlantic and the Pacific. When or where Europe's and Asia's aggressors may strike at us no one can say. It could be anywhere, any time. . . . We have no option save to go armed ourselves. . . . We must mount vigilant guard over the Western Hemisphere."

The distance that the American nation has traveled since its formal and categorical repudiation of the Wilsonian ideal, the changes that have unexpectedly overtaken it in recent years, the direction in which world events are moving, with their inevitable impact on the policies and the economy of that nation, are to every Bahá'í observer, viewing the developments in the international situation, in the light of the prophecies of both Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, most significant, and highly instructive and encouraging. To trace the exact course which, in these troubled times and pregnant years, this nation will follow would be impossible. We can only, judging from the direction its affairs are now taking, anticipate the course she will most likely choose to pursue in her relationships with

both the Republics of America and the countries of the remaining continents.

A closer association with these Republics, on the one hand, and an increased participation, in varying degrees, on the other, in the affairs of the whole world, as a result of recurrent international crises, appear as the most likely developments which the future has in store for that country. Delays must inevitably arise, setbacks must be suffered, in the course of that country's evolution towards its ultimate destiny. Nothing, however, can alter eventually that course, ordained for it by the unerring pen of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Its federal unity having already been achieved and its internal institutions consolidated—a stage that marked its coming of age as a political entity—its further evolution, as a member of the family of nations, must, under circumstances that cannot at present be visualized, steadily continue. Such an evolution must persist until such time when that nation will, through the active and decisive part it will have played in the organization and the peaceful settlement of the affairs of mankind, have attained the plenitude of its powers and functions as an outstanding member, and component part, of a federated world.

The immediate future must, as a result of this steady, this gradual, and inevitable absorption in the manifold perplexities and problems afflicting humanity, be dark and oppressive for that nation. The world shaking ordeal which Bahá'u'lláh,

as quoted in the foregoing pages, has so graphically prophesied, may find it swept, to an unprecedented degree, into its vortex. Out of it it will probably emerge, unlike its reactions to the last world conflict, consciously determined to seize its opportunity, to bring the full weight of its influence to bear upon the gigantic problems that such an ordeal must leave in its wake, and to exorcise forever, in conjunction with its sister nations of both the East and the West, the greatest curse which, from time immemorial, has afflicted and degraded the human race.

Then, and only then, will the American nation, molded and purified in the crucible of a common war, inured to its rigors, and disciplined by its lessons, be in a position to raise its voice in the councils of the nations, itself lay the corner-stone of a universal and enduring peace, proclaim the solidarity, the unity, and maturity of mankind, and assist in the establishment of the promised reign of righteousness on earth. Then, and only then, will the American nation, while the community of the American believers within its heart is consummating its divinely-appointed mission, be able to fulfill the unspeakably glorious destiny ordained for it by the Almighty, and immortally enshrined in the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Then, and only then, will the American nation accomplish "*that which will adorn the pages of history*," "*become the envy of the world and be blest in both the East and the West*."