

Waging Peace in the Midst of War



As we have already seen, [during World War I Abdu'l Baha wrote a series of letters to the Baha'is of North America](#). While the world was waging war, Abdu'l Baha was waging peace. This is the first of a series of articles with the aim of placing these letters in the context of events occurring in the war about the time the letters were being written. The letters could not be delivered until after the war.

26 March 1916

On this day allied delegates were arriving in Paris for an allied conference. The French government, which had convened the meeting, wished to ensure that no government would separately conclude peace with Germany and that severe war indemnities would be imposed on the central powers after the war. The killing had not yet ended and the seeds of World War II were already being planted. By March 1916 the casualties of World War I were already reaching tens of millions.

... to the Bahá'ís of the Northeastern States

26 March 1916

O ye heavenly heralds:

These are the days of Naw-Rúz [the Baha'i new year]. I am always thinking of those kind friends! I beg for each and all of you confirmations and assistance from the threshold of oneness, so that those gatherings may become ignited like unto candles, in the republics of America, enkindling the light of the love of God in the hearts; thus the rays of the heavenly teachings may begem and brighten the states of America like the infinitude of immensity with the stars of the Most Great Guidance. ... God says in the glorious Qur'án: "The soil was black and dried. Then we caused the rain to descend upon it and immediately it became green, verdant, and every kind of plant sprouted up luxuriantly." In other words, He says the earth is black, but when the spring showers descend upon it that black soil is quickened, and variegated flowers are pushed forth. This means the souls of humanity belonging to the world of nature are black like unto the soil. But when the heavenly outpourings descend and the radiant effulgences appear, the hearts are resuscitated, are liberated from the darkness of nature and the flowers of divine mysteries grow and become luxuriant. Consequently man must become the cause of the illumination of the world of humanity and propagate the holy teachings revealed in the sacred books through the divine inspiration. ... Now you must become heavenly farmers and scatter pure seeds in the prepared soil. The harvest of every other seed is limited, but the bounty and the blessing of the seed of the divine teachings is unlimited. Throughout the coming centuries and cycles many harvests will be gathered. ...[\[1\]](#)

27 March 1916

The allied conference opened in Paris. Two lines of German trenches in Ypres were captured. Germans conduct air raid on Salonika. The Russians crossed a river in Armenia. The work of death continued.

... to the Bahá'ís of the Southern States

O ye heralds of the Kingdom of God:

... because these days are the days of Naw-Rúz, you have come to my mind and I am sending you this greeting for this glorious feast... In reality every day which man passes in the mention of God, the diffusion of the fragrances of God and calling the people to the Kingdom of God, that day

is his feast. Praise be to God that you are occupied in the service of the Kingdom of God and are engaged in the promulgation of the religion of God by day and by night. Therefore all your days are feast days.

... you must either go yourselves or send a number of blessed souls to those states, so that they may guide the people to the Kingdom of Heaven.

... A person declaring the glad tidings of the appearance of the realities and significances of the Kingdom is like unto a farmer who scatters pure seeds in the rich soil. ... Appreciate ye the value of this time and be ye engaged in the sowing of the seeds, so that you may find the heavenly blessing and the lordly bestowal.[2]

29 March 1916

The battle of Verdun was raging in France. It had begun in February and was to last 303 days. This one battle consumed almost a million lives. On the 28th and 29th of March, the battle moved back and forth across a short stretch of land.

... to the Bahá'ís of the Central States

29 March 1916

O ye heavenly souls, O ye spiritual assemblies, O ye lordly meetings:

For some time past correspondence has been delayed, and this has been on account of the difficulty of mailing and receiving letters. But ... I am engaged in writing you this brief epistle so that my heart and soul may obtain joy and fragrance through the remembrance of the friends. ... You are always in my thoughts. You are not nor shall you ever be forgotten. ...

... if it is possible, send to those parts teachers who are severed from all else save God, sanctified and pure. If these teachers be in the utmost state of attraction, in a short time great results will be forthcoming. The sons and daughters of the kingdom are like unto the real farmers. Through whichever state or country they pass they display self-sacrifice and sow divine seeds. From that seed harvests are produced. On this subject it is revealed in the glorious Gospel: When the pure seeds are scattered in the good ground heavenly blessing and benediction is obtained. ...[3]

1 April 1916

During March almost 79000 tonnes of shipping were sunk, with the associated loss of life and resources and the hindrance of international communication. On 29 March, a Zeppelin had raided the eastern coast of Britain. On 2 April there was another raid. These raids were not the first. They were a foretaste of the horrific aerial bombardment of World War 2 that would destroy hundreds of cities.

...to the Bahá'ís of the Western States

1 April 1916

O ye sons and daughters of the Kingdom:

... God says in the great Qur'án: "Verily God is the helper of those who have believed. He will lead them from darkness into light." ... It is also recorded in the blessed Gospel: Travel ye throughout the world and call ye the people to the Kingdom of God. Now this is the time that you may arise and perform this most great service ... Thus ... the rays of peace and conciliation may illumine and enlighten all the regions and the world of humanity may find peace and composure.

During my stay in America I cried out in every meeting and summoned the people to the propagation of the ideals of universal peace. I said plainly that the continent of Europe had become like unto an arsenal and its conflagration was dependent upon one spark, and that in the coming years, or within two years, all that which is recorded in the Revelation of John and the Book of Daniel would become fulfilled and come to pass. ...[\[4\]](#)

Selected References:

[Timelines of casualties in World War 1](#)

[A multimedia history of world war 1](#)

Image: French 87th Regiment Cote 34 Verdun 1916

(This article is the 121st in a series of what I hope will be 200 articles in 200 days for the 200th anniversary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh. The anniversary is being celebrated around the world on 21 and 22 October 2017,

The articles are simply my personal reflections on Bahá'u'lláh's life and work. Any errors or inadequacies in these articles are solely my responsibility.)