On 9 January 1951, Shoghi Effendi issued the one and only Proclamation of his ministry. As this Proclamation was dispatched in cablegram form and even though it opened with the words "Proclaim to National Assemblies of East and West weighty epoch-making decision of formation of the first International Bahá’í Council . . ." subsequent events would prove that it was never recognized as such, not only by the National Assemblies to which this Proclamation was significantly addressed but by the entire Bahá’í world as well, in spite of the superlative and unprecedented terms used by Shoghi Effendi to describe this "historic" decision. The inquirer is urged to read the entire Proclamation that can be found in the Home Page of the Orthodox Bahá’í Faith or in a book embodying Shoghi Effendi’s messages to the Bahá’í World during the period 1950 to 1957. The following excerpts will suffice to indicate why Shoghi Effendi announced this decision in a Proclamation:

• “. . . this historic decision marking most significant milestone in the evolution of the Administrative Order of the
Faith of Bahá’u’lláh in the course of the last thirty years” [i.e. since the Ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá]

- “Hail with thankful joyous heart at last the constitution of International Council which history will acclaim as the greatest event shedding lustre upon the second epoch of the Formative Age of the Baha’í Dispensation potentially unsurpassed by any enterprise undertaken since the inception of the Administrative Order on morrow of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Ascension, ranking second only to the glorious immortal events associated with the Three Central Figures of the Faith...”

In this Proclamation Shoghi Effendi stated that one of the developments that induced him to make this historic decision to constitute the International Council was the “present adequate maturity of nine vigorously functioning national administrative institutions [i.e. National Spiritual Assemblies] throughout the Baha’í World.” With this maturity these now “vigorously functioning” national administrative bodies were prepared for the International Bahá’í Council, as the embryonic Universal House of Justice and therefore the supreme International legislative Organ of the Bahá’í Administrative Order, to exercise administrative jurisdiction over them and in the Council’s second stage of development as the International Bahá’í Court (as outlined by Shoghi Effendi) this Supreme Court would be exercising judicial jurisdiction over those Assemblies that had become National Bahá’í Courts in the six countries of the Islamic East that had been identified by Shoghi Effendi where application of the Laws of the Aqdas over the believers resident in those countries would be possible. (authority having been requested and granted by the respective governments to do so)
Because the International Bahá'í Council, in its embryonic stage, was never activated as a functioning body under the Presidency of Mason Remey whose appointment to this supreme Office by Shoghi Effendi had been announced in his message of 2 March 1952 and this Institution had been scrupulously and purposely kept in an embryonic inactive stage by Shoghi Effendi during the remaining years his ministry, (even a liaison officer being appointed by him between the Council and himself to preclude any semblance of the assumption of the Presidency) the Bahá'í world and particularly the National Spiritual Assemblies obviously failed to realize that Shoghi Effendi had, in fact, established the Universal House of Justice identified in its first stage of development as the International Bahá'í Council. (just as National Spiritual Assemblies will develop into Courts and finally National Houses of Justice) As future events would prove, the Hands of the Cause treated the International Council as a provisional or temporary body even though Shoghi Effendi had clearly identified it in his Proclamation as a “NASCENT INSTITUTION.”

Upon the passing of Shoghi Effendi and the failure of the twenty seven Hands of the Cause and the Bahá'í world to reconsider the momentous implications that were to be found in Shoghi Effendi’s Proclamation establishing the International Council with its President appointed by him and to realize that if this Institution were to emerge from the inactive embryonic state in which it had been carefully maintained by Shoghi Effendi and permitted to then become an actively functioning body exercising jurisdiction over the nine National Spiritual Assemblies of the Bahá'í World as envisaged by Shoghi Effendi, the formerly embryonic Head of this embryonic body appointed by Shoghi Effendi and now the active President of an actively functioning Universal House of Justice –
with the temporary appellation of International Council – could be none other than the second Guardian of the Faith chosen by Shoghi Effendi – Guardianship and the “sacred head” of this Institution being synonymous terms – and faithfully appointed by him as his successor “in his own lifetime” as called for under the provisions of the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Tragically, the International Council was never permitted by the Hands to assume its rightful active role as the supreme legislative institution of the Faith as delineated in the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá -- the Charter of the World Order of Bahá’u’lláh – Had it been permitted to do so, they may have recognized that Shoghi Effendi had appointed his successor as explained above. Instead, the International Council was relegated by them to an insignificant role while they blatantly usurped authority for directing the worldwide affairs of the Faith by choosing a body of nine Hands from their number who they designated as the “Custodians of the Faith” with its seat in Haifa, an illicitly formed organization completely outside the provisions of the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. They therefore ignored the fact that the Universal House of Justice had already been established by Shoghi Effendi, albeit in its embryonic form, in 1951 and that he had designated specific intermediary stages through which this body should develop before becoming the Universal House of Justice in its final form, its second stage as the International Court being an “essential prelude” (as outlined in his message of 25 April 1951) to its development, as well as a third stage before “its efflorescence into the Universal House of Justice” in its final stage of development. In their ultimate display of the woeful way in which they blindly and ignominiously ignored what Shoghi Effendi had clearly proclaimed in his Proclamation of 9 January 1951, the Hands of the Cause announced that a sans-Guardian Universal
House of Justice would be elected at Ridván 1963 at which time their organization of “Custodians of the Faith” in Haifa would cease to exist.

If yet further corroboration is desired that Shoghi Effendi had, in fact, established the Universal House of Justice, one need only refer to his cablegram of 30 June 1952 in which he stated that "at long last the MACHINERY of its HIGHEST INSTITUTIONS HAS BEEN ERECTED, and around whose most holy shrines the SUPREME ORGANS of its unfolding Order, are in THEIR EMBRYONIC FORM unfolding . . . " the other EMBRYONIC institution referred to in this cablegram being the first contingent of the HANDS OF THE CAUSE appointed on 24 December 1951, an act which he stated in this same cablegram had "paralleled the preliminary measure of the formation of the International Bahá’í Council . . . "

As it is incontestable from the foregoing that Shoghi Effendi established the Universal House of Justice on 9 January 1951, one may ask why he never convened this body under his Presidency during the remaining six years of his ministry? The answer lies in the fact that he was aware that his ministry would soon be drawing to a close and he was faced with the necessity of appointing his successor. If he had openly revealed to the Bahá’í world that the one whom he had chosen to succeed him – Mason Remey – was a man some 25 years older than himself it would have been obvious that he knew that his passing was near at hand. Such a prediction would have been incredulous to the believers and would certainly have caused consternation and turmoil in the Bahá’í world. He chose therefore to conceal this fact by using the embryonic body of the Universal House of Justice as an instrument for the appointment of an embryonic head who at such time as the
Universal House of Justice emerged from its inactive state into an actively functioning body, this embryonic head would then become the active Head presiding over this supreme legislative body of the Faith, a function that can only be exercised by the Guardian of the Faith under the terms of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Little did he realize perhaps that, following his passing, the faith of the Hands and the vast majority of the believers in the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh would prove to be so weak and their misconceptions and misunderstandings concerning the provisions of the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá – the sacred Child of that Covenant – so profound that they would so quickly and shamefully abandon the Guardianship when they failed to find a testamentary document left by Shoghi Effendi appointing his successor.

Joel Bray Marangella

Third Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith

Note: Emphasis has been added throughout.