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THE ARCHIVE OF
NICHOLAS
ROERICH
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IN TUNE WITH THE INFINITE.

By Courtesy of the Artist

NICHOLAS ROERICH

IN DEFENCE OF ART

NICHOLAS ROERICH

"Humanity is facing the coming events of cosmic greatness. Humanity already realizes that all occurrences are not accidental. The time for the construction of future culture is at hand. Before our eyes the revaluation of values is being witnessed. Amidst ruins of valueless banknotes, mankind has found the real value of the world's significance. The values of great art are victoriously traversing all storms of earthly commotions. Even the EARTHLY people already understand the vital importance of active beauty. And when we proclaim: Love, Beauty and Action, we know verily that we pronounce the formula of the international language. And this formula, which now belongs to the museum and the stage, must enter every-day life. The sign of beauty will open all sacred gates. Beneath the sign of beauty we walk joyfully. With beauty we conquer. Through beauty we pray. In beauty we are united. And now we affirm these words—not on the snowy heights, but amidst the turmoil of the city. And realizing the path of true reality, we greet with a happy smile the future."

THUS we addressed cultural units fifteen years ago. And still earlier, thirty years ago we sent out our first plea for the protection of cultural treasures. And these three decades not only did not lessen the imperative-ness of this call, but many ineffaceably tragic events have since but proved the indeferrability of this S. O. S. Has during these three decades the safety of artistic and scientific values been affirmed? On the contrary, the planet has witnessed horrible vandalism which leaves in the history of humanity a most deplorable page. Many phases of life have been hastened during these decades, but has the veneration for the artist and the scientist and other cultural workers increased?

Has the life of the young artist become less burdensome? Has public opinion amidst the many disputes and discussions about prices in the domain of art, learned to appreciate the real value of artistic creations? If the public opinion of all countries would have come to the defence of art and science, we would not hear of those cruelties and vandalisms which fill the newspapers to-day.

If the monuments of art and science are testimonies to the level of national dignity then the public opinion of the entire world should stand on vigil in order that these unique treasures may not be violated. If from the remotest ages we hear of horrible destructions, now that mankind pretends that it has become more civilized, how much more reason there is to see that such gloomy pages of history should under no circumstances be repeated? All cultural and ethical strivings should be directed to prevent such atrocities occurring again. Evolution is not senseless destruction but constructiveness in the widest sense of this concept.

It is sad to receive from everywhere expressions of horror and despair. Only yesterday we had occasion to write to a friend in distress:

"You write about the Banner of Peace: 'what is the use of it, when you have to deal with savages—with people who do not respect their own signature and who cannot trust or be trusted?' It is strange how this reminds one of similar questions made over half a century ago at the time when the noble Dunant promulgated the great idea of the Red Cross. As you know, this panhuman ideal took over seventeen years until realized universally. While beginning our movement, we of course studied the history of the Red Cross and met with much scoffing, negation and ridicule; yet the benevolent humanitarian idea has triumphed and no one will say to-day that the idea of the Red Cross is useless. You write that the idea of protection of cultural treasures is a vague one. From our entire activity you know that by nature we are against every form of vagueness and uncertainty. I know thoroughly the value of intro-

IN DEFENCE OF ART

ducing into life a firm stimulus for the defence of human dignity, and as an educator I can affirm that students from young years were most anxious to guard their national treasures. Without any vagueness, these constructive principles should be upheld. The question of preservation of treasures of art and science remains indisputable. I fully understand the nervous tone of your letter, for when we are facing brutal destructions one cannot remain unperturbed and especially such a sensitive lover and connoisseur of art as you must become indignant. Already since 1903, I have been ardently working for the defence of art and science and no amount of scepticism and scoffing can convince me that this work is not necessary. And the more brutal circumstances become, the more imperative is every effort to preserve the best treasures of humanity. Already, twenty-one countries have signed the Pact of the Banner of Peace."

How many similar calls one has to send out into space! And in all these discussions it becomes clear that the main distress and error

lies in the fact that the real cultural forces are widely scattered and do not find a common meeting ground on which they could powerfully and unitedly affirm their righteous judgment. Every one in his own sphere can help. Everyone can speak to the younger generation about their beautiful duty.

The heart of woman in all its vigilance and sensitiveness can from every hearth send a message in defence of the most sacred treasures of the human spirit.

Innumerable are the ways of affirmation of culture ; and it is especially dear to me to pronounce these words in a country where since the ancient times of the Rigvedas the most magnificent ordainments of Beauty and Wisdom were manifested.

Help at every hour of the day! Help in all your labours! Help from the depth of your heart—for without love there can be no help. In helping the smallest you venerate the Highest.

"On all paths to Me, I shall meet thee!"

Help! Help! Help!