



SIBERIA

DIARY LEAVES

By NICHOLAS ROERICH

To all Siberian friends ! To all sons of Siberia, hearty greetings !

When we last sailed upon the rapids of Irtysh, a diamond-cutter said to us: "Here drowned our Yermak Timofeevitch. Or rather, he did not drown, but his armour was too heavy for him, and it dragged our valiant knight down." In the eyes of a Siberian, Yermak did not drown. A valiant knight could not drown.

In Kirlyk, on the road to Ouimon, a Shaman spoke to us about benevolent Oirot, messenger of the White Burkhan. Oirot appears upon a white horse and proclaims, "Sain galabyn suduri"—a sign of the good era ! But the old man, an Old Believer, smiled: "But this is not Oirot at all, but Yermak Timofeevitch who animates our land. It is he who guards over the Stone."

The Stone ! And the entire country is a great stone, a precious adamant ! Will it be the site of Tigeretz ? Or Ak-kem ? Or Karagai ? Or Studenetz ? Just the same, it is the stone.

And the ancient wisdom carried over to Siberia—the precious mountains Sumir, Subur, Sumbir, Sumeru. There, "the blacksmith forges the destiny of humanity upon the silvery mountains." White is the snow and white is the silver of Belukha, the mother herself. And the multi-coloured grass is much taller than the horseman. And everything sounds with Belovodye. Verily a Zvenigorod. So it shall be.

"Between Irtysh and Argun ; through the Gobi ; through the salt lakes, through Kokoushi ; through Bogogorshe, over the Ergor itself comes a rider."

"The Siberian paths are not small. Great is their dream. Great is that, which is predestined to them. The land of the White Burkhan, the land of the good Oirot. The land of Sambatyon. The land of the Subterranean Tehud. The land of the blacksmiths from Kurumchi, who shod the horses of all great travellers from the East to the West.

Can one recall Yermak Timofeevitch, without remembering Siberia itself ? According to the sweep of the Siberian paths, also is measured the path of Yermak, who transformed legend into life.

And the banner of Yermak in the Cathedral of Omsk of course, carries upon it the image of St. George. Upon the same White Horse, in an eternal armour, the Holy warrior guided Yermak through many rapids, making the unattainable possible.

It would be strange to speak about the universal significance of Siberia. It is familiar to every school child. Strangers, looking over the map of Siberia only ask, "Are the dimensions correct ?" Thus the infiniteness of Siberia mystifies one ! Need we still speak about its semi-precious stones, and mines, discovered and still undiscovered ; written about or still undescribed ? Or speak about forests, cattle-breeding, gold mines, or the soil ? Need we cite vast quantities and dimensions, which even then do not correspond to reality ?

Today it is permissible not to calculate nor to rationalize, not to dissect with earthly measures but commandingly to celebrate the great occasion, commandingly to set aside all divisions and come together in memory of the great spirit, who did not fear, who

did not become petty, but who gave us a great and constructively sounding call.

Just as the bells of Zvenigorod, as the holy sites of Kitej, call us and purify us and command us to walk towards progress, so also let this day witness the oath of benevolent constructiveness.

We cannot but mention today also the Holy Guardian of all strongholds of Kitej, of all the monasteries of the Spirit, the Blessed St. Sergius. The very infinitude of Siberia brings close today all the warriors of heroic achievement, enlightenment and unbreakable valour.

Let us celebrate the day of Russian victories. Let us remember joyfully that through all Siberian spaces Russian achievement resounds with untiring vigour. Joy is not often predestined. Many things try to cloud the predestined spaces. Not every armour fitted the powerful shoulders of Bogotyz. But he found himself a sword, a banner and a spear, because he desired to find them. Russian heart pointed out the path to him, because the heart knows the defined paths.

It is accidental that the dates recall to us the Victory? Does that word not provide us with one more measure for constructiveness and for all achievements—quests for Bliss? Because for labour fortifications are being sent us which are invisible only to the blind!

If today we would become illuminated by the bliss of co-operation, would that not become a veritable festival? And could one not, amidst streams of tears, rejoice at an heroic deed?

It is not to discover Siberia—one cannot discover that which has been

discovered—but for a festival that we have gathered today. Let this powerful festival suffice all the young hearts with the tremor of heroic deed, with the passion for constructiveness and the pledge of co-operation. At least on memorable festive days, let us remember about friendliness, about mutual labour.

At present, when the universal difficulties are first of all thrust against culture, against all educational possibilities, let us find in our hearts the strength to be together, to be friendly and to think of the great and the glorious. The measure of divisions is overfilled; the Siberian spaces recall the virginity of labour. When shall we remember about virgin labour if not during a festival, which gives us counsel for constructiveness?

My late uncle associated with the University of Tomsk, Prof. Korkunoff, already in my childhood called me constantly to Altai. "Better come sooner," he wrote. "Anyhow you shall be in Altai." Verily it is so!

Then in 1919 rumours buried me in Siberia and a mass was given for me in the Cathedral of Yrkutsk. Even in such an unusual way the Great Siberia draws one.

I would wish to have been with you today, I would wish to have talked of the banner of Belukha; of Ergor itself. But from Asia I am sending to you, all my friends, my best greetings. The snows of Himalayas bear witness to the snowy peaks of Belukha. The cuckoos count the dates. The woodpecker repeats about indefatigability. And Saphet—the white horse—reminds us of the horses of Oirot, and Yermak and St. Egorius Himself. We celebrate this day with you all and beg for co-operation. Great is the heroic deed. A festival, a glorious festival of the Russian victory!