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THE SACRED SIGN OF PEACE.

By H. E. PROF. NICHOLAS ROERICH,
The Himalayas.

RECENTLY we deplored the destruction of paintings of Goya and of ancient church treasures in Spain as well as the perishing of temples in Russia since the revolution, then we heard of the burning of the valuable Shanghai Library and now we read in the newspapers that the presidential palace in Havanna was looted by a mob. Thus, besides war-destruction we notice continuous vandalism. Can one keep silent, knowing about such destructions? Can we admit that the future generation shall know that we negligently allowed barbarians to destroy that which can glorify the high culture of mankind? Our duty is to reiterate persistently the imperative need of safeguarding precious treasures from annihilation through crass ignorance. People give themselves little account what united measures should be undertaken to avoid the new saddest accusations against our present age.

Let us look into the essence of things and let us not be distracted by petty details. Usually just these trifles hinder the perception of actual facts. Our

banner dedicated to the protection of all true treasures of humanity is at present much discussed. There are many new proposals. Someone is against open manifestations—let it be so. Others do not like exhibitions, lectures and pilgrimages in connection with this idea. Someone states that one should but whisper about destructions which take place, as if we could hide such public shame. Others again say that not only culture but even civilization is endangered. And there are even voices suggesting the immediate construction of a new Noah's Ark. Is it possible that even civilization is already in danger?

Let us hope it is not so.

Someone suggests many new names for the banner, so long that it should contain all adjectives; but we know the danger of such long definitions when a short commanding S. O. S. should sound.

Someone suggests the sale of our banner everywhere for spreading it. Others again want to keep the banner and all considerations around it, in a hidden vault. Some want to see the sign of the

banner in the button-hole of every thinking man. Others want to hide it and expose it only during some new extraordinary mishap. Some consider the wide interest and inquiries about the banner as a most beneficial sign. But to others this seems for some inexplicable reason as a sign of extreme danger. Some consider that the banner should be applied only during war-time and preferably limited to Europe. Others justly affirm that the treasures of Egypt, Persia, India, Japan, China, both the Americas and of the whole world require immediately the same protection. Some think that the League of Nations is an organization which decides for the whole world, others point out that its jurisdiction does not even cover half the globe. Such is the diversity of opinions.

Some propose that during all international exhibitions this banner made up from flags of all nations should be shown. But others believe that even in private premises it is impossible to keep this banner, as it may hinder warfare. To some it appears as a threatening sign of impotent "pacifism." To others the banner appears as a glorious defence of the dignity of mankind. Some regard it undeferrable to insist openly everywhere on the safeguarding of cultural treasures. And others again want to postpone all discussion until after some law, which they themselves do not know from where to expect. As "Deus ex machina."

What mean all these apparently contradictory but insistent advices, sugges-

tions and even demands? They simply signify the great interest in this banner, which cannot but call forth the response of the human heart. We have to be accustomed to this diversity of expressions of human minds.

One must know that no world matter was ever decided without the raising of all kinds of symbols. In every procession are being carried manifold placards and emblems, which, however, in their inner essence serve the same ideal. Thus if even someone becomes angry over the pact and banner—this is already good. Let him be excited, but let him in his anger still think of the protection of treasures by which the human race evolves.

It has been said often that an open enemy is still closer to the truth, than an indifferent fool, who is neither hot nor cold, and, according to all cosmic laws, will finally desintegrate. But life itself shows the whole undeferrability of the battle against vandalism. Every newspaper, every daily record shows directly or indirectly the same need. If anyone suggests to speak about this in a subdued tone, we shall tell him: "When at home someone is ill, when the heart is shaken by grief, wouldn't it be inhuman to demand the tone of icy indifference?"

When something is near to our heart, we cannot speak about this in freezing terms.

Everyone in this world who has loved someone or something, knows that it is impossible to speak of the beloved in

petty expressions. The human spirit during such occasions of high tension always finds the thundering vocabulary of enthusiasm and vigour. No graves, no fire-extinguishers can choke the fire of the heart, when it feels truth. From where came attainments and martyrdom, if not from realization of the great truth? Where was generated that unbreakable daring, that inexhaustible resourcefulness, which humanity remembers even from school books? The lovers of icy words should forgive the enthusiasm of others who exist on its life-giving, strengthening fire. But let all suggestions be heard, for one cannot undo that which already exists. To those who propose to speak in freezing terms of the most precious concepts, we shall say: "Alright, we shall also listen to you. We shall whisper, but it will be such a thundering whisper that reaches every human heart."

Even silence may be louder than thunder, of what so beautifully relates the Old Testament. But how can we forbid the human heart to pulsate for that which for it is essential and dear? How can we cease all songs, both earthly and celestial? To destroy the magnificence of the human creative songs would be like hardening and finally killing the heart. But where is that phenomenal individuum, which can boast that in everything and always it can do without the heart?

If in our hearts we shall call the banner of peace a beautiful banner, then this short denomination will of course resound

in the heart, but it would be inapplicable in life, because people are ashamed to speak of the beautiful.

Similarly people act when they come across great realities. That which they dare to ponder over in the quietude of the night, appears to them in daylight inachievable and even shameful. When we look over everything already published and written about the pact and banner, everything that came in response from distinguished personalities and from unknown workers, we want to be with these enthusiasts, who were not afraid to sign their name in full to affirm the protection of human treasures. There are before us thousands of letters received from both the Americas, from Europe and Asia. One would like so much to quote the multitude of names who have become friends through their expressed noble feelings, but this would take many pages.

According to old traditions a whole city was once spared because of one righteous man. When, according to letters received, we mark on a map the places of their despatch, then we obtain a remarkable design of places where people were thinking of the preservation of the world's treasures, beyond boundaries of nations and creeds. And how many more have not yet been asked! Many new friends come continuously from far away who only casually heard about the banner-protector. Therefore let us not prevent any scattered and lonely seekers to reach the One Light. They

all in their own way strive for constructive good.

In far-reaching whisper let us tell all those who come about love and friendliness; they did not come from egotistic motives, but they came in the name of spiritual treasures; in the name of everything beautiful that is spread in creative labour and cognizance. If someone wants to shout, let him do so. If someone wants to whisper, let him whisper. But let us not compel any human heart to keep silent, if it opens up for beauty and good. With all care let us attend the manifold expressions of the human heart. If the peculiar vocabulary of attention and good-will turns out to be more voluminous than we thought, then let us only rejoice at this and let us continue to call for the preservation of the true treasures of the world. May our banner be that sacred symbol of peace, which, by its presence, will remind humanity of its evolutionary destiny!

I rejoice that in Washington friends of peace, beauty and knowledge will gather to affirm the laws of the Spirit!

If the Red Cross flag protects the physical health, then let the Banner of Peace preserve the spiritual health of mankind!

THE ROERICH PACT.

(*Washington Convention of the Banner of Peace, November 17, 1933*).

Prof. Nicholas Roerich, world renowned artist, philosopher and archæologist, to whose art a skyscraper museum has been dedicated in New York and who is the founder of many cultural institutions, conceived the great salutary idea of the protection of artistic and scientific achievements of humanity as far back as in 1904, when he advanced the first proposals in this respect to the Russian Imperial Government. In the beginning of the Great War, Prof. Roerich again emphasized the necessity of the same idea and finally in 1929 he proposed to the nations to establish a pact for the preservation of the treasures of art and science of the world. This proposal was made public in the U. S. A. through the *New York Times* and at the same time, Prof. Roerich commissioned Dr. Georges Chklaver, Doctor of Laws and Lecturer of the Paris University, to draft the legal form of this pact.

The pact in 1930 was submitted to and unanimously approved by the Museums Committee of the League of Nations. In the same year were founded the "Committee of the Roerich Banner of Peace" in New York and the "*Comité pour le Pacte Roerich*" at Paris. The next year saw the foundation of the "*Union Internationale pour le Pacte Roerich*" under the presidentship of M. Camille Tulpinck, with its seat at Bruges, Belgium. Prof. Nicholas Roerich was

elected Honorary President of all these three bodies and the President of the Hague Court of International Justice, M. Adacti, accepted the Protectorship of the Union in Bruges.

Two International Conferences dedicated to the promulgation of the Roerich Pact were organized, both in Bruges, the first in 1931 and the second in 1932, at which delegates of over twenty countries participated.

At the time of the second Bruges International Conference, an Exhibition of Art Cities took place, at which twenty-three countries were represented.

At the same time, on M. C. Tulpinck's initiative, the "*Foundation Roerich pro Peace, Arte, Scientiae et Labore*" was inaugurated in Bruges.

All three Banner of Peace Committees held lectures, published reports and arranged many manifestations, as for instance, the Pageant of the Shakespearean Association of the Roerich Society in Central Park in New York.

Enthusiastic response came in from all parts of the world and thousands of letters of appreciation and endorsement were received from Governments, scientific and artistic institutions, women's organizations and leading statesmen. These opinions were published in the form of Vol. I of the *Roerich Pact Book*. Almost all leading men in the world of culture have expressed their appreciation and enthusiasm for the pact, and we find in this list of adherers such prominent names as H. M. King

Albert of Belgium, President Masaryk, Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Marshal Lyautey, Maurice Maeterlinck, Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, Sir C. V. Raman, Sir Jagadis C. Bose, Secretary H. A. Wallace, Senator Copeland, Senator Ricci, Baron de Taube, Prof. A. Bustamente, Prof. R. Altamira, Prof. Louis Le Fur, H. C. the Duchess of Somerest, Prof. Anesaki, and a long row of other such similar names of international standing, followed by a list of academies, headed by the Academie Francaise, and by the world's Universities, museums, etc., etc.

The first lady of America, Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, writes about our pact: "I think the ideals represented by the Roerich Pact cannot help but appeal to all those, who hope that the best in the past may be preserved to guide and serve future generations."

Leon Dabo, the renowned artist, in endorsing the Roerich Peace Banner said: "If we can have this banner accepted by all nations to protect the beautiful, the precious, the exuberances of the human soul as expressed by the brain and hand of man, it will be the greatest contribution of the spirit of humanity and the spirit of culture which man has introduced into the world in the last thousand years..." "A nation is judged by its poets, its artists, and scientists, not by its captains of industry."

In emphasizing the great spiritual power of Nicholas Roerich, Dr. Charles Fleischer, distinguished writer and lec-

turer, said : " You must have noted how consistently each one of the tributes read to us by the Chairman sounded the same note of spirit, in trying to describe Nicholas Roerich. Indeed, I feel that Roerich himself symbolizes the dominance of spirit. He is absent to-night in body, yet he is just as really present as though he were here sitting on this platform ; so dominant is his spirit."

Dr. Fleischer cited the Roerich Museum and its affiliated institutions as just so many fruits of the creative spirit of Roerich's genius....." Just so many shining proofs that his spirit is omnipotent and omnipresent, all-powerful everywhere."

The present year sees the inauguration of a Convention at Washington, U. S. A., on November 17th, which will be an important milestone for the Roerich Banner of Peace, which is already unfurled over several institutions.

The banner as such represents three spheres within a circle, in majenta colour, on a white back-ground.

Naturally, such a banner is needed not only in times of war, but at all times, because innumerable vandalisms and destructions of irreparable treasures take place almost daily. Thus the banner is an epoch-making sign of culture.

Remarkable is also the concluding passage from the consecratory sermon,

which Dr. Robert Norwood in New York held during the solemn festivity of Peace Day :

" We shall have peace, Beautiful Flag, and it will come to us one day. We send you thus forth on your mission at this moment. We send you forth, and we pledge ourselves that we who touch your folds, that we look upon your whiteness, shall consecrate ourselves, our souls and our bodies, to the adoration of Good in the Highest, the height of human hearts. And so it shall come to pass that Peace shall come at last to Humanity through the victorious folds of your whiteness, the challenge of your colour and the completeness of your symmetry. Go forth and conquer in the name of Love, and we who are Lovers here this afternoon, lay our hearts upon your folds, and wish you good luck in the name of the Highest!"

This Banner of Peace, similarly to the flag of the Red Cross, is intended to protect all centres of art and science, religious monuments and all the world's cultural values. As the founder Prof. Nicholas Roerich states in his address :

" What the Red Cross flag is for the preservation of physical health, our Banner of Peace is as protector of the spiritual health of humanity !"

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