ROERICH, THE PEACE-MAKER

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THE ROERICH BANNER OF PEACE.

Reprinted from

“MAHA BODHI,”
CALCUTTA.
By Nicholas Roerich.

The whole Buddhist world will rejoice to hear that on November 17th, 1933, in Washington will take place the Convention of the Banner of Peace for the protection of treasures of Religion, Art, and Science. The great conception of Peace is pronounced in all languages and there is no such stony heart that would not throb in enthusiasm for peaceful construction.

Humanity in diverse ways is striving for peace and everyone in his own heart realizes that this constructive work is
a true prophecy of a new era. In view of this, it is certainly incongruous to hear discussions on the comparative desirability of various bullets or on whether one type of ship is closer to the conceptions of world unity than the cannon of two battleships. Let us, however, consider these discussions as preliminary steps toward the same great peace that will tame the belligerent instincts of humanity by the resplendent and joyous creations of the spirit.

The fact remains, however, that the shells of even one of these cannon can destroy the greatest treasures of art and science as successfully as a whole fleet. We deplore the loss of the Library of Louvain and the unreplaceable loveliness of the Cathedral of Rheims; we remember the beautiful treasures of private collections which perished during the world’s misunderstandings. We do not, however, wish to inscribe above them words of enmity; let us simply say: “Destroyed by human error, and recreated by human hope”. Nevertheless, errors in this or any other form can be repeated and other precious milestones of human achievement can be destroyed.

Against such errors of ignorance we should take immediate measures. And even though these may be only preliminary measures of safeguarding, some very successful steps can be taken. No one can deny that the flag of the Red Cross proved to be of immeasurable value and reminded the world of humanitarianism and compassion.

For this reason a plan for an International Peace Pact which would protect all treasures of art and science through an international Banner has been outlined by me and the events of every day show how urgently this Banner-Protector is needed.

Reality itself advises us of the undeferability of spreading the Fact and Sign amongst the consciousnesses of the people. Thus also will be strengthened and renewed the understanding of historical traditions and constructive progress. Such a constructive aim in the interest of the youth is after all the most sacred duty of every educator.

Let us not conceal from each other the unheard-of crisis and chaos, which shake the foundations of the world. Let us not enumerate these events—they are known to everyone. Not only known, but even felt most painfully. This is already not a supposition, but indeed a truism. Therefore the idea of special protection of the monuments of highest civilization, of highest culture, arises before us most imperatively. All sensitive minds of the world understand the seriousness of the present situation. A distinguished author has recently pointed out the necessity of building another Ark of Noah in view of the indisputable dangers that threaten humanity. The same dangers are stressed by all cultural leaders. From different countries under most different circumstances these calls of Kassandra reach us. And the events that follow only prove that these calls are not irresponsible utterances. Without exaggeration daily is pouring in fresh news which confirms the necessity to assemble in the name of the protection of the Treasures of human spirit.

There can be no such country which can state that it does not care to worry about the protection of its treasures. There can be no such savage heart that would not like to understand that the renaissance of a nation comes together with the renaissance of the high principle of civilization and culture. Thus I cannot imagine hence that a conscious opposition may originate against our mutual desire for progress of civilization and culture which finds its expression first of all in the preservation of monuments—the true treasures of humanity.

In order to assert that thoughts and care for the preservation of the beautiful, of the growth of progress, are not needed, one must be that destructive barbarian who only in time of complete decadence of civilization raises his voice and violating hand. But let us not speak of opposition, for we do not live in barbarous times.
Consequently before us lies the aim of spreading and rooting in the consciousness of the people the idea of the necessity of utmost care for everything constructive and positive. Destruction and depredation have made the human spirit weary. They introduced in life not only rudeness but also dullness which satisfies itself but with the coarsest forms of life.

Cultural beginnings are still neglected because there exists an erroneous opinion that the present grip of crisis is not the time to care for them. But the S. O. S. of the human spirit resounds. It is time to think of the saving life-belt, which will carry us out into the epoch of a beautiful renaissance.

We are optimists and positivists; we understand that if the joint human thought will strive towards preservation and strengthening of constructive principles, everything else will adjust itself. In all ages, the most difficult problems were always solved through principles of the highest culture and civilization.

History itself affirms our consideration. Let the apparent handicaps and non-understanding be only those hidden possibilities which blossom after the obstacles have been conquered. We shall in no case give up the idea of preservation of true spiritual values of humanity. We want to live, therefore every dissolution is abhorrent to us.

We do not stand alone in these constructive ideas. We have before us thousands of written evidences of support, from the best representatives of the world. I shall not enumerate them, because not one of these beautiful names could be omitted; and to mention them all as a complete necklace of most valuable pearls would mean to write a whole book. Of course this book will be written. The names of those who stood up in the first rows for the defence of the most beautiful, the most educative, the most calling, shall be preserved on precious Tablets. Humanity must know who took pains and care for real progress.

Let us remember the history of the Red Cross. This

Sacred Sign will soon mark the septuagenary of its existence for the sake of humanity. Here it will be fit to remember how much of non-understanding was manifested by the contemporaries of Dr. Dunant towards this pan-human idea. Yet despite all derisions and scoffing, the idea of love for humanity triumphed and even the most severe critics do not dare to dispute the remarkable results of it. There exists a special negative type of people who prefer to speak only of everything negatively. But now even these peculiar individuals will not condemn the benevolent idea of the Red Cross.

The historical development of the Red Cross should be studied by us in order to derive experience for our case. From the history of the Red Cross we understand that the idea became a living one only because of the incessant, persistent, imperative actions of all its founders and co-workers. Fortunately neither derisions nor negations could in the least discourage its noble defenders. Neither shall we divert from our aims! Nothing whatsoever will break your united decisions to protect the Beautiful and the Highest!

The means of rooting this idea in the hearts of people, in the hearts of the youth—our heirs—are extremely manifold. They are as multiform as life itself. Therefore I repeat, every proposition has its reason. Every thought should be benevolently discussed and the circumstances will show how and in what sequence to apply them.

If we discuss the principles of creativeness, we thereby admit also the broadest thinking. May this thinking contain first of all friendliness and goodwill. In the name of the highest constructive principles, in the name of protection of everything best and noble, I greet all adherers of the Pact—the friends of real treasures of humanity.
PEACE BANNER CONVENTION IN WASHINGTON

A MESSAGE.

On behalf of the Buddhists and on behalf of the Maha Bodhi Society in particular, we wish to convey our fraternal greetings to the delegates assembled in Washington for the purpose of taking a further step in the noble work of preserving the treasures of art, religion, and science, in the event of another world conflagration. Buddhists of India in particular feel the necessity of such a Pact as they have suffered most terribly by the numerous invasions of India. No Buddhist can witness without feelings of profound sorrow and indignation, the images of the Blessed One, the Lord Buddha, the magnificent University buildings of Taxila, Nalanda, etc., in utter ruin and the innumerable Viharas scattered all over India, completely destroyed by the insensate folly of India’s invaders. Wave after wave of destructive forces had passed over the magnificent art treasures of Buddhism and the Buddhists had to look on with tears in their eyes as their priceless treasures were being reduced to ashes.

The news of the noble efforts of Professor Roerich, therefore, came to them as the beginning of a new era. It is the wonderful genius of Professor Roerich which has conceived the most practical method of preserving the Art Treasures in this splendid way. He has conceived the idea and has formulated the scheme in its fullness and it is now up to the peoples of the world to heartily support it and get their respective Governments to place their seals of approval on it. That every nation will finally accept the Pact, we have not the least doubt, for the most advanced nations of Europe had the painful experience of witnessing the destruction of some of their invaluable treasures during the last war. They cannot be so callous and devoid of every sense of aesthetic feeling as to remain unmoved while the beautiful creations of the master minds of their nations are being destroyed by human folly. But it may take some time yet before they fully realise the necessity for this Pact and therefore, the duty of those who believe in the future of mankind is to carry on the great struggle till they achieve success. As it has been rightly pointed out by Prof. Roerich, the idea of the Red Cross took a long time for the nations to adopt but to-day it is the one redeeming feature in the fields of human slaughter. Preservation and protection of Art treasures are no less important than the work of the Red Cross Society as man minus the achievements of the best of his family can boast of nothing great. Therefore all honour to Professor Roerich for his wonderful conception and every success to the efforts of the Convention! We have no doubt that Buddhist countries are entirely in sympathy with the movement, and if proper representations are made to their Governments they will be among the first to sign the Pact.

In conclusion we wish to add one more word. By placing the idea of the Pact before the world, Professor Roerich has made the greatest contribution to the peace of the world in recent times and the fact should be fully recognised by all the nations of the world. If there is any person who deserves the Nobel Prize for peace it is Professor Roerich who is undoubtedly one of the greatest promoters of peace and good-will among the warring nations of the world.

May every success attend the deliberations of the Convention.

On behalf of the Maha Bodhi Society

DEVAPRIYA VALISINHA,

General Secretary.
ROERICH BANNER OF PEACE

By Dr. George Chkaver.

Doctor of Laws, University of Paris.

Seldom are all the Nations of the World stirred by the same thought, seldom are they united by the same endeavour. It was given to Nicholas Roerich to create a movement which has won the enthusiastic support of Governments and peoples alike: thus it was proved once more that Beauty, Knowledge, and Culture, are the best means to bring together the Membra disjecta of Humanity.

Many flags wave above our cities, our ports, our ships and fortresses: flags of war and flags of commerce, standards of kings and banners of republics. Now thanks to the initiative and to the genius of a great artist, this new banner is beginning to be unfurled all over the world and will protect in the future the sacred shrines of Beauty and Knowledge. It is again characteristic of Nicholas Roerich that the idea originated by him did not remain a dream or a blissful vision, but was to speak, translated into terms of law and resulted in a precise plan for international co-operation under the auspices of the United States of America and of the League of Nations.

The draft of an international pact for the protection of artistic and scientific institutions was devised in the summer of 1929 and was presented first to the Department of State in Washington and then to the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation of the League of Nations. Representative personalities of all countries were requested by the Roerich Museum of New York to express their opinions as to the principles embodied in the draft of the “Roerich Pact.” Thousands of answers have been received from all parts of the world and all have expressed their admiration for Nicholas Roerich’s initiative and their sympathy with the plan proposed by him. At the same time, the competent authorities of the League of Nations examined the pact and expressed their desire to see it ratified by the various governments.

The Roerich Pact appears, indeed, not only as a token of reverence for culture on the part of the peoples and their governments, but also as a remarkably progressive feature of modern international law.

The preamble to the Pact recalls former efforts to secure respect for monuments dedicated to religion, to education, to the arts and sciences. Then, it sets forth the principles of protection for these monuments to be adhered to by all civilized nations. The “Banner of Peace,” the new flag proposed and designed by Nicholas Roerich, a magenta circle and three inscribed spheres on a white field, will shield the centres of culture against wanton destruction and desecration, in accordance with rules similar to those which apply to the Red Cross ensign. In case of any infringement of these rules, an International Commission of Inquiry may be appointed which will be empowered to publish its report and thus to put the facts before world public opinion. The monuments which are to enjoy the special protection provided for by the Pact will be registered at the Secretariat of the League of Nations, at the request of the respective governments of the countries in which they are situated.

Sceptics may advance, of course, that the rules of the “Roerich Pact” can be broken, as any rules of law, by unscrupulous belligerents or revolutionaries. But everybody knows that even the commands of divinity are violated. So much the worse for the violators. In the end—although it may be so far distant that human eye and intellect fail to perceive it—justice will always prevail, because justice is nothing but an aspect of the general balance of the world, of the equilibrium and the harmony of the universe. Should the divine commands be abolished because of the existence of sinners, or all human laws because of the existence of criminals, or all...
international covenants because of the forces of evils which from time to time seem to overpower a nation?

Truly, international law has not yet developed an appropriate machinery to bring culprit nations to justice and to impose sanctions upon them. But moral sanctions such as an appeal to world opinion, as foreseen in the Roerich Pact, will certainly have an effect and compel any potential law-breaker and desecrator of culture to give some attention to the possible consequences of his acts. Even the most materially-minded people will soon realize that such violations of positive law and of pledged faith "do not pay." A reputation for falsehood and vandalism does not help a nation's prestige or prosperity. This may sound like a simple truism, but it is an appropriate antidote to unwarranted scepticism and negation.

The Banner of Peace has already been unfurled and hoisted. With Nicholas Roerich the leaders of culture have affirmed the vital necessity for it.

The Banner of Peace will fly high over the shrines of Beauty and Knowledge protecting the treasures of humanity's past and announcing a new era of greater culture.

Prof. de Roerich closes his first address on the Banner of Peace in the "New-York Times" thus:

"Really it is imperative to take immediate measures to preserve the noble heritage of our past for a glorious posterity. This can only come if all countries pledge themselves to protect the creations of culture, which after all, belong to no one nation but to the world. In this way we may create the next vital step for a universal culture and peace."

THE ROERICH PACT

Prof. Nicholas Roerich, the world renowned artist, philosopher and archaeologist, 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 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. George Chklaver, Doctor of Laws and Lecturer of Paris University, to draft the legal form of this Pact.

The Pact in 1923 was submitted and unanimously approved by the Museum's 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 "Comite pour le Pacte Roerich" at Paris. The next year saw the foundation of the "Union Internationale pour le Pacte Roerich" under presidential Mr. Comille Tulpineck, 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. Adatci 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, in which delegates of over twenty countries participated.

At the time of the Second International Conference an
Exhibition of Art Cities took place at which 23 countries were represented.

At the same time, on Mr. C. Tuipinck's initiative, the "Foundation Roerich pro Pace, 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 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." Most all leading men in the world of culture have expressed their appreciation and enthusiasm for the Pact, and we find in this list of adherents such prominent names as: H. M. King Albert of Belgium, President Masaryk, Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, H. H. Pope Pius XI, Marshall Lyautey, Maurice Maeterlinck, Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore, Sir C. V. Raman, Sir Jagadis Bose, Secretary H. A. Wallace, Senator Copeland, Senator Ricci, Baron de Taube, Prof. A. Bustamente, Prof. A. Altamira, Prof. Louis Le Fur, H. G. The Duchess of Somerset, Prof. Anesaki, and a long row of other such names of international standing, followed by a list of Academies, headed by the Académie Française and by the world's universities, museum, etc., etc.

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 magenta, colour, on white background.

Naturally such a Banner is needed not only in time 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.

This Banner of Peace, similar to the flag of the Red Cross, is intended to protect all centres of Art and Sciences, 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!"
ploughed, we find in part the harvest gathered or glowing ripe ready for the reaping. Here, where he passed, a while later, the grain is ready to burst in its fullness. And still further, where we come upon his footsteps recently traced, the seedlings have burst their irresistible way through the soil. We have travelled long and far to follow his course, and now that our way is close to him in America and Asia, his footsteps have freshly impressed the soil. Unnoticeably, we have been climbing the slope of a mountain as we discern his figure—and even as we reach him and receive that welcoming smile of his—we must mark that our way has led us even to the Himalayan heights.

So multiform has been the expression of Nicholas Roerich’s creative genius that one may in this brief outline but glimpse a few milestones upon his long road. For instance, one may remember him first as the boy impelled by an incessant urge for knowledge, excavating the tumuli upon the family estate of Isvara in the North of Russia. And the earth—that beloved earth to which primitive man confided his immortality—yields to the boy examples of the art of our progenitors. That love for the fire of beauty, which marks the spirit’s evolution through the ages, makes swift communion between man of the past and Roerich: Forever after he lovingly translates the spirit of ancient man. As he says in “Adamant”: “It may be foretold that, seeking for a more perfect existence, humanity will think more than once of the Free Man of ancient times.... It is curious that the aspirations of the Stone Age seem to be the nearest to our modern searching for beauty. The cycle of culture is but leading us back to what the ancient man realized in his time: I mean the longing for harmony.”

Thus begins Roerich’s archaeological and scientific work, which sends him wide over the face of the earth. Through Europe, in America and then throughout the reaches of Asia, he beholds the spiritual yields of the centuries and marks the great kinship, the interweaving of the threads of man, the Unity of the Fundamental Fires of all creation.

Another of these beautiful threads of Roerich’s work: One recalls his studies with the famous Russian painter Kuindjy. Those who have read Roerich’s “Guru, the Teacher”, may comprehend the relationship of this leonine artist and the boy, in whom he was quick to discern the swift response of genius. A rugged and tenacious spirit, who proved irresistible against the mountainous obstacles of his early days, Kuindjy rose from a shepherd boy of the Crimea to one of Russia’s formidable artists. But it is of the soul of the man, of the Franciscan tenderness which dwelt behind his austere ascetic exterior, that Roerich speaks in his beautiful recollections of his teacher.

And in Roerich himself it is precisely that quality, that Light of the true teacher,—his “Guruship”, as the East terms it—which has brought around him such a legion of youth! In the course of the years, since his great Directorship of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, since his Presidency of the “Mir Isskustva” (“World of Art”) since his founding and leadership of the Master Institute of United Arts, Corona Mundi, International Art Centre and numerous other institutions, his pupils have numbered thousands, all bound to him by an unbreakable link, the evocation to a supreme ideal. Again and again, writers have called attention to Roerich’s disciples and followers, calling them Roerichides. Why? Because withal his personal affection for each of them, Roerich has demanded uncompromisingly and austere an impersonal accomplishment, a constant creative aspiration which would strive toward the universal and infinite.

Of Roerich’s art, his three thousand paintings, spread by destiny through some thirty-five countries, are more adequate and more age-defying testimony than any word. Ever since his first painting, so prophetically called “The Messenger”, was purchased as soon as it was shown for the Tretiakoff Gallery in Moscow, his art has enjoyed a way of triumph
until at the present time, in addition to the thousand paintings in the Roerich Museum, two thousand remain in the galleries of the Louvre, the Luxembourg, the Victoria and Albert Museum and other eminent Museums and collections. Recently a series of Roerich Halls in many centres of the world have been dedicated to the Master, amongst them also India being fortunate to have a Roerich Hall at Allahabad and one at Benares, not to mention the many Roerich paintings in private collections. Roerich's special style, which has become a by-word as well as a symbol of an entire school of art, has its source in the unrepeatable individual character of the Master.

As with his writings, Roerich's paintings resound a Parsifalian quest, a re-stating, in the terms of Infinite Beauty, of the unquenchable Urge which has the finding of the Chalice for its goal. It is the Way translated, not in the light of an individual, but in the aspect of entire humanity: the quest, beginning in the dawn of time, when man first stirred towards the Benign Infinite, on through the corridoried Centuries, as the quest shifts its setting across the spans of world or heaven. One remembers his heroic Paintings, of the dawn of earth, still fresh with the feats of titans: his Sacred Paintings of the lives of Saints, when men stood among the ruined structures of their own building.

But in the paintings following the war, that fiery branding of our Century, comes Roerich's declaration of the ultimate victory. In the paintings of America and Asia, we face the heights. Every painting resounds a stanza in his epic of achievement, which pronounces that the finding of the Chalice is the becoming of it.

And, if we discern, we will perceive that the reason why Roerich's pronouncement is so convincing, so absolutely unanswerable, is that he creates as he has lived, a spirit to whom creation has been a need inseparable from life, and to whom service for men has been the bread of existence.

If, as scientists are beginning to affirm, the Supreme manifests itself in Thought—then in the eternal hierarchy of evolution, are not the universal creators and teachers closest to That Supremacy? Only those ages acquit themselves before posterity, which render tribute to their true Leaders.

As the Hon. George Gordon Battle, an eminent jurist of the United States of America says: "Nicholas Roerich is unquestionably one of the greatest leaders of history. Along with his wonderful breadth of mind there goes a sublime sympathy with the opinions and tolerance for the prejudices of others. He has a marvellous equipment to be the Leader of an international movement. He has the power not only to plan, but to act. He can translate his dreams into action."

And in this enlightened action, it befits all disciples and admirers to bring their offerings to Roerich—to Roerich, the creator and the teacher, the tireless ploughman in infinite fields.