AMERICAN RUSSIAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION, Inc.

Annual Report
1947

200 West 57th Street, New York City
American Russian Cultural Association, Inc.

Annual Report — 1947

It is fitting that this report begin by paying homage to our late Honorary President, Nicholas K. Roerich. His death on December 13, 1947 saw the passing of one of the great champions of world peace. His name will live forever in his art, books and philosophy. In opening the memorial exhibition of Prof. Roerich’s paintings in New Delhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, paid the following tribute: “When I think of Nicholas Roerich, I am astounded at the scope and abundance of his activities and genius. A great artist, a great scholar and writer, archaeologist and explorer, he touched and lighted up so many aspects of human endeavor. The very quantity is stupendous — thousands of paintings and each one of them a great work of art”. In a lifetime devoted to promoting world peace, perhaps his greatest contribution to mankind is the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace. He gave much to ARCA in effort, inspiration and direction. His life is a sublime example for all to hold high and to emulate. ARCA shall carry forward, continuously and untiringly, the chalice of his dictum, “Peace Through Culture”.

Through its lectures, exchange of cultural material, exhibitions and information service ARCA has for the past year steadfastly pursued its goal, namely, the cultural exchange and study between two great people with its resultant mutual understanding and respect.

LECTURES

In January, Prof. John Somerville, the renowned author of “Soviet Philosophy”, completed his series of lectures, entitled, “The
Literature of Russia — From Pushkin to Sholokhov. He depicted graphically the ubiquitous Socialist realism in contemporary Russian literature, tracing its derivation from the influence of earlier writers, such as Tolstoi, Turgeniev and Gorky; the latter a renowned writer during the Czarist regime and also after the revolution. The works of the poet, Mayakovsky, were studied in some detail, for he is regarded as the Poet-Tribune of the Russian Revolution. Prof. Somerville read extracts from the works of Gorky, Leonov and Sholokhov, stressing especially the philosophy of the socialist credo in the works of Leonov and Sholokhov. The famous Soviet writer, Aleksei Tolstoi, who died recently, was also discussed at great length. Prof. Somerville's lecture series was a superlatively rendered and informative discourse, unanimously acclaimed.

Also in January, Mrs. Sina Fosdick, Executive Director of ARCA, began her series of three lectures, entitled, "The Great Classics of Russian Literature". This was delivered to the English Club, Columbia High School, Maplewood, New Jersey. The lectures discussed the appreciation among Russians for the value of other people's culture; the complete frankness and courage with which Russian writers criticized the social economic and moral conditions in Russia and the wealth of universal truth in Russian masterpieces concerning basic principles of freedom and rights of man. Students and faculty responded enthusiastically to the lecture series.

In March, Mme. Irina Khrabroff lectured to ARCA members and friends on the topic, "Russian Poets — Past and Present". The lecture dealt with the classic Russian poets, Pushkin, Lermontov and Tutschev and the Soviet poets, Essenin, Block and Mayakovsky. It was warmly received and concluded with a spirited and interesting discussion. Also in March, Dr. E. Markoff, member of the Board of Directors, lectured in French for Ecole Libre, New York, on "Rumanian Literature and Pushkin". It was a versatile and scholarly discourse, depicting the influence of Rumanian literature on Pushkin during his stay in Bessarabia.

Acceding to the requests of members and friends ARCA again engaged Prof. John Somerville for a lecture series in the fall and winter of 1947-8. In October, he began his series "The Culture of the Soviet Union". The opening lecture described the growth of Russian culture from the early 19th century, revealing Soviet humanism as the keynote of contemporary Russian culture. He detailed the aims of Soviet culture, the means of its wide promotion within the USSR and its unparalleled growth in a short period. The comparative values of Soviet culture and those of other European countries were an interesting revelation to many of his audience.

Upon his return from Russia in December, Mr. Valery Tereshchenko, Honorary ARCA Adviser, delivered his much-anticipated lecture, "My Experiences in the Ukraine, 1946-1947". As one of the principal members of the UNRRA mission to the Ukraine he was an exceptionally qualified speaker on that subject. He gave a vivid and shocking account of the war's devastation to the Ukraine. Every person had some close one killed, wounded or missing. One third of the country was completely and systematically demolished by the Germans. In spite of these ravages of war the people were enthusiastically participating in the Ukraine's reconstruction. An ever-present note was the deep gratitude and friendship the Ukrainians feel for Americans. A measure of this was shown in the description of the late Mayor La Guardia's visit to Kiev and the lavish, musical extravaganza staged for his reception.

EXCHANGE OF CULTURAL MATERIAL

In the past year the ARCA Reference and Research Library has been notably enriched. It now numbers more than 1,600 volumes and includes a "Ukrainian Corner" which is sponsored by UOKS, Kiev. Regularly received from VOKS, Moscow are the newspapers and periodicals, "Literary Newspaper", "Pravda", "Izvestia", "Soviet Woman", "Novy Mir", "October", "Smena", "Ogonek" and others. In addition, they have sent monographs on contemporary masters
in Russian painting, selected works of Soviet writers and poets, chronicles on music, theatre, art, science, medicine and sports and current Soviet school textbooks.

ARLUS, Bucharest, Rumania, also helped to enrich our library. There has been an exchange of cultural material between ARCA and the Ryska Institutet, Sweden, Cultura Sovietica, Mexico and Culturele Vereniging, Nederland-Rusland, Holland.

In turn, ARCA has been a rich and valuable source of cultural material which has been transmitted to many institutions, groups and individuals. Throughout the year, VOKS, Moscow and UOKS, Kiev were sent large numbers of American art, science and educational periodicals, Museum Bulletins and books on American philosophy. Two months of ARCA research on Contemporary American Art was collected into a portfolio which catalogued some 50 exhibitions. This was forwarded to the Art Section, VOKS, Moscow.

Other recipients were the New York Public Library; University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada; Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.; William Jewell College, Liberty, Missouri; National Library of Peiping, Peiping, China; Social Affairs Dept. of the UN, Lake Success, New York; Honolulu Academy of Arts, Hawaii; State College of Washington, Pullman, Wash.; Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N. Y. and University of Kentucky, Lexington, Ky.

EXHIBITIONS

ARCA was active as usual in circulating its various exhibitions. The demand for these exhibitions and the spontaneous, enthusiastic acclaim they receive are very gratifying. "Graphic Art of Soviet Russia" was displayed at Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H.; Columbia High School, Maplewood, N.J. and Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. "Artists of Soviets Russia" was exhibited at the Pendle Hill School, Wallingford, Pa. "Historic Cities, Ancient Churches and Cultural Monuments of Soviet Russia" was shown at Mohawk College, Utica, N.Y.; the Honolulu Academy of Arts, Honolulu, Hawaii and in a number of educational institutions throughout the Hawaiian Islands.

"Life in Soviet Russia", was displayed at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada and Columbia High School, Maplewood, N. J. "History of USSR" was viewed by the Pendle Hill School, Wallingford, Pa. and the Verona Public Schools, Verona, N. J. The exhibition, "24 Reproductions of Roerich Paintings", was shown by Columbia High School, Maplewood, N.J. and the College Club of the Oranges, East Orange, N.J.

The following exhibitions were held at ARCA headquarters: "Drawings on Sea and Land at Murmansk, 1942-1945" by Julius Griffith, a Canadian artist; "Artists of Soviet Russia"; "Life in Soviet Russia"; "Old Moscow, 1147-1947"; "Moscov in the Days of Victory" and "Moscov in the Days of Old".

INFORMATION SERVICE

The information furnished in response to inquiries was broad and versatile in its cultural and scientific scope. Some of the recipients were the following: the New York Times, Music Digest, Time, Town and Country, Reader's Digest and Hotels Association magazine. Some others also served in this capacity were the University of North Dakota, Stanford University, Rutgers University, The New York School for Social Work, The Brooklyn Ethical Culture School, The Research Department of RKO Motion Pictures, Argent Galleries, New York and The National Folk Festival Society. Countless, extensive inquiries from individuals were answered. Thirty-six Brooklyn school children, ages 12-14 years, arranged for ARCA to transmit letters they had written to Russian school children of comparable age.
For the coming year, ARCA renews its undaunted efforts to travel, undeviatingly, the road to peace. Although in this trying period of post-war readjustments there are many hazardous detours on the road to lasting world peace, ARCA shall persevere guided by the ever-lasting wisdom of its late Honorary President, Nicholas K. Roerich, who said "Art will unify Humanity. Everything created by hostility is impractical and perishable. The history of mankind has given us remarkable examples of how necessary for progress is peaceful creativeness. The hand tires from the sword, but the creating hand, sustained by the might of the spirit, is unerring and unconquerable. No sword can destroy the heritage of culture. It is this generation's duty to create for the younger generation the tradition of culture — for there, where culture is, there is peace".

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* Died December 13, 1947

BRONIA DRUTT
Corresponding Secretary