

PETITION

To His Majesty King George the Fifth of Great Britain, Emperor of India, Etc.:

Respectfully, we the undersigned, in good faith and believing in the good faith of your Majesty's Government, present these facts for your consideration, in the hope of remedy. We believe that in the matter of Professor Nicholas Roerich and his son, George Roerich, of New York, U. S. A., there has been a miscarriage of justice due to misinformation. And we also believe that correct information is all that is needed to persuade your Majesty's Government to withdraw its refusal to grant visas to Professor Roerich and his son, who are at great pecuniary loss and present inconvenience because the visas are not granted.

Professor Nicholas Roerich and his son, George Roerich, desire to re-visit India for the following reasons:

(1) Madame Roerich, wife of Professor Roerich and mother of George Roerich, is extremely ill near Naggar Kulu, in the Province of the Punjab, India.

(2) Professor Roerich and his son George Roerich are responsible executive officers of the Urusvati Research Institute at Naggar Kulu, in which considerable sums of money have been invested for scientific purposes in which no proper progress can be made until they arrive on the scene.

(3) Professor Roerich and his son George Roerich are, and are well known to be men of distinguished artistic and scientific record and personal integrity, whose movements are not reasonably an object of suspicion, and whose dignity should not be impugned.

The following facts are known to the undersigned petitioners to be true:

Professor Nicholas Roerich was born A. D. 1874 in St. Petersburg, Russia. He was educated at the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, and he subsequently graduated with honors from the Law School of St. Petersburg University. In 1897 he became Professor of Archaeology at the Institute of Moscow. In 1905 he was appointed Director of the Imperial Society for the Encouragement of Art, under the direct patronage of H. M. the Czar. In 1910 he founded and became the first president of Mir Iskusstva, a society devoted to the coordination of all the best forces in the world that are directed solely in the interests of Art. In 1915 he was appointed president of the Imperial Commission for War Invalids.

Professor Roerich is President-Founder of the Master Institute of United Arts, New York, and of Corona Mundi, International Art Center, New York; Member of the Archaeological Society, Washington, U. C. U. S. A.; Fellow American Ass'n for the Advancement of Science, New York, U. S. A.; Fellow of the American Geographical Society, New York, U. S. A.; President-Founder, New-Syndicate, New York, U. S. A.; Honorary President, Alatas, Publishers, New York, U. S. A.; Honorary Advisor of the Y. M. C. A.,

New York, U.S.A.; Honorary Member, Boston Art Club, Boston, U.S.A.; Honorary President, Cor Ardens, Chicago, U.S.A.; Member of the Anglo-Russian Literary Society, London, England; Academician of the Academy of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg; Director of the School for the Encouragement of Fine Arts in Russia; Honorary President of the Council of Architecture for Women, St. Petersburg; Honorary Member of the Moscow Archaeological Institute, Moscow; Member of the Board, Fine Arts Editions of St. Eugenia, St. Petersburg; President of Council, Red Cross Art Workshop for Disabled Soldiers, St. Petersburg; Vice-President of the Council of Art in Russia, St. Petersburg; President of the Council of the Museum of Pre-Petrian Art, St. Petersburg; President Museum of Russian Art, Society for Encouragement of Fine Arts, Russia; Member of the Board, Society of Architecture, St. Petersburg; Member of the Russian Archaeological Society, St. Petersburg; First President of the "Mir Iskusstva" Society, St. Petersburg; Member of the Board, Society of Lovers of Art, St. Petersburg; Commander, First Class, Royal Swedish Order of North Star, Stockholm; Member of the Finnish Artists' Society, Helsinki, Finland; Honorary Member of the Vienna Secession, Vienna, Austria; Live Member of the India Society of Oriental Art, Calcutta, India; Life Member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, India; Honorary Member of the Bose Institute, Calcutta, India; Societaire of the Salon d'Automne, Paris, France; Member of the Societe Prehistorique, Paris, France; Honorary Member of the Societe Lusace, Paris, France; Membre de la Societe Geographique, Paris, France; Membre Donateur de la Societe Ethnographique, Paris, France; Member of the Academie Nationale de Reims, France; Honorary President, Maha Bodhi Society of America; Member of Jugoslavian Academy of Art and Science; Vice-President, Archaeological Institute of America.

Having at no time in his life engaged in politics, and in view of growing political unrest with which he was not in sympathy, Professor Roerich left Russia in 1916 with his family. During the period 1916-1919 he devoted himself exclusively to Art, exhibiting his paintings in Finland, Sweden and Denmark. He arrived in London in 1919 and remained there nearly two years, giving frequent exhibitions of his paintings, with the result that certain of them were acquired for the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Professor Roerich and his family arrived in New York in the Autumn of 1920, and in 1921 he founded the Master Institute of United Arts and became president of the International Art Centre. He became the author of the plan, at present under consideration by the Council of the League of Nations in Geneva, to protect the art treasures of the world in the event of future wars, by means of an internationally recognized flag.

During 1923-24 Professor Roerich traveled in India in order to paint a panorama of the Himalayas and to do research work in Archaeology. He returned to New York with about 750 paintings which are now on exhibition, and which have been acclaimed by the leading critics of the world as paintings of extraordinary merit.

Attention is called to the inherent probability that the painting of so many pictures within the time of less than two years definitely precludes any possibility of his having engaged in any other activity, and particularly not in any activity of a harmful nature.

Professor Roerich re-visited India toward the end of 1924. At that time, with the full knowledge and consent of the Indian Government, he conducted an expedition from India into Chinese Turkestan, Mongolia, and Tibet, for the purpose of painting and archaeological study. In Turkestan his expedition was delayed by the Chinese authorities. At Urumchi he was advised by Major Gillan, the British resident representative, to visit Moscow as the only means of obtaining a permit to enter Mongolia. Accordingly (1926) he visited Moscow for that purpose, and for no other purpose. He remained in Moscow just long enough to secure the needed visas. Leading his expedition through Mongolia he entered Tibet and eventually reached India after enduring many hardships, arriving in India in 1928, where he was cordially and hospitably received by the Viceroy, Lord Irving, and by other Anglo-Indian officials.

After recovering from the hardships of the expedition, and with the full knowledge of the Anglo-India authorities, with whom he was frank and from whom he had no secret purpose to conceal, Professor Roerich made careful preliminary investigations and enquiries with a view to establishing in India a permanent institution for scientific study and research. He was very careful indeed to ascertain that his proposal met with no objection from the Anglo-India authorities; and to that end he consulted with Lord Irving and with Sir Dennis Bray at Simla, whose advice he followed in applying for title to property at Naggar Kulu in his own name rather than in the name of an institute.

The property which he acquired by purchase from the Rajah of Mandi is in the Kangra District of the Punjab; registration of title, however, has not yet been granted, for reasons unknown to the undersigned petitioners, who, however, do know that Sir Mohammed Habibullah and Mr. Acheson, Assistant Secretary of the Foreign Department approved of the plan.

Considerable sums of money have been spent on the property since its acquisition and occupation by members of the Roerich Museum. Scientific instruments and equipment have been sent there, and the estate is in charge of Captain Bennon, (An Englishman) pending the arrival of Professor Roerich to direct the study and research.

Madame Roerich, who remained in India owing to ill health brought on by the Roerich expedition, is at Naggar Kulu, too ill to be moved.

In July 1929 Professor Nicholas Roerich and his son, George Roerich, communicated with the British Embassy in Washington, D.C. and were assured that visas to revisit India would be granted through the ordinary channels. They were subsequently advised by the British Passport Control Office in New York that the matter would be settled by the home authorities. They thereupon sailed for London, arriving on April 11th, 1930, understanding that the visas would be speedily granted upon application. Passage to India was engaged and luggage and equipment were sent to Italy, whence it was intended to sail on the S. S. Genova. Upon reaching London Professor Roerich and Mr. George Roerich immediately communicated with the Foreign Office and the India Office and were again advised that the matter was one of routine. The United States Embassy in London also approached the authorities, on the ground that Professor Roerich and his son are the duly authorized representatives of an American institution and actively engaged in interests with which the United States Government is in sympathy.

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Considerable delay followed until, on April 23rd, Mr. Stephen Gaselee of the Foreign Office stated that the visas could not be granted for the present, confirming this statement two days later by writing, "The Government of India were unable to modify their previous decision that visas should not be granted for the present." This, however, was the first intimation to Professor Hoerich and his son that there had been any previous decision. Since that time, many applications have been made to the British Government on behalf of Professor Hoerich and his son, not only by important individuals of all nations, but by the following governments:

Dept. of State, U.S.A.
Republic of France
Bulgaria
Czechoslovakia
Jugoslavia
Greece

Republic of Argentina
Republic of Bolivia
Republic of Brazil
Republic of Chile
Republic of Peru

Nevertheless, the visas have not been granted.

The attitude of your Majesty's Government is very perplexing to the undersigned petitioners, since the work of many other alien institutions and expeditions is being carried on in India without objection from the authorities, and no explanation has been offered to Professor Hoerich by your Majesty's Government as to why he should be singled out for exclusion from India, whose officials without exception have invariably treated him with cordiality, and from whom he has never received a complaint as to his conduct. Perplexity is increased by the fact that Dr. Koelz, of the Botanical Department of the Hoerich Institute, has been permitted to visit India and is now in Kulu.

No doubt as to Professor Hoerich's sentiments, affiliations and life purpose is possible. He is the author of the following books, whose contents make it inconceivable that he should entertain anything but the highest, loftiest, and most artistic aims, which, pursued consistently, do not go hand in hand with lawlessness or malice:

Nor can there be the slightest doubt as to the friendliness of Professor Roerich toward the British Government, against whom he has never said or written one word of criticism. As a philosopher, it is part of his teaching and of his invariable practice, not to meddle with the affairs of Governments or in any way to add to difficulties of administration.

To the undersigned petitioners there is only one circumstance known that could, by any stretch of imagination, suggest a reason for the attitude of your Majesty's Government in refusing visas to Professor Roerich and his son. We refer to the fact that at Tanmarg, in 192 , Professor Roerich's party was attacked by ruffians and was forced to apply for aid from the local police authorities. The attack was not caused by Professor Roerich or by any member of his party, who remained throughout on the defensive — facts that were brought out in the subsequent enquiry. And it seems to us impossible that this could be the real reason; it is mentioned solely in order that we may not appear to withhold information, which we believe we are giving frankly and without reservation of any kind.

It is not our purpose, at this time, to raise the issue of the registration of title to the land at Naggar Kulu. That is probably a matter of administration routine, and whatever technicalities have become involved, those can doubtless be resolved in course of time, in one way or another.

But we do not submit that scientific work of high importance is being unnecessarily held up by the refusal to grant visas to Professor Roerich and his son. And we, furthermore, respectfully submit that it is not in keeping with the high honor and generosity of your Majesty's Government to prevent Professor Roerich from visiting his wife, who is much too ill to be removed from Kulu.

We recognize and acknowledge the grave difficulties with which all governments must deal; and that a mistake should have apparently been made in no way stirs our criticism, since we understand how easily mistakes arise. Being firmly convinced of the high character, laudable aims and unflinching rectitude of Professor Nicholas Roerich and his son, George, we respectfully call the attention of your Majesty's Government to the mistake that has been made, believing that it will comport with dignity to recognize and rectify the error, in the name of Science, Art, and Humanity, if not for other reasons also.

We request that the visas be granted, and subscribe ourselves, with good will and respect: