

TRANSACTION
1965-1966

Professor Nicholas Roerich
Radio Talk
with Irina Fosselich

Nicholas Roerich Museum in New-York
Translated from Russian.

by
Irina A. Malchanova.

Tallinn - U.S.S.R.

Nicholas Roerich Museum bearing the great Russian artist's name has an exceptional status in the cultural life of New-York. Not only Russians and Americans call on the museum but also numerous visitors of all nations. The arrivals from the other countries whom Roerich was heard of come to meet his paintings.

Roerich's world-wide fame has established its firm place in art. The books of Nicholas Roerich and about him fostered a vast bibliography. The youth visiting the Museum, the professors of American and European universities, scientists, orientalists and simply art-lovers put always many questions. Whether Roerich was a Christian or a Buddhist. Whether he was a mystic and possessed an extraordinary knowledge. Whether he lived at the Museum-home. Whether he had collected antique furniture and Buddhist sculpture.

One has to answer the questions considering the conscious' standard of inquirer. Yes, he was a great scientist, archaeologist, traveller, writer not only a world known painter. He was

also a philosopher, humanist and directed with his books at the service to common weal, at peace, beauty, knowledge and labour. He constantly wrote on the matter, spoke in his lectures and reports always and everywhere, inspired to the selfless labour and to broadening of consciousness. He paid homage to all religious and philosophies, manifesting the living Ethics in his own life and creative work.

Many painters visiting the Museum are especially interested in his colours, combinations of tones and are amazed by the ease that almost all his pictures are painted in distemper. But staying near the pictures some more time they infer tempera is better than oil by its purity, freshness and brightness of colours.

Rovick has painted over 7,000 canvases. Besides numerous private collections in many countries there are three museums dedicated to Rovick; the Museum in New-York, in Kulu (India) and in Leningrad the State Russian Museum where are three halls devoted to Rovick. His paintings are also at Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow, at Museums in Novosibirsk, Riga, Kiev, Paris,

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London, Stockholm and other European and Asian capitals.

There are mainly three periods of creative work of the artist in Rorich Museum (New-York) on expose there. These are India, Tibet and Himalayas. Through those paintings with their magnificent panorama of mountains, saturated colours and full of spirits one can guess why Rorich was known as a master of mountains in India. Neither Indian nor European painters did not give that mighty inimitable panorama of Himalayas before Rorich. India where he lived near 20 years thought particularly of artist's love to its greatest pearl - Himalaya. The dedicated to India, Tibet and Himalaya canvases reveal artist's phenomenal knowledge on folklore of Asia, its epic and heroes which are composed legends about and songs are sung near the fire in caravan, on passes and on distant ways.

The paintings dedicated to Gesser-Khan, Maytreya, Mother of the World (the names are sacred in East) also 'The Holy Grottoes', 'The Treasure of the World', 'Darkness Burning down', 'The Great Spirit of Himalayas', 'Ashram', 'Lotus', 'Shambala Lark', 'From there', 'Hero's Star', 'Mohammed', 'The Path on Kailas' and many others are

at the Museum in New York. And the visitors stay more better at these paintings. One can see on these paintings not only the artist's skill but also refined imagination realizing historic episodes from the life of heroes and ascetics into unforgettable canvases.

Profound, philosophical sense and subject of afore-mentioned paintings recall ^{the} ideals of Beauty and Exploit in Roerich's colours. The dazzling blue is rising above the snow summits, the snow is radiant with blazing light, the fancy-shaped clouds engird the mountains. Such is Kandhenjunga one of the favourite painting at the Museum. The grandeur and symbol of Tibet on the background of Himalayas is in relief on the other popular painting at the museum. The great number of sketches dedicated to the mountain-land give inexpressible feelings and hues of sunrise, shadows slowly wrapping the mountains up, and miraculous lights of sunset. The sky, clouds, glaciers, summits, passes, light piercing through the gloom — this all given by the spirit of the painter attracts admiration of many. And also the canvases as Saint Franzisc Assia, Oriflamma, Saint Panteleimon, Saint Sofia, show the painter's quest of spirit and philosophie up. They satiate and broaden the consciousness of audience with their creativ intelligence.

It is difficult to enumerate all paintings of the New York Museum but it is necessary to

dwell on the significant collection of 43 paintings and architectural sketches exposing the creative work of Roerich at the very beginning of 1900th years. This rare collection lend to the Roerich Museum by the Art Museum in Ocland, California, for long enjoy is regarded to the period when the painter was on the tours of the ancient Russia to study the valuable rare antique monuments. The painter visited and sketched Yaroslavl, Rostov, Vladimir, Suzdal, Pskov, Novgorod, Pechorou, Izborak, and other ancient centres of Russian culture, architecture and art. These paintings and sketches are of particular value as many of the antique monuments do not exist anymore being destroyed during the Second world war.

There was much said and written about realism, mysticism of Roerich, about the philosophical turn manifested in his creative work, about his prevision of Future. Roerich, a thinker and writer, a scientist and humanist undoubtedly made a great contribution to Russian and World culture.

Having revined the great past of ancient Russia with all reality of its life system nevertheless he always was rushing into the future believing in rise of spirit and human consciousness. In one of his articles he says, 'a person who does not know past cannot reflect future.' One of his saying is most significant, 'From the magnificent stones of remotes we shall lay steps for Future.'

During the last years we observe youth frequent to Roerich Museum. His paintings are studied and there is expressed an interest

to Roerich-writer and thinker. His books which are rare now, especially 'Shambala', 'Altay-Himalayas', 'Heart of Asia', 'Gates into Future' and many others, are constantly requested.

The literary gift of Roerich counted still in his youth and he continued to write ^{during} all his life. Over 30 books belong to his pen besides his numerous articles, essays and booklets appeared in America, Europe and India in many languages and dedicated to the urgent problems of community, culture, philosophy and ideas of humanism. The synthesis of Roerich maintained art, science and profound knowledge in oriental philosophy.

One of his greatest services is the creation of the draft of Pact and Banner of Peace and its carrying in life for the protection of the treasures of human genius in all countries. Being still in Russia Roerich thought about the problems of peace and safety of monuments of culture foreseeing the impending world wars. The questions how to fight for preservation of treasures and achievements of science, art and education were exciting his mind. He decided to apply with the appeal to the eminent state and cultural leaders of all countries to take extremely measures. The idea was realized in the Roerich Pact at the beginning of 30th years in specific form pointing the necessity and possibility of protection of all world monuments of culture out just as museums,

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universities, libraries, temples, churches and all what is of historical and cultural value. The Roerich Pact calling to protect the treasures of culture showed the co-ordination between all countries about admission and acceptance of a special banner. The banner by the name the Banner of Peace was created after the design of Roerich and had to serve the purpose. Flying over all historical monuments and buildings which serve culture, Education, Knowledge and Art, the Banner safeguards them against destruction during the war and international conflicts. One more name was given by Roerich to the Banner - the Red Cross of Culture. On a white colour cloth are represented three red spheres within a red circle just at once attracting ones attention by their meaning - the Past, Present and Future within the circle of Eternity. After two international conventions in Bruges, Belgium, and the third at Washington in which thirty-six states took part, its participants addressed an appeal to the Governments of all countries with a view to ratify the Pact as an international instrument. On the 15th of April 1925 the Roerich Pact was signed by U.S.A. and 20

countries of Latin-America.

The Banner of Peace had already been flying over a number of cultural and educational institutions of America, France, Belgium, Latvia, Japan and India in the past but this widespread movement was broken by the tragical events of the second world war off. After the war the movement carrying the ideas of the Pact was continued, and in 1948 Indian ~~Government~~ ^{Government} supported the Pact. In 1954 at Hague the concluding statement of the International cultural treasures protecting conference, on the basis of the Roerich Pact, in case of armed conflict was signed. Soon the Pact was ratified by 39 countries including the U.S.S.R.

It is interesting to know about the history of the Roerich Museum's arising in New York. In 1920 Roerich at the invitation of R. Harshe the director of the Chicago Art Institute came to America with the exhibition of his paintings. The first exhibition by 400 paintings went off with great success in New York. Nearly at once there appeared round Roerich a group of serious admirers of his art and high-humane ideas. The thoughts about the foundation of the Museum in his name were growing and getting stronger.

at the same time the exhibition of Rorich's paintings was shown in 29 cities of America. During his stay in America Rorich set by himself up a number of art-educational institutions. Rorich inspired his friends and many seekers for a contact with him with his belief in the bright future, in advance of knowledge and in joining Beauty. On the 17th of November 1923 there was opened the Museum in the name of Rorich by the initiative of his friends and admirers of his talent in New York. 315 paintings presented by the painter laid down the foundations of that first museum. The ideas and principals of ethics of N.K. Rorich are followed at the present five-stored edifice the periodic exhibitions of modern painters of all nations are going on as well as lectures and concerts. The Museum gets America to know Russian culture as well as achievements of art of other countries and opens its doors wide for talented painters, artists and musicians.

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within the years he painted over 600 pictures. In 1928 after the expedition was over the painter has settled down in the picturesque valley Kulu in India, on the west side of Himalayas where he remained till his death in 1947. Since older times India has attracted Roerich, especially its mythology and art. The work of painter has revealed his profound comprehension of antique spiritual treasures of India and brought him to reflect its colourful nature in connection with deep symbolics which ~~is~~ is an integral heritage of Indian people. One can and must speak about the philosophical content and spiritual force of Roerich's paintings. At present time there are being written some books just dedicated to Roerich - philosopher and thinker and the literary heritage of the great artist is also being collected.

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'Let the thought about Culture, about nationalities of the world, about the soul of the people be that living stimulus which will help to come from the terrible crisis out and start selfimprovement again, with the whole patience, compassion and love on fellow men. Let the peoples begin to sound!'

The talk in N. Riverside Museum in New York by Z. Furdic in the Russian broadcast of 'The Voice of America', March, 1945

PROFESSOR NICHOLAS ROERICH

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