

The House Among Linaloe

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Well known writer and Art Critic

(Continued from previous Number Vol. XI No. 1)

In the third panel, "The Release", the cross is shown in the heart of the mystic flower of light, which has blossomed forth in the nocturnal deep of the skies, growing and opening downward^s in the direction of the earth. Towards it, from the bottom of the terrestrial abyss, rises the liberated Mankind^d.

The theme of this triptych is akin to the idea of the Peace Pact and the Banner of Peace—an appeal for the preservation of peace in the name of higher values, culture and humanism. The Peace Pact calls for the creation of a mighty peace organization, the International Cultural Centre, for the preservation and safeguarding of organisations and monuments connects^{ed} with science and art—a sort of "Red Cross Culture". If mankind has recognized and accepted the Red Cross as a symbol of help to the physically ill and wounded, it must, in like manner, accept also the Peace Pact and the Banner of Peace as a symbol of the safeguarding of cultural treasures—the highest values of life, on which depend the spiritual and psychic health and well-being of the human race.

Led by the Peace Pact, united by the Banner of Peace, supported by the indestructible "Fortress of Light" of culture, mankind must emerge out of darkness and free itself from fear, from the menace of wars with their incalculable suffering.

The idea of the Pact occurred to N. K. Roerich as far back as in 1903 when he was working on the examination and restoration of the monuments of Russian art of the 11th and 12th centuries. In 1904, he submitted a project for the Pact to the Russian Architectural Society and, later, in 1914, during the war, to the Imperial Government. The project was approved, but the war delayed its realization.

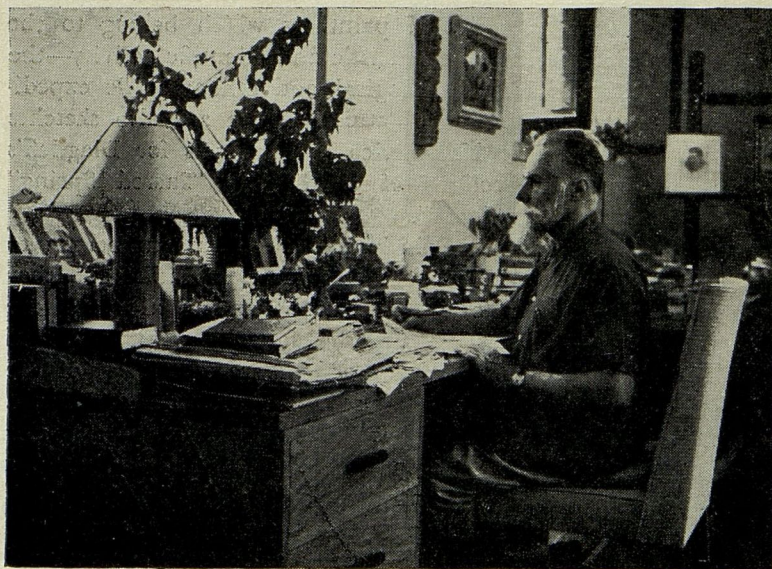
The first steps towards the founding of the International Organization of the Pact of Culture were taken in New York, in 1929, and the hope arose that a "New Era" of a constructive work on the path to true and lasting peace was about to dawn. The first and second International Conference of the Peace Pact convened respectively in 1931 and 1932, in Bruges, Belgium. The third conference took place in 1933, in Washington. It was attended by the representatives of 33 countries. They gave the project their unanimous and enthusiastic approval^{ea}.

and outlined its implementation by means of international treaties and conferences (an account of the work and decisions of the Washington Conference was published in a separate edition in New York, in 1934). The Conference elected a Committee which was later confirmed in Paris and Bruges, for the purpose of putting the Pact into operation.

At the time, many European countries expressed their interest in the Peace Pact and informed the Paris Committee that the Pact is being considered by their respective governments.

In 1934, the Paris Committee addressed also a letter to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, submitting the Pact for its consideration and approval.

In 1935, in Washington, Roerich's Peace Pact was



Svetoslav Roerich at his desk where he spends many hours writing and studying

signed in a solemn ceremony by President Roosevelt on behalf of the United States, and by the representatives of twenty countries of Central and South America. President Roosevelt made a speech (broadcast on an International hook-up), explaining the significance and importance of the Pact and the Banner of Peace.

A sketch of the Banner of Peace, designed by N. Roerich, is kept in the Roerich Museum in New York (319 West 107th Street, near Riverside Drive).



"MAN BEHOLD"
By
SVETOSLAV ROERICH
1961—1962

The symbol shown on the Banner—three connected small circles within a larger circle—has been given many interpretations of which the more widely accepted are: religion, science and art within the single circle of Culture; and, the past, the present and the future within the single circle of Eternity. That ancient and universal symbol may be seen on many of N. Roerich's paintings in the New York Museum.

The Museum contains an art gallery and a library. The gallery has a great number of N. Roerich's paintings, among them (a rarity outside of Russia) a series of paintings which belong to the early period of his artistic and scientific activity—the time of his archeological and ethnographic expeditions to Northern Russia. There are also sketches designed by N. Roerich of stage sets for Diaghileff's Paris productions of Stravinsky's "Sacred Spring" and "Prine Ignor".

Most of the paintings in the Museum belong to the time of N. Roerich's sojourn in India; and they are inspired by the philosophy and mysticism of the East—India, Tibet and Mongolia. But some of those paintings reveal as it were, memories of the Russian North, still so close to Roerich's heart. Here, for instance, is Saint Panteleimon—a healer so greatly revered in Russia. He is walking down a mountain slope, gathering curative herbs. The play of silvery tones in the sky, the hues of grass and flowers, the whole landscape, all seem to reveal the loveliness of Northern spring. It might have happened near the White Sea whose steep shores are covered in spring with a carpet of tenderest colors.

Among the paintings in the gallery are two portraits of his parents, by Svetoslav Roerich. On the portrait of his mother, Elena Ivanovna Roerich, the background consists of the green foliage of trees shading a temple. Within the mysterious dusk, can be perceived the dark figure of a statue of Krishna playing the flute.

N. Roerich is represented among mountains, near a statue of the Stone Rider (such statues, including some very ancient ones, are strewn all over the moun-

tains and deserts of India, Tibet, Turkestan and Mongolia). The Orange gold of morning sun rays, the blue shadow of canyons, the blueness of the sky, the dark purple of a rock resembling a rich mantle . . . the lushness of the light and the color of the mountain kingdom of the Himalaya! In spite of his European clothes (except for a purple Tibetan skullcap), N. Roerich's whole appearance on that portrait has about it something of the Orient to which he was bound both in his life and in his art. His art has also influenced greatly many of the painters of India and Pakistan.

The State Museum of Mysore contains a Roerich Hall hung with the canvases he had painted during his sojourn in India. In the library of the Higher Agricultural School in Delhi Pusa Institute are also exhibited more than a hundred paintings of N. Roerich—compositions and landscapes of the Himalaya. They hang on the walls of the library's great hall, above the low bookcases. In the middle of the hall, at a long table of beautiful Indian wood, are seated pupils of the school, their heads bent over books. Whenever one of them tears himself away from his book and lifts his head, he sees the painter's representations of snowy mountain tops and mountain ridges, crystal lakes, the advent of Maytraya—the coming "Buddha of Mercy". Images and visions incorporated by N. Roerich in his works have become a part of those people's lives; is this not the greatest thing a painter can wish for his canvases?

Svetoslav Roerich is bound to India by even stronger and more lasting ties than his father was. "I am already a part of this country", said he. Representatives of India's cultural life, its intelligentsia, writers, painters, regard him as their own. "Svetoslav Roerich is an Occidental painter, but he is what a painter ought to be according to the concepts, laws and ideals of the Orient", writes about him G. Venkatachalam.* "His art is a kind of Yoga—a path towards the cognition of the higher by means of its disclosure in the beauty of the world . . . One of the Yogas (paths) that lead to Liberation".

The ancient motherland of nations, Asia, has preserved a viable contact with "the Fiery World"—the world of the Spirit. Therein lies its strength.

* * * *

Dusk was approaching. Nigh was that wonderful moment of the transition from day to night, the transformation of light into darkness, which is so brief and particularly impressive in the Orient. We wanted to see the garden, to penetrate into its mysterious, alluring depth, before darkness had filled and concealed it.

"You have not as yet seen our sacred tree", said Devika Rani. "Let's go. This is just the right time".

On a brightly lit terrace, the cold electric light was struggling with the waning brilliance of a departing day. In that double light, the big red flowers on the bushes which lined our path, shone with particular brightness. The path led into the depth of the garden, to an extraordinary living temple. Around the mighty golden column of the tree's central trunk, a multitude of other, thinner, almost white, fancifully shaped columnar trunks spread like a chorus. Where were their roots? Above or below? They grew out of the tree's branches, descended perpendicularly towards the ground, pierced and grew into the soil. They possessed an almost independent life of their own, but at the same time formed an inseparable part of the whole; and upon them, as on the central trunk, rested—high above, in the darkening sky—the majestic green dome fashioned by millions of heart-shaped leaves. In that "sacred grove" of the tree, there reigned a special kind of stillness—frought with meaning and prayerful. There seemed to be present Somebody invisible, immense, wise and benevolent.

I was seized with an almost religious emotion—deep admiration mixed with gratitude. Such an emotion expresses itself in a bow, in praise, in the light of a candle and a bouquet of flowers. Suddenly, from behind, over my shoulder, somebody's hand proffered to me—Oh, the miracle of it!—a lighted stick of incense. A tremulous tiny flame was moving downward along the little stick, turning into a blue, aromatic smoke which soared upward in a spiral. I put the miraculous little stick at the foot of the tree, inserting it—as a candle into a candle stick—into the soil.

In India, the people believe that at the hour of sunset the spirit which inhabits a tree communes with the Universal Soul. It is the hour of prayer for everything living. In everything that lives, the Divine Image is reflected and a Voice is heard—Krishna, the Lord of Music, is playing his flute.

What a wonderful pure, religious sense of nature! No wonder that India with its multimillennial wisdom, has lured and continues to lure human-beings into her fold. Nor is it any wonder that she became a second motherland to a Russian painter who had come from the distant, grey North!

* See, "Illustrated Weekly of India", June 1st 1947 Mr. Venkatachalam the well known writer, as well as critic has done a great deal to acquaint the Occident with the Orient and the Orient with the Occident, through his articles, lectures and books. To his pen belong: THE CONTEMPORARY INDIAN PAINTERS, THE MIRROR OF INDIAN ART, THE DIARY OF AN ART STUDENT, THE DAUGHTERS OF THE DAWN, PEN PICTURES AND SKETCHES, FRAGRANT MEMORIES, SHRIMATI SHANTA AND HER ART, and other books.



SVETOSLAV ROERICH in his garden under an ancient Banyan Tree

The Wind

BARNETT D. CONLAN,

(France)

The wind in going catches this plate of zinc
And makes its presence heard. A suite of bells,
Fine silver bells such as the Chinese suspend
Around their pagodas, gives an airy touch



Like flight of distant spirits. In centuries gone
The eolian harp swept by the lonely wind,
Roused feelings of the infinite. The wind for ever
Calls from a fabulous and forgotten past.

THE TREE
A Painting by
GEORGE BRUNON