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## PEACE THROUGH CULTURE

The Story of the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace

by

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A (chilly) shrill of (anguish, sorrow and) bereavement (had) passed throughout the world [of art and literature, culture and civilisation,] and (had) shook the heart of a fatherless humanity ~~to~~ to the very roots of her being. It was (in the middle of) <sup>mid-</sup>December (in the year) 1947. The world-renowned Russian artist, Nicholas Konstantinovich Roerich, who was also an eminent writer and a poet, a philosopher and an explorer, an educationist and an archaeologist, a historiographer and towering above them all a prophet, all rolled ~~+~~ into one, (had bade farewell to his fellowbeings, had taken leave of this world,) had departed for the travel of the Universe, the worlds beyond our planet. He was a traveller all his life. (No surprise then if he deserted his quiet retreat, if he castigated his mortal remains in the Himalayas for travels beyond our world. As in life, so in death !

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Had this magician of majestic colour, whom we had learned ~~+~~ to revere and respect with profound love, died? It was preposterous, it was unbelievable. The news of his sad and sudden demise came to us like a veritable thunderbolt from the blue, which arrested and brought into unison the heart of all humanity, irrespective of class, creed, colour, sex and national water-tight compartments, to mourn the irreparable loss of this great Russian sage, this profound thinker, this fiery poet of art, beauty and ~~xx~~ culture, this indefatigable fighter and guardian of world-peace, this protector of amity and friendship among the comity of nations not through politics which is parochial, dirty and dingy beyond doubt, but through "pax per cultura" - 'peace through culture'. X

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Never since the very dawn of history has humanity passed through (such turbulent, such torturesome,) such cataclysmic times as in (this) the twentieth century, with all its boons and banes of scientific progress. [In the material sphere.] In the course of whole history, humanity has passed through certain evolutionary growth and changes, however halting and gradual, which may well be considered milestones in the pathway of human progress, whether that be in the realm of thought or the realm of material development. Good and evil, mistakes and righteousness, big and small, rich and poor, noble and ignoble, high and low, perfection and imperfection, barbarism and civilization, slavery and freedom are some of the determining factors by which human progress throughout the ages past can be measured; [can be weighted.] With every minute that passes, the Sands of Time are running out and, with it, humanity is, undoubtedly and uninterruptingly, marching forward, sometimes through the shadows and sometimes through the sunlight, sometimes through the valley of death, the bath of blood, and sometimes through the zenith of highly cultured and civilised progress in the fields of religion, philosophy, literature, science and art.

During [the course of] the first half of this century, humanity has already traversed and trudged through the unbearable travail and agony, the sorrows and sufferings, the insults and injuries of two devastating global wars, and the hovering shadows of the impending, the imminent third world-war is presently darkening the horizon of human hope. The fear of coming world-war has most most definitely rent humanity asunder into very many varied shreds and patches, and the only novel inimitable innovation which may save the world from the present crucial times and the expected catastrophic tragedy is "PAX PER CULTURA" or "PEACE THROUGH CULTURE". [This pan-human idea of "PEACE THROUGH CULTURE", which lived, moved and had its being in the remarkably striking creative genius of Nicholas Roerich whose undeniably undying, indeed, unifying contribution to the world of culture is his ROERICH PACT AND BANNER OF PEACE - through which he proposed, he sought, he strove to bring into being the now-much-sought-after world-peace, is we may say without the slightest cause for hesitation an artists'

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ideal utopia. Now-a-days in this world is <sup>the</sup> prevalent vogue of many utopias - the scientists' utopia, the politicians' utopia, the economists' utopia and the sociologists' utopia, not to say of those of the writers', the poets', the visionaries, and the dreamers of dreams. But the artists' utopia is such where all these utopias find their proper places without much fear of contradictions and contra-distinctions.

Nicholas Roerich was born on the 9th (day of) October (in the year) 1874, at St. Petersburg in Russia. The present-day world recognises Nicholas Roerich as one of the most outstandingly unique master-painters, not only of this century, but of all times. As the 'Master of the Mountains', his art stands out in unique contrast to any of the Western artists. He more resembles, both in colour and scheme, the Chinese master-painters like Ma Yuan, Li Lung Mien, Sia Kule, and Wang Wei. Among the modern masters of Europe, Roerich very favourably ranked with Titian, Turner, and Van Gogh, (with) Vrubel, Cezanne (and) Gogol, (with) Courbet, and Gaugin. Roerich followed no definite school of painting, though art-critics have defined his art as 'Cosmic Synthesis' or 'Synthetic Realism'. But this does not place Roerich's art into any particular category, into any conventional rut of some special school of painting. If his art has been defined into some special school of painting, it is entirely a new school, an unexplored region with an originality and individuality of its own. The school of Roerich's way of painting is only born and will take its proper and permanent place in the near future. Roerich's place in the present is that of an initiate, a pioneer leading the world of art <sup>through vistas</sup> to new and unexplored ~~vistas~~ and avenues, to uncharted seas and undiscovered lands. Roerich essentially belongs, by the very nature of his miraculous art, to future, to posterity.

Overlooking the Hudson River, on Riverside Drive, in New York, stands, as a monumental tribute to his stupendous achievements in the realm of paintings, the majestic, the gigantic Roerich Museum, a thirty-storey skyscraper.

There is not a single country in the whole world, which does not have one or other of his paintings. His paintings, which are



found in large measure in America, Russia, France and England, are found in China, Japan, India, Iran, Egypt, Java and Bali as well. His paintings are in Canada, Mexico, the Latin American countries, Australia and even in such remote, inaccessible countries as Tibet. They adorn world's most famous museums and art galleries and they even grace the private collections of the fabulously wealthy people of the world.

To India and Indians Nicholas Roerich was a veritable "Maharshi" - the Great Saint. Multiple were the aspects of his life, work and activities. "Give art to the people", he used to say. "We should have not only museums, theatres, schools, libraries, stations and hospitals, but even prisons decorated and beautified. Then, we shall have no prisons." Nicholas Roerich lived for over last ~~his~~ twenty-five years of his life in the Himalayas whose spirit - rugged, serene, sweet, soft and calm - he has enshrined and recaptured in most of his paintings which have earned him world-wide renown.

But Nicholas Roerich was not merely a world-famous Russian artist. He has ~~been~~ <sup>been</sup> variously described as a versatile genius, a literary giant who has written not less than twenty-seven volumes of highly creative works. He was the master artist. He was a philosopher and an explorer, an educationist and an archaeologist, a historiographer and, towering above them all, a prophet. For over two-and-a-half decades he spent his life in the seclusion of the Himalayas, of which he often spoke affectionately and whose (splendid and) spectacularly brilliant grandeur he ~~has~~ immortalized in his superb, his unique canvasses. He passed away <sup>in India</sup> on the 13th (day of) December, (in the year) ~~1947~~ 1947, in the Kulu Valley, <sup>of</sup> in the Himalayas, in India.

Nicholas Roerich, the prophet ~~and~~ of beauty and peace, has departed, but his essentially outstanding and spectacularly significant legacy to world-peace still remains and abides with us, which it is the duty of the whole of humanity to fulfil if it is to save itself the shipwreck of annihilation of the whole of human race. Humanity has to harmonise, synthesise, soften and soothe the conflicting and contrary forces which to-day are leading the whole ~~a~~ world willy-nilly to an orgy of yet another



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(world-war.) Great as Nicholas Roerich was as a master-artist, he was perhaps still greater as the "Messiah of Culture" through which he strove to establish the world-order and world-peace. The problem of world-peace is most important to-day. And we have got to tackle it by making tentative suggestions. As the world-famous Indian writer and Nobel Prize Winner, the late Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, wrote to Nicholas Roerich in a personal letter: "The problem of peace is to-day the most serious concern with humanity, and our efforts seem so insignificant and futile before the onrush of new barbarism, that is sweeping over the West with accelerating momentum. The ugly manifestations of naked militarism on all sides forbode an evil future and I almost lose faith in civilisation itself. And yet we cannot give up our efforts, for that would only hasten the end."

(Hope or) Faith in world-peace is infinite. Humanity should lose no hope or faith in the ~~the~~ great objective it has set before it. And the Roerich Pact and the Banner of Peace are a means to that end. in view. Its story unfolds before our eyes remarkable achievements attained by it.

"One other ~~a~~ fact", as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru observed in a speech a few days after the sad and sudden demise of Nicholas Roerich, "so many of you may know about him and which is very pertinent in India especially, is his conception of preserving artistic and cultural monuments and the like. He started a kind of a pact between nations for the preservation of these cultural and artistic monuments. Many nations agreed to it. ----- We have seen recently in the last war the destruction of so many great monuments of culture in spite of all previous agreements to protect them. Nevertheless the fact remains that it is a tragedy for ~~the~~ destruction to overcome these great cultural monuments of the past. We in India have a great number of them and it should be our duty to respect them, honour them, learn from them and imbibe their inspiration. ---- I hope that when we are a little freer from the cares of the moment, we shall pay every special attention to the ancient cultural monuments of the country, not only just to protect them from decay but somehow to bring them more in line with our education, with our lives, so that we may imbibe something of the inspiration



that they have." This was the Prime Minister of India speaking exactly a year ago and the Government of India have already acquiesced to append her signature to the Roerich Pact early in the month of August, 1948.

Culture is the main plank, the chief theme of the Roerich Pact. Therefore, what is culture? "Culture", according to Nicholas Roerich, "is reverence of Light. Culture is love of humanity. Culture is fragrance, the unity of life and beauty. Culture is the synthesis of uplifting and sensitive attainments. Culture is the armour of Light. Culture is salvation. Culture is motivating power. Culture is the Heart. If we gather all the definitions of Culture we ~~find~~ find the synthesis of active Bliss, the altar of enlightenment and constructive beauty.

"Condemnation, disparagement, defiling, melancholy, disintegration and all other characteristics of ignorance do not befit culture. The great tree of Culture is nourished by an unlimited knowledge, by enlightened labour, incessant creativeness and noble ~~attainment~~ attainment. By study, esteem and admiration we become real co-operators with evolution and out of the brilliant rays of supreme Light may emerge true knowledge. This refined knowledge is based on real comprehension and tolerance. From this source comes the great understanding. And ~~from~~ from the great understanding rises the Supremely Beautiful, the enlightening and refining enthusiasm for Peace."

It is the assertion of Nicholas Roerich that Peace and Culture go hand-in-hand; and, therefore, naturally, he wrote: "Culture and Peace make Man verily invincible and realizing all spiritual conditions he becomes tolerant and all-embracing. Each intolerance is but a sign of weakness. --- We understand ~~how~~ how creative is affirmation and how destructive is negation. Amidst basic conceptions, those of Peace and Culture are the conceptions ~~which~~ which even a complete ignoramus will not dare to attack. There, where is Culture, is Peace. ----- In real unconventional science we feel the splendid responsibility before the coming generations. We understand gradually the harm of ~~all~~ everything negative. We begin to value enlightened positiveness and constructiveness and in this measure, in merciful tolerance, we can prepare for our next



generation a vital happiness, turning vague abstractions into beneficent realities."

The pan-human idea of the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace was first ~~seem~~ conceived (and contrived) by Nicholas Roerich as early as the dawn of this century. The same idea was conveyed and proposed to the Russian Society of Architects in 1904. Ten years later in 1914 the same project was <sup>conveyed</sup> brought to ~~the~~ the ~~the~~ royal attention of Tzar Nicholas II and Grand Duke Nicholas. It received the royal acclaim and assent that was favourable enough for its promulgation but, unfortunately, as the luck would have it, the World War First had just then commenced and the initial and final onslaughts of this war prevented the possibility of the promulgation of the Roerich Pact. Because of the war, its noble and transcendent principles were unavoidably delayed from being put into concrete <sup>practice</sup> and constructive practice and activity. Great interest ~~was~~ was evinced in this truly great pan-human ideal in spite of the enormity of human erroneousness which had its culmination in the terrific violence and ~~the~~ tremendous devastation of the World War First. But it was not until fourteen or fifteen years later that it was formally promulgated in legal shape and form in 1929 in New York in consonance with the Codes of International Laws. A Doctor of International Law and Political Sciences of the Paris University, Dr. Georges Chklaver, drafted this pan-human ideal in legal language.

In the same year - that is in 1929 - the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace Committee was first founded in New York and the principles of this Pact were published <sup>in</sup> through the channel of the Press to enlighten the public mind. In Paris and Bruges also Committees with similar functions, duties, aims, objects, and responsibilities were established in the year 1930, their obligations being the same as those of New York Committee. In nutshell, ground was prepared for its acceptance throughout the length and breadth of the entire world.

When Nicholas Roerich first opened one of these Committees, he uttered these eloquent words: "The world is striving towards Peace in many ways and every one realizes in his heart that this



constructive work is a true prophesy of the New Era. ----- In the meantime the fact remains that shells from a few guns can destroy the greatest treasures of art and science as ~~thoro-~~ thoroughly as those of an entire fleet. We deplore the loss of the libraries of Louvain and Oviedo and the irreplaceable beauty of the Cathedral of Rheims. We remember the beautiful treasures of private collections which were lost during world calamities. But we do not want to inscribe on these deeds any words of hatred. Let us simply say:- Destroyed by human ignorance - rebuilt by human hope !

"Nevertheless, errors of one form or another may occur again and thus other valuable achievements of humanity remain in constant danger of being destroyed. Against such ignorant errors we must ~~immediately~~ immediately take precautions and definite measures. Hence, let us protect, as sacred, the ~~human~~ creative treasures of humanity. ~~First of all~~ First of all let us agree that, as with the Red Cross, the Banner may significantly summon the conscience of men to the protection of that which in essence belongs not to one nation alone, but to the entire world and constitutes the real pride of human race."

In the years 1931 and 1932 the first and second International conferences of the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace were held in Bruges, Belgium, and many European nations and governments evinced keen interest in their proceedings by actually participating in the deliberations of these ~~new~~ conferences. Enthusiastic response was forthcoming for its adoption by world-renowned men of letters and thought, men of science and men of philosophy. Voicing their approval of the Pact were countless religious, artistic, scientific, educational, literary, and other cultural bodies all the world over, not to mention innumerable libraries, museums and art galleries from all parts of the world. Some of the veteran military leaders and authorities stood foursquare back in support of this noble project and had ~~been~~ introduced in their military training-centres lessons relating to the Pact as applicable in war, civil strife, or peace. And, it was not long before it had already started gaining world-wide momentum.



The third international convention of the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace was held at Washington in Hotel Mayflower where no less than thirty-five nations of <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ world participated. This convention passed unanimously a resolution recommending the adoption of this noblest, this loftiest humanitarian measure to the governments of all nations, big or small, for adoption or adhesion by unilateral action through proclamation of the executive, by bilateral action through international agreements and by multilateral action through declaration of international conferences. This was in November 1933.

Scarcely a month had elapsed when the Seventh Conference of the Pan-American Union met at Montevideo where twenty-one nations from North, Central and South Americas participated. It was here that an unanimous resolution urging its members or participants to ratify the Roerich Pact was passed.

The year 1934 saw the establishment of the Roerich Pact and ~~Banner~~ Banner of Peace Committee at Harbin in Manchuria and Bruxelles, <sup>in Belgium,</sup> Thereafter there was mushroom growth of the Roerich Pact Committees throughout the world, especially in India, China, Austria, Poland, Switzerland, Portugal and its colonies, as also in France, <sup>and its colonies,</sup> as well as the Baltic countries.

Articles I and II of the Roerich Pact provide that educational, artistic and scientific institutions, (artistic and scientific) missions, the personnel, the property, and collections of such institutions and missions shall be deemed neutral and as such shall be protected and respected by belligerents. Protection and respect shall be due to the aforesaid institutions and missions in all places, subject to the Sovereignty of the High Contracting Parties, without any discrimination as to the State Allegiance of any particular institution or mission. The Institutions, Collections and Missions thus registered may display a distinctive flag, which will entitle them to especial protection and respect on the part of the belligerents, of Governments and peoples of all the High Contracting Parties. Historic and scientific monuments shall be deemed inviolable and as such protected and preserved by the belligerents, insurgents or otherwise in times of war, civil strife or peace.



The history of the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace may well be regarded as a companion history of the International Red Cross Society, though their tasks, functions, responsibilities and obligations widely differ.

2400 Just as the originator of the Geneva Convention dated 22nd August 1864, and the founder of the International Red Cross Society, Henry Dunant, a Swiss by birth and a banker by profession, had to struggle a lot in order to get the governments and peoples alike throughout the world to acquiesce to his plan to treat the wounded and nurse the sick, so also Nicholas Roerich, the founder of the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace, strove to emphasize the need to preserve cultural monuments for the guidance and inspiration not only of the present generation but those of countless generations yet unborn.

2500 Henry Dunant had thought of his project of the Red Cross in 1859 when as a tourist visiting Italy he happened to be an involuntary spectator of a fierce battle raging between the Austrians and the Frenchmen. It was Napoleon III's Italian Campaign and the battle was being fought at Solferino, on the soil of Italy. The battle lasted for about fifteen hours and left to the grim horror of both the victors and vanquished alike over 40,000 persons dead or wounded. There were practically no medical units attached to the army to treat and nurse these hapless and unfortunate injured and maimed people. Their bodies were covered with blood and swarming with maggots and flies. As they lay on bare ground of the battlefield (no hospitals or first-aid for them then, poor people), the dirt and dust, the mud and mire, and small pieces of grass blown by winds, stuck to their wounds. Medical aid was insufficient in proportion to the wounded to cope with the situation. But the origin of this idea in Henry Dunant's mind was not necessarily this battle. It went five years back in 1854 to the Battle of Inkerman in Crimea, where Florence Nightingale treated and nursed the wounded ~~was~~ with the aid of a batch of women. Before that female nurses were <sup>not</sup> known to exist. Then, the wounded were treated by male nurses ! So, as the battle of Inkerman gave the world the organised female nursing, the battle of Solferino followed by the

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27°°° Geneva Convention gave the grandeur of the Red Cross. Similarly, Nicholas Roerich first thought of his conception of the preservation of historical monuments long before the twentieth century. The origin of his thought was, apparently enough, the artistic bent of his mind. But more than that was his archaeological work, his explorations and excavations of historical, and artistic, and cultural sites in Russia and Siberia in the course of his early youth. It was then that Nicholas Roerich realized what a lot of valuable historic, and cultural, and artistic treasures were lost throughout the ages past because of insensate wars and unsensible plunders. Roerich also ~~was~~ believed that people in the pre-historic age were more artistically inclined and had more reverence and respect for the art ~~than~~ than people in the historic age.

28°°° But Red Cross did not become internationally known organisation till the end of the Great ~~War~~ War in 1918. It was only after about fifty or fifty-five years after its origin and inauguration that it became widely known throughout the ~~length~~ length and breadth of the world and rallied under its banner countless men and women to bring succour to the poor, the wounded, the maimed, the diseased, the ~~sick~~ sick, the starved in times of war, floods, earthquakes, cyclones, famines, pestilence and epidemics of all sorts. So, it was not until <sup>1929</sup> ~~1930~~ that the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace, conceived as far back as the dawn of this century and proposed <sup>in</sup> in the year 1904, was devised <sup>set</sup> and contrived into legal verbiology twenty-five years later. in 1929. Both the Red Cross and the Roerich Pact detest war-mongering tactics <sup>despise</sup> and deplore the co-sequences that follow in the wake of war. It is usually a practice <sup>with humanity</sup> which knows no exception, to accept new ideas and new practices after ~~then~~ looking at them at first with suspicion and dismay and accept them only very slowly and gradually. But when humanity accepts any new ideas or practices slowly, those ideas and practices once accepted ~~then~~ flourish and bloom steadily till their course is run. So also with these projects which have as ~~a~~ their sole aim world-peace and world-brotherhood.

3°°° Henry Dunant received first Nobel Peace Prize in 1901 for his splendid contribution to save the world ~~a~~ from the scourge of war



and civil commotion. Similarly, Roerich was named for Nobel Prize for Peace in 1935 for his brilliant contribution to the inviolability and neutralisation of cultural, and historic, and artistic treasures of humanity in times of war and civil strife. But these organisations do not necessarily exist to salvage humanity from the debris of war and strife. They have also a mission in time of peace as much as they have a mission in times of war and civil commotion. Their responsibilities and duties in peace is more arduous and more toilsome<sup>than</sup> in times of war. In wartime everything is accepted as an emergency measure without much questioning and heart-searching inquiry. Not so in peacetime when people accept things after much consideration, [after due deliberation and discretion.] In times of peace, it is the duty of the Red Cross to stabilize the standard of public health at the highest point that is humanly attainable and to train the nurses and necessary staff equipped with the full knowledge of precautionary, first-aid, preventive and curative medical ~~knowledge~~ treatments. Similarly, it is the responsibility of the Roerich Pact to arouse into the people that consciousness which is so vital to the preservation of the cultural and artistic treasures of mankind. When people have such consciousness and sense ~~of~~ the protection of the cultural and artistic treasures? Only when they can appreciate art and cultural achievements not only of their own country and people, not only of their political allies and friends, but<sup>those</sup> of their enemy-country and people ! For, in art there is no enemy, but only friends. It does not belong to only one particular people or country, it is, in fact, the common treasure of all mankind. It does not necessarily belong to the time of its creation. It continues to elevate and inspire countless millions for all times to come.

While the ~~Russian~~ Red Cross is famous throughout the world, Roerich Pact is only taking first strides of its career. The world is aware of the magnificent work done by the Red Cross in the last war - the World War Second. Both Red Cross and Roerich Pact stand to mitigate and alleviate the physical as well as moral sufferings and tortures of mankind. It was only in 1930 that the Roerich Pact became ~~is~~ slightly widely known in the American hemisphere as also - Europe.



It was not until April 15, 1935, that the Roerich Pact was formally promulgated, when the respective plenipotentiaries of twenty-one governments of North, Central and South Americas affixed their respective signatures and seals to this historic pact under the personal presence of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt at the White House in Washington, *who felt that to quote his own words that*

At the close of the ~~sig~~ signing of the Pact, no less a famed personage than the late President Roosevelt spoke these forceful words: "It is most appropriate that on this day, designated as Pan-American Day by the chief executives of all the republics of the American continent, the governments - members of the Pan-American Union - should sign a treaty which marks a step forward in the preservation of cultural ~~achievements~~ achievements of the nations of this hemisphere. In opening this Pact to the adherence of the nations of the world, we are endeavouring to make of universal application one of the principles vital to the preservation of modern civilization. This treaty possesses a spiritual significance far deeper than the text of the instrument itself." Let us bring ~~renewed~~ renewed allegiance to those high principles of international ~~co-operation~~ co-operation and helpfulness which, I feel assured, will be a great contribution to civilization by the Americas."

Mr. Henry Wallace, the then Secretary of Agriculture who was appointed a plenipotentiary to sign the Roerich Pact on behalf of the United States of America by President Roosevelt himself, observed: "At no time has such an ideal been more needed. While individual nations are working out their ~~separate~~ separate economic and national problems, it is also necessary that they recognise their responsibilities as a part of the community of nations. I do say that it is high time for the idealists, who make the realists of to-morrow, to rally around such a symbol of international cultural unity. It is time we appeal to that appreciation of beauty, science and education ~~which~~ which runs across all national boundaries to strengthen all that we hold dear in our particular governments and customs. It is for this that I regard the ratification of the Roerich Pact as so significant a step. Its accept-



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acceptance signifies the approach of a time when those who truly appreciate love their own nation will/in addition the unique contribution of other nations and also do reverence to that common spiritual enterprise which draws together in one fellowship all artists, scientists, educators and truly religious of whatever faith. I believe that Roerich Pact is in conformity with the deepest, the most sacred laws of the Universe and that it has become an international reality at an especially ~~propitious~~ propitious time." 2318

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The then Secretary of State of the United States of America, Mr. Cordell Hull, uttered these powerful words: "Many a nation is to-day continuing to plunge headlong in the direction of extreme nationalism, mindless of its disastrous effects upon the promotions of conditions of peace. Under this spell of wild and mad extremism, nations in many parts of the globe are arming to the teeth and are thus more securely blocking recovery in the world at large. Let us appeal to all nations to join and to march forward together under the Banner of Peace and honest friendship."

Dr. Ricardo J. Alfaro, the then Minister of Panama, declared: "The historic act which has just taken place is one that marks a signal victory in the ~~per~~ perennial struggle of the better sentiments of man against the ravages of war, ----- a Covenant, open also to the signatures of all other nations, whereby for the first time in history the neutrality and protection of Culture are incorporated into one single and complete (compact) body of conventional international law."

In a very recent letter after the death of Nicholas Roerich, the distinguished American author, ~~Mr. James Hull~~ Mr. James Hull, wrote to the artist's son, Mr. ~~Nikolai~~ Svestoslav ~~Roerich~~ Roerich, about his experience and inquiry regarding the application of the principles of the Roerich Pact during the World War Second. When Mr. Hull was in Washington in 1942 for the Red Cross, he inquired among officials to find out about the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace - in the midst of all the thoughts and plans for war. The most important Red Cross officer informed him that the army had decided that the Roerich Pact was a fine idea, but that it could not work because bombs could not be aimed



accurately. . But later, Mr. Hull noticed that accurate bomb-sights were invented, and because of them and of the careful aerial photography that preceded the bombings, the Vatican of Rome was spared and the Cologne Cathedral among other things. And when Mr. Hull inquired as to why the Museums in Munich were destroyed, an American Air Officer informed him that the bombs were directed at the Nazi meeting places, and the American Intelligence Service in Germany had found that the Museums were being used as the Nazi meeting places for military purposes. So, naturally, of course, they were destroyed. But Mr. Hull likes to think that Prof. Roerich's idea did at least a little good, and woke militarists to new possibilities. He thinks it likely that the precision-bombing, at least, grew out of Prof. Roerich's much larger idea.

Why the Museums of Munich were destroyed? The reason for this is not far to seek. As the article II of the Pact reads: "The aforesaid Monuments, Institutions, Collections and Missions shall cease to enjoy the privileges of neutrality in case they are made use of for military purposes"; that is, in other words, to say, the misuse of such places. And here the point to be noted is this that the Cathedral of <sup>Munich</sup> ~~Munich~~ stands still erect, bright and upright, and, happily enough, it celebrated <sup>in</sup> this year ~~1948~~ its 700 years of existence. It still stands there to ennoble, elevate and inspire the spirit of mankind through the incomparable grandeur of its mighty architectural edifice to the highest heights yet scaled by the noble, (ever-enduring, all-persevering precepts of Lord Jesus Christ. The lofty principles, oft-preached and seldom-practised, of Christianity still stand in good stead for the wrecked, the wretched, the maimed and crushed humanity of the European Continent.

During the Second World War took place ~~what~~ the development of what is well-known as the 'precision-bombing', which enables the air-crew to aim at the target correctly and release the bomb on to it. Though ~~there~~ there is no possibility of the immunity or inviolability of historical and artistic monuments, for their preservation and protection, in case of atomic bombing, the human



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spirit must triumph over the material devastation.

As the World War II was nearing, Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, the Poet Laureate of India and the Indian Nobel Prize Winner in Literature, wrote Prof. Nicholas Roerich this letter: "I have keenly followed your great humanitarian work for the welfare of the nations of which your Peace Pact with a special Banner for protection of cultural treasures is a singularly effective symbol. The problem of peace is to-day the most serious ~~and~~ concern. The ugly manifestations of naked militarism on all sides forbode an evil future. We can but hope that the world may emerge cleaner from this bath of blood. We cannot give up our efforts, for that would only hasten the end."

Roerich knew full well that his project would not take shape suddenly. It would eventually take its proper and permanent place. Roerich actually thought of this project in the year 1904 and it was not until 1935 that it ~~came~~ took some concrete shape.

Roerich also designed a special Banner of Peace, which comprises of a scarlet circle with a triad or <sup>to be typed</sup> triple spheres <sup>to be typed</sup> of the same colour inscribed in magenta colour in the centre, on a white background. This sign of the banner has many meanings, prominent among them being that it interpretes Past, Present, and Future, enclosed in the Ring of Eternity; or that it manifests reference to Religion, Science and Art, held together in the Circle of Culture. Nicholas Roerich himself has immortalized this symbol of the Banner ~~of~~ of Peace in a series of his own paintings which he designed in order to popularise the sign of this banner. Prominent among his paintings bearing this symbol are "MADONNA ORIFLAMMA", "SANCTA PROTECTRIX", "CONFLAGRATION" and "PAX PER CULTURA".

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But apart from that this symbol of the banner has universal significance throughout the history down to our present times. In this chaotic and anarchic world, it is indeed gratifying to dig deeper in order to explore the universal significance of the symbol of this Banner of Peace, which is found in the farthest four corners of the earth, both in the Orient and the Occident, whether you are catching the glimpse of the history of recent times or remote.



1400  
In the East, it exists in India, China and elsewhere. In India, its existence is evidenced in Chintamani, the ~~most ancient~~ most ancient of Indian symbols, and in China in the Temple of Heaven at Peking. Even in such remote small country like Tibet, the evidence of its existence is proved by taking a very casual glance at the Three Treasures. That this symbol exists from times immemorial is testified by the fact that it was carved on the Mongolian rocks, on Coptic and Ethiopian relics of limitless antiquity as well as on the coat-of-arms- of the City of Samarkand. This sign existed in pre-historic age because immeasurable evidence leads to the fact that it was either painted or engraved on the pottery of neo-lithic or stone-age. <sup>That</sup> The similar sign is used as an ornamentative design is witnessed in the breast-ornaments worn by women of semi-civilized tribes inhabiting Lahul, Ladak and all the neighbouring ~~countries~~ countries in the immediate vicinity of the mighty Himalayas. Throughout Tibet, it is engraved on the finger-rings. Conspicuous evidence of its existence is to be found on the Buddhist banners throughout Asia. It is branded as a decorative and good-omen ~~sign~~ design on the steeds of Mongolia.

1600  
In the West, ~~xxxx~~ Memling's widely familiar painting bears witness to its existence on the breast of Lord Jesus Christ. It is also marked on the Madonna of Strasbourg. This sign is very prominently displayed on the shields of the Crusaders. It is traced on the blades of "GURDA" - the swords made in Caucasia. It is also trekked on the coat of arms of the Templars.

1700  
Again this sign is used, both in the East as well as the West, as a symbol of innumerable philosophical systems throughout the corridors and ~~xxxx~~ collonades of history. Spanish painters belonging to ancient times, as also Titian, in the West, have immortalized this symbol of exquisite artistry and rare imagination. Proving, signifying, personifying and symbolising reverence and respect towards hero-worship, the same symbol is amply made use of as a carving on the image of Gessar Khan and Rigden Djapo in the East; on the old ikon of St. Nicholas in Bari, the lovely statuette of St. Sergius as also on the enchanting statue of the Holy Trinity in the West. It appears on the "TAMGA" of Timurlane.



It is represented also on the coat of arms of the Popes of the Vatican in Rome. Therefore, no better symbol could possibly have been selected than this one with universal character. X 1797

Those cultural institutions, museums, art-galleries and libraries which append their signatures to the Roerich Pact can display over their buildings this Banner of Peace which entitles them to protection in times of war and civil commotion.

*As we have seen previously,*  
The rise of the movement of the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace closely resembles the Red Cross and that is why it has often been referred to as the "Red Cross of Culture". As Roerich himself puts it: "Humanity has become accustomed to the sign of the Red Cross. This beautiful symbol has penetrated life not only in times of war, but has afforded to all existence an affirmation of the concept of humanitarianism. And the same realization of humanitarianism, the same undeferrable necessity from small to ~~xx~~ great, must surround this sign of Culture similar to the Red Cross. One must not think of culture at certain times when digesting the tasty food of a dinner. One should know that during hunger and cold it is also needed. As the sign of the Red Cross shines luminously to the wounded, so to the physically and spiritually famished should the Sign of Culture burn radiantly."

Again Roerich exclaims in ecstasy: "What an epoch-making day might be before us when over all countries, all centres of spirit, beauty and knowledge could be unfurled the one Banner of Culture! This sign would call everyone to revere the treasures of human genius, to respect culture and to have a new valuation of labour as the only measure of true values. From childhood, people will witness that there exists not only a flag for human health, but also there is a sign of peace and culture for the health of the spirit. This sign, unfurled over all treasures of human genius, will ~~xxx~~ say: 'Here are guarded the treasures of all mankind, here above all petty divisions, above illusory frontiers of enmity and hatred, is towering the fiery stronghold of love, labour and all-moving creation.'"

Roerich knew that not through mere governmental patronage of this Pact will the aspirations, as exemplified in the text of the



the instrument, evolve to fruition, but through gradual process of education and the cultivation of taste in art, literature and knowledge. in the present younger generation and the posterity yet to come. Roerich had much faith in the mission of women who could bring up their children in the spirit defined by him. Roerich knew the old adage: "The hand that rocks the cradle, is the power that rules the world." He, therefore, exhorted sisters, wives and mothers to imbibe in their brothers, husbands and children respectively the lofty idealism of Culture, & the Beautiful. Next in Roerich's planning was the educationist who teaches the Society the highest or the worst culture, and it is he who can mould the minds of younger generation and the posterity by instilling in them the sense of & goodness, kindness, generosity and knowledge, be it literary, mathematical, scientific or any.

Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace was mentioned and applied in pre-war days during the Spanish Civil War in 1936 and earlier during the Sino-Japanese War in China. The Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace Committees have been reorganised or newly founded in Austria, Poland, Switzerland, Portugal and its Colonies, France and its Colonies, and the Baltic countries.

1070. Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace are a solid, proof, an impregnable guarantee, a striking, a strong warrant against the dangerous maggots and flies of decay, damage, destruction and pillage of cultural and scientific monuments either in times of war or peace.

In India, the Roerich Pact Committee has on its list names of such internationally famous Indian personages as Sir C. V. Raman, Sir S. Radhakrishnan, Sir Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar and ~~Mrs~~ Her Excellency Mme. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, India's ~~ambassador~~ Ambassador at Moscow and leader of the Indian delegation to the Third Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations' Organisation. Roerich Pact was very warmly received in India long before Indian Government agreed to append her signature to ~~it~~ it, when Nagari Pracharini Sabha, the oldest literary society of Benares, passed a resolution in 1938 supporting the Pact and again in 1946 when the Sixth All-India Cultural Unity Conference endorsed the Pact at its



Calcutta Session under the presidency of Dr, Amarnath Jha, who is at present Educational Adviser to the Ministry of Education of the Government of India and he is also one of the most active members of the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace Committee in India.

Nicholas Roerich has performed an impossible task. His mission for the protection and preservation of cultural, scientific, artistic and historical monuments has been more than accomplished and it is upto us to continue his unfulfilled and unrealized mission for the benefit of mankind, past, present or future.

Truly, indeed, therefore, Dr. Georges Chklaver, Doctor of Law and Professor of International Law at the Paris University, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ who drew up the Roerich Pact in its legal form, in a moment of supreme exultation uttered: "Seldom are all 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 means to bring together the ~~the~~ 'membra dissecta' of humanity."

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PEACE THROUGH CULTURE

The Story of the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace

by

MAHENDRANATH C. VAKIL

A chilly shrill of anguish, sorrow and bereavement had passed throughout the world of art and literature, culture and civilisation, and had shook the heart of a fatherless humanity to the very roots of her being. It was in the middle of December in the year 1947. The world-renowned Russian artist, Nicholas Konstantinovich Roerich, who was also an eminent writer and a poet, a philosopher and an explorer, an educationist and an archaeologist, a historiographer and towering above them all a prophet, all rolled into one, had bade farewell to his fellowbeings, had taken leave of this world, had departed for the travel of the Universe, the worlds beyond our planet. He was a traveller all his life. No surprise then if he deserted his quiet retreat, if he castigated his mortal remains in the Himalayas for travels beyond our world. As in life, so in death !

Had this magician of majestic colour, whom we had learned to revere and respect with profound love, died? It was preposterous, it was unbelievable. The news of his sad and sudden demise came to us like a veritable thunderbolt from the blue, which arrested and brought into unison the heart of all humanity, irrespective of class, creed, colour, sex and national water-tight compartments, to mourn the irreparable loss of this great Russian sage, this profound thinker, this fiery poet of art, beauty and culture, this indefatigable fighter and guardian of world-peace, this protector of amity and friendship among the comity of nations not through politics which is parochial, dirty and dingy beyond doubt, but through "pax per cultura" - 'peace through culture'.



Never since the very dawn of history has humanity passed through such turbulent, such torturesome, such cataclysmic times as in this the twentieth century with all its boons and banes of scientific progress in the material sphere. In the course of whole history, humanity has passed through certain evolutionary growth and changes, however halting and gradual, which may well be considered milestones in the pathway of human progress, whether that be in the realm of thought or the realm of material development. Good and evil, mistakes and righteousness, big and small, rich and poor, noble and ignoble, high and low, perfection and imperfection, barbarism and civilization, slavery and freedom are some of the determining factors by which human progress throughout the ages past can be measured, can be weighted. With every minute that passes, the Sands of Time are running out and, with it, humanity is, undoubtedly and uninterruptingly, marching forward, sometimes through the shadows and sometimes through the sunlight, sometimes through the valley of death, the bath of blood, and sometimes through the zenith of highly cultured and civilised progress in the fields of religion, philosophy, literature, science and art.

During the course of the first half of this century, humanity has already traversed and trudged through the unbearable travail and agony, the sorrows and sufferings, the insults and injuries of two devastating global wars, and the hovering shadows of the impending, the imminent third world-war is presently darkening the horizon of human hope. The fear of coming world-war has most most definitely rent humanity asunder into very many varied shreds and patches, and the only novel inimitable innovation which may save the world from the present crucial times and the expected catastrophic tragedy is "PAX PER CULTURA" or "PEACE THROUGH CULTURE". This pan-human idea of "PEACE THROUGH CULTURE", which lived, moved and had its being in the remarkably striking creative genius of Nicholas Roerich whose undeniably undying, indeed, unifying contribution to the world of culture is his ROERICH PACT AND BANNER OF PEACE - through which he proposed, he sought, he strove to bring into being the now-much-sought-after world-peace, is we may say without the slightest cause for hesitation an artists'



ideal utopia. Now-a-days in this world is <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ prevalent vogue of many utopias - the scientists' utopia, the politicians' utopia, the economists' utopia and the sociologists' utopia, not to say of those of the writers', the poets', the visionaries, and the dreamers of dreams. But the artists' utopia is such where all these utopias find their proper places without much fear of contradictions and contra-distinctions.

Nicholas Roerich was born on the 9th day of October in the year 1874 at St. Petersburg in Russia. The present-day world recognises Nicholas Roerich as one of the most outstandingly unique master-painters not only of this century but of all times. As the 'Master of the Mountains', his art stands out in unique contrast to any of the Western artists. He more resembles, both in colour and scheme, the Chinese master-painters like Ma Yuan, Li Lung Mien, Sia Kuie, and Wang Wei. Among the modern masters of Europe, Roerich very favourably ranked with Titian, Turner and Van Gogh, with Vrubel, Cezanne and Gogol, with Courbet and Gauguin. Roerich followed no definite school of painting, though art-critics have defined his art as 'Cosmic Synthesis' or 'Synthetic Realism'. But this does not place Roerich's art into any particular category, into any conventional rut of some special school of painting. If his art has been defined into some special school of painting, it is entirely a new school, an unexplored region with an originality and individuality of its own. The school of Roerich's way of painting is only born and will take its proper and permanent place in the near future. Roerich's place in the present is that of an initiate, a pioneer leading the world of art to new and unexplored vistas and avenues, to uncharted seas and undiscovered lands. Roerich essentially belongs by the very nature of his miraculous art to future, to posterity.

Overlooking the Hudson River, on Riverside Drive, in New York, stands, as a monumental tribute to his stupendous achievements in the realm of paintings, the majestic, the gigantic Roerich Museum, a thirty-storey skyscraper.

There is not a single country in the whole world, which does not have one or other of his paintings. His paintings, which are



found in large measure in America, Russia, France and England, are found in China, Japan, India, Iran, Egypt, Java and Bali as well. His paintings are in Canada, Mexico, the Latin American countries, Australia and even in such remote, inaccessible countries as Tibet. They adorn world's most famous museums and art galleries and they even grace the private collections of the fabulously wealthy people of the world.

To India and Indians Nicholas Roerich was a veritable "Maharshi" - the Great Saint. Multiple were the aspects of his life, work and activities. "Give art to the people", he used to say. "We should have not only museums, theatres, schools, libraries, stations and hospitals, but even prisons decorated and beautified. Then, we shall have no prisons." Nicholas Roerich lived for over last ~~as~~ twenty-five years of his life in the Himalayas whose spirit - rugged, serene, sweet, soft and calm - he has enshrined and recaptured in most of his paintings which have earned him world-wide renown.

But Nicholas Roerich was not merely a world-famous Russian artist,. He has been variously described as a versatile genius, a literary giant who has written not less than twenty-seven volumes of highly creative works. He was the master artist. He was a philosopher and an explorer, an educationist and an archaeologist, a historiographer and, towering above them all, a prophet. For over two-and-a-half decades he spent his life in the seclusion of the Himalayas, of which he often spoke affectionately and whose splendid and spectacularly brilliant grandeur he has immortalized in his superb, his unique canvasses. He passed away on the 13th day of December in the year ~~1947~~ 1947, in the Kulu Valley, in the Himalayas, in India.

Nicholas Roerich, the prophet ~~and~~ of beauty and peace, has departed, but his essentially outstanding and spectacularly significant legacy to world-peace still remains and abides with us, which it is the duty of the whole of humanity to fulfil if it is to save itself the shipwreck of annihilation of the whole of human race. Humanity has to harmonise, synthesise, soften and soothe the conflicting and contrary forces which to-day are leading the whole ~~a~~ world willy-nilly to an orgy of yet another



world-war. Great as Nicholas Roerich was as a master-artist, he was perhaps still greater as the "Messiah of Culture" through which he strove to establish the world-order and world-peace. The problem of world-peace is most important to-day. And we have got to tackle it by making tentative suggestions. As the world-famous Indian writer and Nobel Prize Winner, the late Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, wrote to Nicholas Roerich in a personal letter: "The problem of peace is to-day the most serious concern with humanity, and our efforts seem so insignificant and futile before the onrush of new barbarism, that is sweeping over the West with accelerating momentum. The ugly manifestations of naked militarism on all sides forbode an evil future and I almost lose faith in civilisation itself. And yet we cannot give up our efforts, for that would only hasten the end."

Hope or faith in world-peace is infinite. Humanity should lose no hope or faith in the ~~as~~ great objective it has set before it. And the Roerich Pact and the Banner of Peace are a means to that end in view. Its story unfolds before our eyes remarkable achievements attained by it.

"One other ~~a~~ fact", as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru observed in a speech a few days after the sad and sudden demise of Nicholas Roerich, "so many of you may know about him and which is very pertinent in India especially, is his conception of preserving artistic and cultural monuments and the like. He started a kind of a pact between nations for the preservation of these cultural and artistic monuments. Many nations agreed to it. ----- We have seen recently in the last war the destruction of so many great monuments of culture in spite of all previous agreements to protect them. Nevertheless the fact remains that it is a tragedy for ~~the~~ destruction to overcome these great cultural monuments of the past. We in India have a great number of them and it should be our duty to respect them, honour them, learn from them and imbibe their inspiration. ---- I hope that when we are a little freer from the cares of the moment, we shall pay every special attention to the ancient cultural monuments of the country, not only just to protect them from decay but somehow to bring them more in line with our education, with our lives, so that we may imbibe something of the inspiration



that they have." This was the Prime Minister of India speaking exactly a year ago and the Government of India have already acquiesced to append her signature to the Roerich Pact early in the month of August, 1948.

Culture is the main plank, the chief theme of the Roerich Pact. Therefore, what is culture? "Culture", according to Nicholas Roerich, "is reverence of Light. Culture is love of humanity. Culture is fragrance, the unity of life and beauty. Culture is the synthesis of uplifting and sensitive attainments. Culture is the armour of Light. Culture is salvation. Culture is motivating power. Culture is the Heart. If we gather all the definitions of Culture we ~~find~~ find the synthesis of active Bliss, the altar of enlightenment and constructive beauty.

"Condemnation, disparagement, defiling, melancholy, disintegration and all other characteristics of ignorance do not befit culture. The great tree of Culture is nourished by an unlimited knowledge, by enlightened labour, incessant creativeness and noble ~~enlighten~~ attainment. By study, esteem and admiration we become real co-operators with evolution and out of the brilliant rays of supreme Light may emerge true knowledge. This refined knowledge is based on real comprehension and tolerance. From this source comes the great understanding. And ~~from~~ from the great understanding rises the Supremely Beautiful, the enlightening and refining enthusiasm for Peace."

It is the assertion of Nicholas Roerich that Peace and Culture go hand-in-hand; and, therefore, naturally, he wrote: "Culture and Peace make Man verily invincible and realizing all spiritual conditions he becomes tolerant and all-embracing. Each intolerance is but a sign of weakness. --- We understand ~~it~~ how creative is affirmation and how destructive is negation. Amidst basic conceptions, those of Peace and Culture are the conceptions ~~themselves~~ which even a complete ignoramus will not dare to attack. There, where is Culture, is Peace. ----- In real unconventional science we feel the splendid responsibility before the coming generations. We understand gradually the harm of ~~all~~ everything negative. We begin to value enlightened positiveness and constructiveness and in this measure, in merciful tolerance, we can prepare for our next



generation a vital happiness, turning vague abstractions into beneficent realities."

The pan-human idea of the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace was first ~~conceived~~ conceived and contrived by Nicholas Roerich as early as the dawn of this century. The same idea was conveyed and proposed to the Russian Society of Architects in 1904. Ten years later in 1914 the same project was brought to ~~the~~ the ~~royal~~ royal attention of Tzar Nicholas II and Grand Duke Nicholas. It received the royal acclaim and assent that was favourable enough for its promulgation but, unfortunately, as the luck would have it, the World War First had just then commenced and the initial and final onslaughts of this war prevented the possibility of the promulgation of the Roerich Pact. Because of the war, its noble and transcendent principles were unavoidably delayed from being put into concrete and constructive practice and activity. Great interest ~~was~~ was evinced in this truly great pan-human ideal in spite of the enormity of human erroneousness which had its culmination in the terrific violence and ~~the~~ tremendous devastation of the World War First. But it was not until fourteen or fifteen years later that it was formally promulgated in legal shape and form in 1929 in New York in consonance with the Codes of International Laws. A Doctor of International Law and Political Sciences of the Paris University, Dr. Georges Chklaver, drafted this pan-human ideal in legal language.

In the same year - that is in 1929 - the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace Committee was first founded in New York and the principles of this Pact were published through the channel of the Press to enlighten the public mind. In Paris and Bruges also Committees with similar functions, duties, aims, objects, and responsibilities were established in the year 1930, their obligations being the same as those of New York Committee. In nutshell, ground was prepared for its acceptance throughout the length and breadth of the entire world.

When Nicholas Roerich first opened one of these Committees, he uttered these eloquent words: "The world is striving towards Peace in many ways and every one realizes in his heart that this



constructive work is a true prophesy of the New Era. ----- In the meantime the fact remains that shells from a few guns can destroy the greatest treasures of art and science as ~~thas~~ thoroughly as those of an entire fleet. We deplore the loss of the libraries of Louvain and Oviedo and the irreplaceable beauty of the Cathedral of Rheims. We remember the beautiful treasures of private collections which were lost during world calamities. But we do not want to inscribe on these deeds any words of hatred. Let us simply say:- Destroyed by human ignorance - rebuilt by human hope !

"Nevertheless, errors of one form or another may occur again and thus other valuable achievements of humanity remain in constant danger of being destroyed. Against such ignorant errors we must ~~immediately~~ immediately take precautions and definite measures. Hence, let us protect, as sacred, the ~~hans~~ creative treasures of humanity. ~~First of all~~ First of all let us agree that, as with the Red Cross, the Banner may significantly summon the conscience of men to the protection of that which in essence belongs not to one nation alone, but to the entire world and constitutes the real pride of human race."

In the years 1931 and 1932 the first and second International conferences of the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace were held in Bruges, Belgium, and many European nations and governments evinced keen interest in their proceedings by actually participating in the deliberations of these ~~many~~ conferences. Enthusiastic response was forthcoming for its adoption by world-renowned men of letters and thought, men of science and men of philosophy. Voicing their approval of the Pact were countless religious, artistic, scientific, educational, literary, and other cultural bodies all the world over, not to mention innumerable libraries, museums and art galleries from all parts of the world. Some of the veteran military leaders and authorities stood foursquare back in support of this noble project and had ~~intem~~ introduced in their military training-centres lessons relating to the Pact as applicable in war, civil strife, or peace. And, it was not long before it had already started gaining world-wide momentum.



The third international convention of the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace was held at Washington in Hotel Mayflower where no less than thirty-five nations of <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ world participated. This convention passed unanimously a resolution recommending the adoption of this noblest, this loftiest humanitarian measure to the governments of all nations, big or small, for adoption or adhesion by unilateral action through proclamation of the executive, by bilateral action through international agreements and by multilateral action through declaration of international conferences. This was in November 1933.

Scarcely a month had elapsed when the Seventh Conference of the Pan-American Union met at Montevideo where twenty-one nations from North, Central and South Americas participated. It was here that an unanimous resolution urging its members or participants to ratify the Roerich Pact was passed.

The year 1934 saw the establishment of the Roerich Pact and ~~Kannax~~ Banner of Peace Committee at Harbin in Manchuria and Bruxelles. Thereafter there was mushroom growth of the Roerich Pact Committees throughout the world, especially in India, China, Austria, Poland, Switzerland, Portugal and its colonies, as also in France, as well as the Baltic countries.

Articles I and II of the Roerich Pact provide that educational, artistic and scientific institutions, artistic and scientific missions, the personnel, the property, and collections of such institutions and missions shall be deemed neutral and as such shall be protected and respected by belligerents. Protection and respect shall be due to the aforesaid institutions and missions in all places, subject to the Sovereignty of the High Contracting Parties, without any discrimination as to the State Allegiance of any particular institution or mission. The Institutions, Collections and Missions thus registered may display a distinctive flag, which will entitle them to especial protection and respect on the part of the belligerents, of Governments and peoples of all the High Contracting Parties. Historic and scientific monuments shall be deemed inviolable and as such protected and preserved by the belligerents, insurgents or otherwise in times of war, civil strife or peace.



The history of the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace may well be regarded as a companion history of the International Red Cross Society, though their tasks, functions, responsibilities and obligations widely differ.

Just as the originator of the Geneva Convention dated 22nd August 1864, and the founder of the International Red Cross Society, Henry Dunant, a Swiss by birth and a banker by profession, had to struggle a lot in order to get the governments and peoples alike throughout the world to acquiesce to his plan to treat the wounded and nurse the sick, so also Nicholas Roerich, the founder of the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace, strove to emphasize the need to preserve cultural monuments for the guidance and inspiration not only of the present generation but those of countless generations yet unborn.

Henry Dunant had thought of his project of the Red Cross in 1859 when as a tourist visiting Italy he happened to be an involuntary spectator of a fierce battle raging between the Austrians and the Frenchmen. It was Napoleon III's Italian Campaign and the battle was being fought at Solferino, on the soil of Italy. The battle lasted for about fifteen hours and left to the grim horror of both the victors and vanquished alike over 40,000 persons dead or wounded. There were practically no medical units attached to the army to treat and nurse these hapless and unfortunate injured and maimed people. Their bodies were covered with blood and swarming with maggots and flies. As they lay on bare ground of the battlefield (no hospitals or first-aid for them then, poor people), the dirt and dust, the mud and mire, and small pieces of grass blown by winds, stuck to their wounds. Medical aid was insufficient in proportion to the wounded to cope with the situation. But the origin of this idea in Henry Dunant's mind was not necessarily this battle. It went five years back in 1854 to the Battle of Inkerman in Crimea, where Florence Nightingale treated and nursed the wounded ~~was~~ with the aid of a batch of women. Before that female nurses were <sup>not</sup> known to exist. Then, the wounded were treated by male nurses ! So, as the battle of Inkerman gave the world the organised female nursing, the battle of Solferino followed by the



Geneva Convention gave the grandeur of the Red Cross. Similarly, Nicholas Roerich first thought of his conception of the preservation of historical monuments long before the twentieth century. The origin of his thought was, apparently enough, the artistic bent of his mind. But more than that was his archaeological work, his explorations and excavations of historical and artistic and cultural sites in Russia and Siberia in the course of his early youth. It was then that Nicholas Roerich realized what a lot of valuable historic and cultural and artistic treasures were lost throughout the ages past because of insensate wars and unsensible plunders. Roerich also ~~believed~~ believed that people in the pre-historic age were more artistically inclined and had more reverence and respect for the art ~~than~~ than people in the historic age.

But Red Cross did not become internationally known organisation till the end of the Great ~~War~~ War in 1918. It was only after about fifty or fifty-five years after its origin and inauguration that it became widely known throughout the ~~length~~ length and breadth of the world and rallied under its banner countless men and women to bring succour to the poor, the wounded, the maimed, the diseased, the ~~sick~~ sick, the starved in times of war, floods, earthquakes, cyclones, famines, pestilence and epidemics of all sorts. So, it was not until 1930 that the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace, conceived as far back as the dawn of this century and proposed in the year 1904, was devised and contrived into legal verbiology twenty-five years later in 1929. Both the Red Cross and the Roerich Pact detest war-mongering tactics and deplore the <sup>disastrous</sup> the consequences that follow in the wake of war. It is usually a practice, which knows no exception, to accept new ideas and new practices after ~~then~~ looking at them at first with suspicion and dismay and accept them only very slowly and gradually. But when humanity accepts any new ideas or practices slowly, those ideas and practices once accepted ~~then~~ flourish and bloom steadily till their course is run. So also with these projects which have as ~~a~~ their sole aim world-peace and world-brotherhood.

Henry Dunant received first Nobel Peace Prize in 1901 for his splendid contribution to save the world ~~from~~ from the scourge of war



and civil commotion. Similarly, Roerich was named for Nobel Prize for Peace in 1935 for his brilliant contribution to the inviolability and neutralisation of cultural and historic and artistic treasures of humanity in times of war and civil strife. But these organisations do not necessarily exist to salvage humanity from the debris of war and strife. They have also a mission in time of peace as much as they have a mission in times of war and civil commotion. Their responsibilities and duties in peace is <sup>than</sup> more arduous and more toilsome in times of war. In wartime everything is accepted as an emergency measure without much questioning and heart-searching inquiry. Not so in peacetime when people accept things after much consideration, after due deliberation and discretion. In times of peace, it is the duty of the Red Cross to stabilize the standard of public health at the highest point that is humanly attainable and to train the nurses and necessary staff equipped with the full knowledge of precautionary, first-aid, preventive and curative medical ~~knowledge~~ treatment. Similarly, it is the responsibility of the Roerich Pact to arouse into the people that consciousness which is so vital to the preservation of the cultural and artistic treasures of mankind. When people have such consciousness and sense ~~of~~ of the protection of the cultural and artistic treasures? Only when they can appreciate art and cultural achievements not only of their own country and people, not only of their political allies and friends, <sup>those</sup> but of their enemy-country and people ! For, in art there is no enemy, but only friends. It does not belong to only one particular people or country, it is, in fact, the common treasure of all mankind. It does not necessarily belong to the time of its creation. It continues to elevate and inspire countless millions for all times to come.

While the ~~Roarich~~ Red Cross is famous throughout the world, Roerich Pact is only taking first strides of its career. The world is aware of the magnificent work done by the Red Cross in the last war - the World War Second. Both Red Cross and Roerich Pact stand to mitigate and alleviate the physical as well as moral sufferings and tortures of mankind. It was only in 1930 that the Roerich Pact became ~~is~~ slightly widely known in the American hemisphere as also in Europe.



It was not until April 15, 1935, that the Roerich Pact was formally promulgated, when the respective plenipotentiaries of twenty-one governments of North, Central and South Americas affixed their respective signatures and seals to this historic pact under the personal presence of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt at the White House in Washington.

At the close of the signing of the Pact, no less a famed personage than the late President Roosevelt spoke these forceful words: "It is most appropriate that on this day, designated as Pan-American Day by the chief executives of all the republics of the American continent, the governments - members of the Pan-American Union - should sign a treaty which marks a step forward in the preservation of cultural ~~aspects~~ achievements of the nations of this hemisphere. In opening this Pact to the adherence of the nations of the world, we are endeavouring to make of universal application one of the principles vital to the preservation of modern civilization. This treaty possesses a spiritual significance far deeper than the text of the instrument itself. Let us bring ~~renewed~~ renewed allegiance to those high principles of international ~~co-operation~~ co-operation and helpfulness which, I feel assured, will be a great contribution to civilization by the Americas."

Mr. Henry Wallace, the then Secretary of Agriculture who was appointed a plenipotentiary to sign the Roerich Pact on behalf of the United States of America by President Roosevelt himself, observed: "At no time has such an ideal been more needed. While individual nations are working out their ~~separate~~ separate economic and national problems, it is also necessary that they recognise their responsibilities as a part of the community of nations. I do say that it is high time for the idealists, who make the realists of to-morrow, to rally around such a symbol of international cultural unity. It is time we appeal to that appreciation of beauty, science and education ~~which~~ which runs across all national boundaries to strengthen all that we hold dear in our particular governments and customs. It is for this that I regard the ratification of the Roerich Pact as so significant a step. Its accept-



acceptance signifies the approach of a time when those who truly appreciate love their own nation will will in addition the unique contribution of other nations and also do reverence to that common spiritual enterprise which draws together in one fellowship all artists, scientists, educators and truly religious of whatever faith. I believe that Roerich Pact is in conformity with the deepest, the most sacred laws of the Universe and that it has become an international reality at an especially ~~propitious~~ propitious time."

The then Secretary of State of the United States of America, Mr. Cordell Hull, uttered these powerful words: "Many a nation is to-day continuing to plunge headlong in the direction of extreme nationalism, mindless of its disastrous effects upon the promotions of conditions of peace. Under this spell of wild and mad extremism, nations in many parts of the globe are arming to the teeth and are thus more securely blocking recovery in the world at large. Let us appeal to all nations to join and to march forward together under the Banner of Peace and honest friendship,"

Dr. Ricardo J. Alfaro, the then Minister of Panama, declared: "The historic act which has just taken place is one that marks a signal victory in the ~~per~~ perennial struggle of the better sentiments of man against the ravages of war, ----- a Covenant, open also to the signatures of all other nations, whereby for the first time in history the neutrality and protection of Culture are incorporated into one single and complete (compact) body of conventional international law."

In a very recent letter after the death of Nicholas Roerich, the distinguished American author, ~~Mr. James Hull~~ Mr. James Hull, wrote to the artist's son, Mr. ~~Nicolas~~ Scestoslav ~~Roerich~~ Roerich, about his experience and inquiry regarding the application of the principles of the Roerich Pact during the World War Second. When Mr. Hull was in Washington in 1942 for the Red Cross, he inquired among officials to find out about the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace - in the midst of all the thoughts and plans for war. The most important Red Cross officer informed him that the army had decided that the Roerich Pact was a fine idea, but that it could not work because bombs could not be aimed



accurately. . But later, Mr. Hull noticed that accurate bomb-sights were invented, and because of them and of the careful aerial photography that preceded the bombings, the Vatican of Rome was spared and the Cologne Cathedral among other things. And when Mr. Hull inquired as to why the Museums in Munich were destroyed, an American Air Officer informed him that the bombs were directed at the Nazi meeting places, and the American Intelligence Service in Germany had found that the Museums were being used as the Nazi meeting places for military purposes. So, naturally, of course, they were destroyed. But Mr. Hull likes to think that Prof. Roerich's idea did at least a little good, and woke militarists to new possibilities. He thinks it likely that the precision-bombing, at least, grew out of Prof. Roerich's much larger idea.

Why the Museums of Munich were destroyed? The reason for this is not far to seek. As the article II of the Pact reads: "The aforesaid Monuments, Institutions, Collections and Missions shall cease to enjoy the privileges of neutrality in case they are made use of for military purposes"; that is, in other words, to say, the misuse of such places. And here the point to be noted is this that the Cathedral of <sup>Munich</sup> ~~Frankfurt~~ stands still erect, bright and upright, and, happily enough, it celebrated this year (1948) its 700 years of existence. It still stands there to ennoble, elevate and inspire the spirit of mankind through the incomparable grandeur of its mighty architectural edifice to the highest heights yet scaled by the noble, ever-enduring, all persevering precepts of Lord Jesus Christ. The lofty principles, oft-preached and seldom-practised, of Christianity still stand in good stead for the wrecked, the wretched, the maimed and crushed humanity of the European Continent.

During the Second World War took place ~~what~~ the development of what is well-known as the 'precision-bombing', which enables the air-crew to aim at the target correctly and release the bomb on to it. Though ~~there~~ there is no possibility of the immunity or inviolability of historical and artistic monuments, for their preservation and protection, in case of atomic bombing, the human



ultimately  
spirit must triumph over the material devastation.

As the World War II was nearing, Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, the Poet Laureate of India and the Indian Nobel Prize Winner in Literature, wrote Prof. Nicholas Roerich this letter: "I have keenly followed your great humanitarian work for the welfare of the nations of which your Peace Pact with a special Banner for protection of cultural treasures is a singularly effective symbol. The problem of peace is to-day the most serious ~~and~~ concern. The ugly manifestations of naked militarism on all sides forbode an evil future. We can but hope that the world may emerge cleaner from this bath of blood. We cannot give up our efforts, for that would only hasten the end."

Roerich knew full well that his project would not take shape suddenly. It would eventually take its proper and permanent place. Roerich actually thought of this project in the year 1904 and it was not until 1935 that it ~~took~~ took some concrete shape.

Roerich also designed a special Banner of Peace, which comprises of a scarlet circle with a triad or triple spheres of the same colour inscribed in magenta colour in the centre, on a white background. This sign of the banner has many meanings, prominent among them being that it interpretes Past, Present, and Future, enclosed in the Ring of Eternity; or that it manifests reference to Religion, Science and Art, held together in the Circle of Culture. Nicholas Roerich himself has immortalized this symbol of the Banner ~~of~~ of Peace in a series of his own paintings which he designed in order to popularise the sign of this banner. Prominent among his paintings bearing this symbol are "MADONNA CRIFLAMMA", "SANCTA PROTECTRIX", "CONFLAGRATION" and "PAX PER CULTURA".

But apart from that this symbol of the banner has universal significance throughout the history down to our present times. In this chaotic and anarchic world, it is indeed gratifying to dig deeper in order to explore the universal significance of the symbol of this Banner of Peace, which is found in the farthest four corners of the earth, both in the Orient and the Occident, whether you are catching the glimpse of the history of recent times or remote.



In the East, it exists in India, China and elsewhere. In India, its existence is evidenced in Chintamani, the ~~most ancient~~ most ancient of Indian symbols, and in China in the Temple of Heaven at Peking. Even in such remote small country like Tibet, the evidence of its existence is proved by taking a very casual glance at the Three Treasures. That this symbol exists from times immemorial is testified by the fact that it was carved on the Mongolian rocks, on Septic and Ethiopian relics of limitless antiquity as well as on the coat-of-arms- of the City of Samarkand. This sign existed in pre-historic age because immeasurable evidence leads to the fact that it was either painted or engraved on the pottery of neo-lithic or stone-age. The similar sign is used as an ornamentative design is witnessed in the breast-ornaments worn by women of semi-civilized tribes inhabiting Lahul, Ladak and all the neighbouring ~~sundry~~ countries in the immediate vicinity of the mighty Himalayas. Throughout Tibet, it is engraved on the finger-rings. Conspicuous evidence of its existence is to be found on the Buddhist banners throughout Asia. It is branded as a decorative and good-omen ~~sign~~ design on the steeds of Mongolia.

In the West, ~~this~~ Memling's widely familiar painting bears witness to its existence on the breast of Lord Jesus Christ. It is also marked on the Madonna of Strasbourg. This sign is very prominently displayed on the shields of the Crusaders. It is traced on the blades of "GURDA" - the swords made in Caucasia. It is also trekked on the coat of arms of the Templars.

Again this sign is used, both in the East as well as the West, as a symbol of innumerable philosophical systems throughout the corridors and ~~also~~ collonades of history. Spanish painters belonging to ancient times, as also Titian, in the West, have immortalized this symbol of exquisite artistry and rare imagination. Proving, signifying, personifying and symbolising reverence and respect towards hero-worship, the same symbol is amply made use of as a carving on the image of Gessar Khan and Rigden Djapo in the East; on the old ikon of St. Nicholas in Bari, the lovely statuette of St. Sergius as also on the enchanting statue of the Holy Trinity in the West. It appears on the "TAMGA" of Timurlane.



It is represented also on the coat of arms of the Popes of the Vatican in Rome. Therefore, no better symbol could possibly have been selected than this one with universal character.

Those cultural institutions, museums, art-galleries and libraries which append their signatures to the Roerich Pact can display over their buildings this Banner of Peace which entitles them to protection in times of war and civil commotion.

*As we have seen previously,*

The rise of the movement of the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace closely resembles the Red Cross and that is why it has often been referred to as the "Red Cross of Culture". As Roerich himself puts it: "Humanity has become accustomed to the sign of the Red Cross. This beautiful symbol has penetrated life not only in times of war, but has afforded to all existence an affirmation of the concept of humanitarianism. And the same realization of humanitarianism, the same undeferrable necessity from small to great, must surround this sign of Culture similar to the Red Cross. One must not think of culture at certain times when digesting the tasty food of a dinner. One should know that during hunger and cold it is also needed. As the sign of the Red Cross shines luminously to the wounded, so to the physically and spiritually famished should the Sign of Culture burn radiantly."

Again Roerich exclaims in ecstasy: "What an epoch-making day might be before us when over all countries, all centres of spirit, beauty and knowledge could be unfurled the one Banner of Culture! This sign would call everyone to revere the treasures of human genius, to respect culture and to have a new valuation of labour as the only measure of true values. From childhood, people will witness that there exists not only a flag for human health, but also there is a sign of peace and culture for the health of the spirit. This sign, unfurled over all treasures of human genius, will say: 'Here are guarded the treasures of all mankind, here above all petty divisions, above illusory frontiers of enmity and hatred, is towering the fiery stronghold of love, labour and all-moving creation.'

Roerich knew that not through mere governmental patronage of this Pact will the aspirations, as exemplified in the text of the



the instrument, evolve to fruition, but through gradual process of education and the cultivation of taste in art, literature and knowledge. in the present younger generation and the posterity yet to come. Roerich had much faith in the mission of women who could bring up their children in the spirit defined by him. Roerich knew the old adage: "The hand that rocks the cradle, is the power that rules the world." He, therefore, exhorted sisters, wives and mothers to imbibe in their brothers, husbands and children respectively the lofty idealism of Culture, & the Beautiful. Next in Roerich's planning was the educationist who teaches the Society the highest or the worst culture, and it is he who can mould the minds of younger generation and the posterity by instilling in them the sense of & goodness, kindness, generosity and knowledge, be it literary, mathematical, scientific or any.

Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace was mentioned and applied in pre-war days during the Spanish Civil War in 1936 and earlier during the Sino-Japanese War in China. The Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace Committees have been reorganised or newly founded in Austria, Poland, Switzerland, Portugal and its Colonies, France and its Colonies, and the Baltic countries.

Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace are a solid, proof, an impregnable guarantee, a striking, a strong warrant against the dangerous maggots and flies of decay, damage, destruction and pillage of cultural and scientific monuments either in times of war or peace.

In India, the Roerich Pact Committee has on its list names of such internationally famous Indian personages as Sir C. V. Raman, Sir S. Radhakrishnan, Sir Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar and Mrs Her Excellency Mme. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, India's ambassador Ambassador at Moscow and leader of the Indian delegation to the Third Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations' Organisation. Roerich Pact was very warmly received in India long before Indian Government agreed to append her signature to it, when Nagari Pracharini Sabha, the oldest literary society of Benares, passed a resolution in 1938 supporting the Pact and again in 1946 when the Sixth All-India Cultural Unity Conference endorsed the Pact at its



Calcutta Session under the presidency of Dr. Amarnath Jha, who is at present Educational Adviser to the Ministry of Education of the Government of India and he is also one of the most active members of the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace Committee in India.

Nicholas Roerich has performed an impossible task. His mission for the protection and preservation of cultural, scientific, artistic and historical monuments has been more than accomplished and it is upto us to continue his unfulfilled and unrealized mission for the benefit of mankind, past, present or future.

Truly, indeed, therefore, Dr. Georges Chklaver, Doctor of Law and Professor of International Law at the Paris University, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ who drew up the Roerich Pact in its legal form, in a moment of supreme exultation uttered: "Seldom are all 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 means to bring together the ~~the~~ 'Membra disjecta' of humanity."