

Memo to K. K. K.

Knowing the great sense of justice of yourself, and believing that a deep injustice has been done to Nicholas Roerich, we, the three Trustees of the Roerich Museum who have worked with Professor Roerich for fourteen years in his ideal of bringing the peoples of the world closely together through the bonds of culture, beg to present to you the following facts. We do so with an especial poignancy, since the injustice to Nicholas Roerich and the threat to the institutions which he founded, have been made during his absence on an expedition when he is unable to defend himself.

In 1920, Nicholas Roerich, after singular honors in his native land, Imperial Russia, as well as in other countries of Europe, came to America at the invitation of the Chicago Art Institute which inaugurated a nation-wide touring exhibition of his paintings. Shortly after his arrival, feeling sincerely that a great cultural destiny awaited America, he founded the Master Institute of United Arts, dedicated to the ideal of uniting peoples through the bonds of culture. In this work he was joined by Maurice and Sina Lichtmann, and shortly after by Frances K. Grant. Others, also inspired by Professor Roerich's ideal then joined the organization, which had been formed as a self-perpetuating body, intended by its founders to be carried on forever without personal profit and for the noble purpose to which it was dedicated. The inspiration which then, as now, committed us to this work in the cause of culture, was the noble and disinterested spirit of Nicholas and Helena Roerich, which we have had full opportunity to judge in these years with ever-increasing love and respect.

Gradually since 1924, new branches were added to the original Master Institute of United Arts -- including the school, the international art center, a press, a scientific research institute. As the heart of the institution, a permanent collection of 1000 paintings by Nicholas Roerich, was created as a gift to the nation. Then, in honor of the founder and inspirer of the many-faceted work in the cause of peace through culture, all these branches were coordinated under the name of the Roerich Museum. In 1929 a new building was erected which now houses these institutions.

In 1932, together with numerous other buildings erected under the difficult conditions of 1929, our building was threatened with foreclosure. With our united efforts, and with sacrifices which we regarded as a privilege in the saving of our ten years of work, we fought to save the institution. The result was, that in 1935, the building was restored to us under highly advantageous conditions, due to the educational and cultural character of the work which it housed.

Immediately upon restoration of the building to the Master Institute of United Arts, Mr. Horch, who had succeeded to the presidency of the institution in 1923, following the departure of Professor Roerich on his Central Asiatic Expedition, began to claim full ownership of the institutions. Without burdening you with the details of this -- although we will be pleased to give these to you if you should desire them -- we may only say that Mr. Horch is attempting to oust the founders of the institution, as well as us, the Trustees who have given our lives to its upbuilding over the course of 14 years.

The issue in the present case is whether any man -- even though he may have given generous donations to an institution, -- may oust from that institution those who have given their own entire possessions -- their lives and all their creative labors over the course of fourteen years. Mr. Horch as well as other friends of the institution, have been contributors financially to the works. But it is equally true that this work could never have been developed and reached its eminence without the ideals set into its foundations by Nicholas and Helena Roerich, nor without the efforts of the other Trustees, who have worked without thought of compensation and with only the consummation of their ideals, at heart.

On the very last occasion when Nicholas Roerich was in this country, at a Meeting of the Board of Trustees held on April 20th, 1934, Mr. and Mrs. Horch made the following statement:

"At this last meeting before Prof. de Roerich's departure, Mr. and Mrs. Louis L. Horch wish to express their very deep appreciation and gratitude to Prof. Roerich for the joy he has brought and for his wise guidance in all the activities of the Museum. We shall make every effort to fulfill his indications and bring glory and honour to the institution which bears His name....."

After the departure of Professor Roerich, Mr. Horch entered into the Minutes of April 28th, 1934, the following:

"Our Great Leader left New York on April 22nd, after spending about 5 weeks in New York. His Presence here shall forever remain an inspiration. Professor Roerich generously gave new ideas, for the development of the works, which we shall endeavor to bring at once into life."

Since Professor Roerich has been absent from America consistently in Asia since that time, and Mme. Roerich has remained in the Himalayas, it is inconceivable that they have done anything to change the cause for these expressions, which Mr. Horch has recorded frequently over the course of his years of association with the institution. It must therefore be asked whether Mr. Horch and his associates were sincere during the past fourteen years, or now?

We who have worked side by side with Nicholas and Helena Roerich over the course of these years, who represent five of the seven Trustees of the Roerich Museum, feel that a great wrong is being done to Nicholas and Helena Roerich, who have given their lives to this ideal. Over the course of these years they have manifested a constant nobility and disinterestedness of purpose which have remained for us a lasting inspiration.

In the light of this ideal to which we three Trustees remain devoted, we beg your continued sympathy to the cause of the Roerich Museum and the work of Nicholas Roerich. We have been profoundly appreciative of

your understanding of this work during the past few years. Knowing of your justice, we have taken the liberty of presenting to you these facts. In the light of the years of service to this cause, we feel even more deeply the beauty of Professor Roerich's vision and our responsibility to defend it from the present threat of usurpation.

We hope that at some time we may have the great privilege of meeting you and presenting to you something of the history of our work. And in the meantime we ask for your continued sympathy with this cause, inaugurated by Nicholas Roerich, and to which you have already given such gracious evidences of interest.

With deep appreciation,