

July 20th, 1938

Mr. Courtney Ryley Cooper
Sebring, Florida

My dear Mr. Cooper :

About a year ago, having read your book "Here's to Crime!", I tried to reach you, writing letters to Little, Brown & Company and then to your secretary in Sebring. The matter about which I wished to speak to you has become so urgent now that I am taking the liberty to tell you something about it by letter.

A public institution is being destroyed in defiance of law and ethics. A shrine of art, a renowned beacon in the way of cultural progress in America is being crushed. It is a story of conspiracy and treachery; of personal ambition, political and financial; it casts a shadow on the Bar Association of New York City and some of its most prominent men; and it reaches through the courts, touching reputable judges, into the President's cabinet.

You have already raised a powerful voice in defense of Truth in your strong denunciation of flagrant present day criminality, intrigue and public apathy, and I feel sure that you will also decry an act of vandalism such as this.

No doubt you are acquainted with the Roerich Museum in New York, which has been in existence since 1923, enjoying the highest esteem and containing over one thousand paintings by one of the most remarkable contemporary artists, Nicholas Roerich. The majority of the Museum's paintings present an unrepeatable panorama of Asia, the only one of its kind, which the master executed during his many Asiatic expeditions.

There exists a voluminous literature on the art of Roerich and some of the most authoritative art critics have expressed their admiration for his art. In the words of the late Dr. Robert Harshe, for years director of the Chicago Art Institute, "The message of Roerich's art extends beyond

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museum walls. His art has tremendous influence on American art." In 1932, speaking about certain financial difficulties at the Museum which had arisen because of the wide spread crisis in America, Dr. Harshe said, "Danger for the Roerich Museum is a national calamity."

At present the Museum is closed and the paintings have been seized and taken out by two trustees who, using power of attorney (being fiduciaries), suddenly appropriated all shares, with voting rights, belonging to the other five trustees and moved to destroy a public institution which has achieved great renown during its fifteen years of progress. Some of the trustees were and are at present away from the United States and this circumstance enabled the usurpers to carry out this sinister plan to seize a public institution for their own purposes.

The name of Nicholas Roerich has received universal acclaim and for enlightened American citizens the vandalism which has taken place in New York is absolutely intolerable. Without exaggeration, one may say that about no other artist have so many monographs and articles been written, which in many languages evaluate highly his unique art and his selfless cultural activity.

Undoubtedly you also know about the Roerich Pact for the Preservation of Artistic and Scientific Treasures, which was signed by twenty-one countries, including the United States and all of South and Central America.

In many countries Roerich Societies and Committees are functioning which carry out his cultural program, having as their mottoes "Pax per Cultura" and "Beauty Will Save the World." The tenth volume of his writing, dedicated to various phases of culture, was issued recently.

We believe that you will agree that vandalism against the art of such a master will remain one of the darkest pages in the history of Culture. There are many sinister details connected with the precarious circumstance into which Roerich Museum has been thrown which reveal that enemies of Roerich have suddenly appeared who are obsessed with the desire to destroy everything pertaining to his creations.

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We are trying to reach the public ear by all possible means, and, therefore, hope that you will respond and permit us to give you further information.

The destruction of an entire Museum is certainly no less a crime than the destruction of one statue. To willfully seize the property of a public Museum, close its doors and announce its death - all without the knowledge or consent of its founders and the majority of its trustees and the public as well - is vandalism, just as undeniably as if the conspirators had raised their glasses to the "grisly toast" of which you wrote and, after drinking, had hurled them into the face of a marble figure symbolizing Justice, marring it beyond restoration.

Are all American citizens expected to raise their glasses also and croak "Here's to crime!"?

Sincerely yours

Dudley Fosdick,
Vice-President

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