

June 28, 1936.

Mr. Dudley Crafts Watson,
Chicago Art Institute,
Chicago, Ill.

Dear Sir:

I am writing you in the name of Flamma, Inc., Association for the Advancement of Culture. Our Association deems it an essential duty to battle and protest against all vandalism. Since you already have stood up many times for the defense of truth, nobility and spirituality in art, I am hastening to inform you now of the unprecedented vandalism which has just been committed against the Roerich Museum, of which you are an Honorary Advisor.

Of course you know that the Roerich Museum 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 paintings of the museum 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 making this statement I am recalling your own notable lectures with slides, and I might add that owing to the precarious circumstance into which Roerich Museum has been suddenly thrown these slides are of great value and should be safeguarded. The enemies of Roerich seem to be obsessed with the desire to destroy everything pertaining to his creations.

Unfortunately I myself did not have an opportunity to attend any of your lectures, but I had the pleasure of meeting you when I accompanied Mrs. Sina Lichtmann on a brief visit to the Institute during the Chicago World's Fair. However, I have at hand a quotation from your esteemed colleague, the late Dr. Robert Harshe, Director of the Chicago Art Institute at that time. Dr. Harshe said, "The message of Roerich's art goes beyond Museum walls. His art has tremendous influence on American Art." And in 1932, speaking about

2

any financial records of any kind in the hands of the Trustees, and that
all of the same records, including the records of the Trustees, are

2 D. C. Watson

certain financial difficulties at the Museum which had arisen be-
cause of the wide-spread crisis in America, Dr. Harshe said, "Dan-
ger for the Hoerich 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), decided to seize all shares, with voting rights,
belonging to the other five Trustees and destroy a public institu-
tion which has existed for fifteen years and received general acclaim.
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 Hoerich 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, in so many languages, evaluating highly his
unique art and his selfless cultural activity. Without doubt you
also know about the Hoerich Pact for the Preservation of Artistic
and Scientific Treasures, which was signed by twenty-one countries,
the United States and all of South and Central America.

In many countries Hoerich Societies and committees are func-
tioning which carry out his cultural program, having as their mot-
toes: "Pax per Cultura" and "Beauty will Save the World". The tenth
volume of his writings, dedicated to various phases of culture,
was issued recently.

I believe that you will agree that vandalism against the
art of such a master will remain the darkest page in the history
of Culture. Can we Americans who have so deeply valued his art
permit in our country the perpetration of such vandalism as this
of which we will be ashamed in the future?

We know you as an indefatigable fighter for Truth and Cul-
ture and we feel confident that in this case also your voice will
resound in defense of art and justice.

We are prepared to give you all information which you may
desire. We hope that you will respond, and we will be glad to

send you material which will help you to survey broadly and in detail this vandalism - unprecedented in its significance.

Sincerely yours,

Dudley Fosdick
Vice President

January 10, 1939

Mr. Dudley Fosdick
Vice President
Flanna Inc.
227 Riverside Drive
New York City

Dear Dudley Fosdick:

My punctilious attitude toward any response that I may make to the defense of present day culture makes it amazing to find me just now dictating a reply to your letter of June 28; but as my secretary wrote you, it was not available to me until my return from Europe in September. Since that time there has been no immediate opportunity to clear carefully filed and unfinished material in my desk.

I do not know what has gone on in the Nicholas Roerich Museum or the Master Institute. I rejoiced with every far-seeing, beauty-loving person when that building was erected and dedicated. I participated in some of the activities of the Master Institute before it went into the building and rejoiced over the splendor of the new achievement. Then many things seemed to be going wrong. My subsequent visits to the Institute were disillusioning and disheartening. I felt no keen unanimity or selfless cooperation. I felt a disturbance without even knowing what the factions meant.

I am quite sure you could not wish a museum such as that was to continue over the rumbling of volcanic fires. It was not right. Professor Roerich could not solve the thing as a perfect demonstration without being present for its solution. That he alone could have done. I do not believe that any of his pictures will be injured--that any of the treasures will be in any way destroyed. But those pictures should not be placed just any where but only under circumstances which manifest the unity and universal harmony which they themselves show.

Professor Roerich's mind is too great to be submerged by this act. If this is not so, then it all had better cease. This does not mean that there shall not be success. But success must come in a different way. That is what I am sure the devoted disciples to his great teachings and his splendid example may expect. Certainly if we had had the constant presence, protection, and wisdom of the master leadership, this thing never could have happened. Diversion of interest, the seeming need to live and work in sanctified Tibet contributed to the Maelstrom. I am sure I am not wrong.

I do not believe the other camp was malicious or willfully vicious. They were simply let down and blinded by misunderstandings to a point of total disillusionment. The most recent writings that I have had of Professor Roerich have been doubly convincing of all this. I rejoice that he is in this world, and I pray that his wisdom and mastery may be felt most keenly where it is so needed.

Sincerely yours,

Dudley Crafts Watson
Extension Lecturer
The Art Institute of Chicago

4

February 20, 1939

Dr. Dudley Crafts Watson
Extension Lecturer
The Art Institute of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

My dear Dr. Watson:

Even though your letter of January 10th mentions that you are "sure" you are "not wrong", I would be neglecting my duty as a citizen if I failed to carry further my appeal to your conscience in the matter of Roerich Museum.

A noble institution in our country has been seized and crushed, and its founder betrayed and slandered. We who are loyal, who protest and issue a call for united defense in the name of Culture to friends of the Museum and cultural leaders, find response equivocal and apathetic in some instances, which we may perhaps attribute to our own failure to inform everyone adequately of the background facts. This is a sad state of affairs which I hope you will help us remedy.

I am not writing now primarily in behalf of an Association for Advancement of Culture but as an American.

I was glad to see from your letter that you stand by your many previous well-written and well-spoken words of admiration and respect for Professor Roerich and his art, and that you would be quite reluctant to have to denounce it all now. On the other hand I am sorry to see that you are also reluctant to denounce one who does now recant all previous words of devotion and who denounces all that he previously held sacred. The evil of this volt-face is apparent when we consider that instead of giving a reason or even a warning, this man plotted long and then betrayed his leader, his co-workers and the public in a sudden coup to the material benefit of himself and family and a few co-conspirators.

Slander is one of the worst of human crimes, most insidious and hardest to fight, for in challenging a certain slander and discussing its lack of merit, one often only prolongs its evil life.

Dr. Dudley Crafts Watson

-2-

February 20, 1939

Therefore I cannot consider nor dwell upon the unfounded insinuations against Prof. Roerich and his friends with which we are being confronted and which I know emanate from a vicious source enimical to American culture. Great art is more than a national asset; its value and influence are international and it is a universal treasure. It should never be obscured, especially in the United States and at a time when the public conscience has awakened to so powerfully express itself in regard to the present-day human crisis outside our borders, by any form of intolerance, suspicion or malice, least of all should its high mission be drowned in the "maelstrom" of any individual's lost faith.

Professor Roerich spoke and wrote adequately of his purposes at the time he generously laid in America the foundations of his cultural institutions. At the very outset he established an American section in the Museum and outlined plans for the sponsoring of American art and artists therein. He led the trustees to formulate a declaration, still valid, that the entire Museum is the permanent possession of the American people, to be always accessible to the public. It was his desire to bequeath to America the fruits of his creative genius, and he was commissioned by all trustees of three American Institutions to head the expedition into the heart of Asia which yielded, in a series of 500 paintings, a panorama of the East never before painted--a unique treasure destined from the beginning for the U.S.A. This expedition lasted five years but Prof. Roerich's absence during this period was considered by all trustees as of vital necessity and benefit to the life and progress of the Museum. The expedition brought to Prof. Roerich no material benefits whatsoever, on the contrary he suffered great danger and hardships. The Nation and the Institutions which sponsored this expedition were the beneficiaries. How can we then permit Prof. Roerich's name and work to be attacked now?

I do not know to what you refer when you mention "the most recent writings" you "have had of Prof. Roerich", and of course I would greatly appreciate it if you could inform me about it further.

It is only by bringing the truth to light in this affair that we can eradicate the stain from the scroll of our national ethics. This is not a personal matter at all, but one of grave public con-

Dr. Dudley Crafts Watson

-3-

February 20, 1939

cern. Impersonally, then, let me briefly contrast my experience at the Roerich Museum with your own.

● For two first impressions were about the same. Then, you say "subsequent visits were disheartening and disillusioning". But my subsequent visits were exactly the opposite--heartening and inspiring to such a degree that I vowed to devote my life to this work. Far from feeling that there were "two camps" at war atop a "volcano" I was sure that here was a group united in altruism. So sure was I that I did not hesitate to advance to Mr. Horch, through Mrs. Lichtmann, a substantial loan for the Institutions as late as January 1935. The spirit of the giving of this loan was duly acknowledged by all trustees including Horch, notwithstanding the fact, subsequently brought to light, that this was on the very eve of his secretly transferring to his wife all shares held by him in trust for the others. I have every reason to believe that this money helped Horch to turn immediately and throw my friends out of the Institution and later close the Institution itself. Horch apparently considered that I deserved to be left either to search for another "star" to which I might hitch my "wagon" or else to profit by experience and search for someone to cheat out of a sum equal to the amount of the loan, as upon applying to Horch, for payments as per agreement to be forwarded to Urusvati Himalayan Research Institute of Roerich Museum as my donation, I was practically told to go "whistle for it". I have letters from Horch substantiating the above conclusion.

Now, obviously, either I was much more gullible than you or else you were more perspicacious or had more intimate contact with other trustees, but I am sure that such a dark impression as you describe could not have been formed before 1935 nor since 1935 by any of your contacts, associations, or meetings with those from whom I gained my inspiration to strive towards Light. I mean, of course, Prof. and Madame Roerich, and especially Sina Lichtmann, Director of Master Institute of United Arts of Roerich Museum whom you know.

When you speak of someone's "disillusionment" I presume you mean the opposite "camp". The loyal ones, including Mrs. Lichtmann, were disillusioned only in their erstwhile co-workers whom they trusted implicitly for so many years. My own wagon is still hitched to the very same star, "Roerich", and if the light from that star is temporarily partially dimmed from us by the smoke of a "volcanic eruption" from below, I do not think it wise to jump light-mindedly or desparingly into the pit. Let us wait until the "eruption" removes the disturbing elements and then reconstruct our temple.

Dr. Dudley Crafts Watson

-4-

February 20, 1939

We agree that there is nothing disturbing, evil nor wrong with the Museum itself or the paintings. You say there is nothing wrong with Prof. Roerich, and I agree. Inasmuch as Mr. and Mrs. Lichtmann and Miss Grant, even though in so doing they have been caught and trapped in a volcanic shower, have remained loyal to Prof. and Madame Roerich and the Institutions, there is nothing wrong with them. On the other hand, Mr. Horch has attacked the Roerichs, and the loyal Trustees; he has disrupted the work of the Institutions and crushed the school; he has closed the Museum, removed the paintings and deprived the public of the privilege of viewing them. Can you say that there is nothing disturbing nor wrong with all this?

You say the Horch "camp" was "blinded". Prof. Roerich's loyal supporters never were blinded, and they still are quite clear and determined in their discrimination between right and wrong. Shall we of America who revere our pioneer forefathers for these same sterling qualities, now go on record as having lost them and become as lax as a man who upon seeing a maniac run amuck stands idly by, shaking his head and muttering "poor man", or shall we forget personalities and move to stop destruction?

If a worker or supporter of the Art Institute of Chicago with the bald statement "I have just decided I do not like Dudley Crafts Watson and I am sorry I put money into some of these exhibits", would suddenly bring a group of gangsters to remove the entire contents of the museum and place a sign at the entrance reading "The Art Institute of Chicago is no more", I do not believe you would stop to inquire whether he intended to burn the treasures or simply to bury them. I believe you would at least protest against his opening there immediately a private commercial venture. As for me I would call it vandalism.

As you see then, Dr. Watson, I cannot believe that our two views must remain always in unalterable and complete contrast. Please understand that I appreciate your expressions of high regard for Prof. Roerich, his art and the Institutions, and that I am writing, with emphasis on the traditions of justice in true Americanism, in the interests of our art life and progress and the present-day culture of which you speak and for which I hope you will continue to stand.

Most sincerely yours,

Dudley Fosdick
Vice President

April 3, 1939

Mr. Dudley Fosdick
Vice President
Flamma, Inc.
227 Riverside Drive
New York City

Dear Mr. Fosdick:

Your letter of February 20 reached my desk while I was in Mexico, and my secretary held it to my return on the 17th of March. Since then I have had little chance to go over its detailed and very clear statements, and now I am anxious for you to know that I understand and sympathize with your viewpoint quite thoroughly.

If the demolition of the Roerich Museum and the Roerich collection is as you state, it is a most lamentable occurrence--only comparable to the dastardly things that go in the dictator countries. But I still regard Professor Roerich's principle and work so masterly that I know no permanent harm can be done to it. My doubt regarding the right or wrong of the whole thing had nothing to do with any doubt regarding Professor Roerich's supremacy in the whole situation. I still contend barricades of fortitude were left open. Only through acts of neglect or indifference or lack of vision can anything fail the supremacy of the master mind.

The process of building was not sufficiently laid upon foundations of strength, or such a thing as this could not have happened. Let us not blame Professor Roerich. You indicate the necessity of such foundations. His dream world, his world of harmony probably cannot quite comprehend this other thing. However, he did have the unalloyed and unselfish generous support of groups who have forsaken him. Of course, this has happened to almost all spiritual leaders. It is too bad that all of them seem to have to have enemies.

I am still unwilling to believe that anything unlawfully malicious has been done. I think the money-changers are too smart to destroy their own property. They certainly have no intentions of homicide. They will want to put that property forth in its fullest value. How else can it be done except by putting it back into the service of humanity? That is all the worth that it has.

I believe through a loving and intelligent consideration of the other viewpoint with an arbitration of ideas would bring this about much more rapidly than animosity and a vicious struggle. You may rest assured that I consider Professor Roerich's contribution impregnable.

My most successful and thoughtful program this

year is a new lecture on "New York--the Wonder City". I review primarily the great architectural achievements of Manhattan, and I point to the vision and unstinted courage which makes possible the New York World's Fair of 1939. Of course, I touch upon the Universities of New York, the great museums with much accent upon the general collections of treasury, the Metropolitan, the Morgan library, the Frick library, etc. I devote two rather extensive passages to the direct and individual contribution of two Russians, telling the story of the building of the Master Institute and showing some of Professor Roerich's paintings as an example of that gift to the world that comes to its full fruition in this western democracy. And I take my "hearers" to the studio of Boris Lovet-Lorski and show his sculptures, which are the epitome of rhythmic beauty through the impassioned loveliness of the order of life. No other individuals receive any treatment in this lecture.

I climax the Roerich interlude with his "World Mother" and his "Banner of Peace". This program has been done seven times this winter, and I shall do it twice more--always for packed houses. I do not tell you this in bravado but only to re-assure you my lasting gratitude and my deep admiration for Professor Roerich's art.

Now if there is anything I possibly can do in a constructive way to help the situation in New York, please command me. I don't believe that any stones should be left unturned. We should uncover the scorpions beneath or clear the way to a perfect understanding.

You have upon your shoulders a very big responsibility. I am grateful that you are able to assume it, and I trust that the clouds will be dispelled without storm.

We do not need to meet out expiation; time does that. But retribution is very hard to pay for, although it has to be done sooner or later.

The writings of Professor Roerich's that I refer to are the books that have come since he went to Tibet--beginning with "Alta Himalaya". I think there have been three since. They are magnificent. I rejoice in the last two pamphlets.

Please regard my interest sincere and eager, and keep me in touch with the developments.

Gratefully yours,

(signed) Dudley Crafts Watson
Extension Lecturer
The Art Institute of Chicago

Flamma

Liberty, Indiana

July 31, 1939

Dr. Dudley Crafts Watson
Extension Lecturer
The Art Institute of Chicago

Dear Dr. Watson:

Your letter arrived while I was again absent from the city and I am sorry that I was unable to answer it sooner.

First let me thank you for your thorough attention and response to my letter. It is a most encouraging sign and I am sure will be appreciated by Professor Roerich and by his friends who are continuing his work.

If all honorary advisors and friends of Roerich Museum would respond in the way that you have I am sure that the fight against what we still term "vandalism" would be turned to a quick and glorious victory.

Since you offer to do anything possible in a constructive way to help the situation, may I send you the new Monograph, "Roerich", published in Riga, Latvia, recently, with a request that you write a review? I am taking the liberty of sending you under separate cover an announcement of this book. We will appreciate your help in placing such a review in publications in the Mid-West which you may choose, and at the same time can promise you that it will be published immediately in the new magazine issued quarterly by Flamma Association for the Advancement of Culture.

I am especially glad to hear of your lectures and your extensive tribute to Professor Roerich, because this is exactly what is most desirable at the present time---to bring to great numbers of people the importance and continuity of his cultural achievements. I hope that you will continue to give these lectures, and of course "always for packed houses". In connection with this, may I at this time propose that you put this material in the form of an article of approximately 1500 words suitable for publication in the Flamma Quarterly?

no para (re-typed)

I am sending you the latest issue, and, while I know that you

Dr. Watson--

usually receive much higher remuneration for your articles, Flamma, being a young magazine, cannot pay more than \$25-at present.

Many of the more active members of our group have gone away for the summer months but we hope that the fall will bring more opportunities for a united progress in our task.

I am anxious to hear from you as to whether we may send you the Monograph, and also about the possibility of an article for Flamma, as soon as possible. Let me thank you again for your cooperative spirit.

Sincerely yours,

Dudley Fosdick

Vice-Pres