

1

MESSENGERS OF PEACE AND CULTURE .

Along a mountain path, near an ancient mandir and ruins of a stronghold of the Pandavas, thirty pahari-hillmen hasten downhill towards the torrents of the Beas river with two huge cases. Nicholas Roerich sends eighteen of his latest paintings from his Himalayan Ashram for Bruges in Belgium, where in July the Second World Conference of the Union Internationale pour le Pacte Roerich for the protection of treasures of Art and Science will be opened and an Exhibition of Art Cities will take place. These paintings are sent by request of Belgium's Supreme Authority and our eyes follow these Messengers - Ambassadors of Peace and realization of spiritual treasures - as they disappear in the deodar forests.

This series of paintings is highly significant. In them is masterfully expressed Roerich's style, known in literature as "world synthesis" and as "Aurora Borealis". In their sonorous colours and in the images expressed through them, these paintings represent a most characteristic unit of the Master's manifold creations.

"MADONNA ORIFLAMMA", the Great Mother, manifesting the Banner with the significant Sign for the Protection of cultural treasures of humanity. Her diadem bears the same sign, reminding us of the antiquities of the Goths, of the Treasures of the Merovings. Through the tall sagittal windows one sees the wide horizon, with temples, castles and many beautiful strongholds. On the throne of the Great Mother is laid out the memorable monogram, which also serves as the artist's monogram. As if two wings of the Madonna are two most significant paintings. One of St. Sophia - The Almighty's Wisdom, riding on a Fiery Steed, all in brilliant golden flames, holding in her hand a charter - the Banner with the same protecting Sign. Below her rests the silhouette

2

ancient
of a city in Flandres. The towers and domes are still undisturbed
but on the horizon some glimmer of fire approaches and the Supreme
Wisdom protects the treasures vigilantly. This painting revokes in
memory other propethical series of the artist of the year 1914, when
Nicholas Roerich had a presentiment of war, but here he prays for Peace.
On the other wing will be the painting SACRED CAVES of ancient Asia.
A lama concentrates his thoughts and as fiery riders^a they hasten onwards.
A mighty rythm of the structures of the caves permeates the paintings;
ancient images shine in the caves and far beyond one sees white-caped
mountain giants, marvels of a heavenly country.

Another group of paintings is headed by a painting of St. Francis of
Assisi, blessing birds in a nest. One feels the same striving towards
bliss and constructiveness. The saint proclaimer of love is perhaps sur-
prized that the trusting birds have made their nests so close to the
path. St. Francis with a benedicting gesture, strengthens the spirit of
these little builders. His figure stands out in a sharp silhouette on
the wide background of the sky. In this solitary silhouette, in these
mercilessly sharp rocks and in the far-off city of white towers which
the saint pilgrim has left behind is express powerful rythm and
austere synthesis. The painting ASHRAM stands slightly apart, represent-
ing Ceylon ~~permeated by burning heat with its~~ with its carvings
of Elephants of Happiness, permeated by the burning heat. A long boat
glides on the emerald green quiet mirror surface of the lake with a
white figure of a Hindu in it. The upper part of the painting radiates
under the last rays of the setting sun.

All the other paintings of this sending belong to the Himalayan
Tibetan Series, which calls both by its turquoise-amethyst colours and

by the song of the snowy heights, the structure of which is so familiar to the Master. The symphony of translucidity, the clearness of silverlike crystals, all this belongs to the unrepeatable style of Roerich. All this has created the multitude of admirers of his art, who in the same way are coming to Italian and Flemish primitives to be ennobled and uplifted in spirit, as they return again and again to the paintings of Roerich which speak to them about eternity, which is so near to every human heart, if this heart is searching rejuvenation and construction. Lately literature often compares Roerich with Leonardo Da Vinci. This is ascribed because of multiformity of creations, but in inner conceptions of beauty and rythm one can certainly recall many other names which will be nearer in essence.

Let us remember Benozzo Gozzoli, or Duccio, or Fra Beato, and then many centuries later let us also remember Gauguain, with whom many critics have often compared Roerich. But after all speaking about independency of Roerich's art, let us remember the definition given to his art by Dr. Rabindranath Tagore. Addressing Roerich, this great Indian Poet says: "your art is jealous of its independence because it is great". Let us also not forget the opinions about Roerich's art, expressed by such a wide range of representatives of many countries, as Zuloaga, Maeterlink, Mestrovitch, Einstein, Gallen-Kalela, Maurice Denis, Chabas, Sven Hedin, Bjork, Kumar Haldar, Takeuchi, Norwood, Sargeant.....

In this variety of names the persuasiveness of Roerich's creative power, moving above nations calling the human spirit, expresses itself. This becomes still more evident when we recall the fifty Roerich Societies spread all over the world. These bearers of Culture striving towards a renaissance of the Beautiful and towards inrooting of this renovated tradition amongst young generations, are inspired by Roerich's

Call, which resounds in the whole multiformity of his creations and imperatively urges the human spirit towards a new creativeness.

The Master knows much and has experienced himself everything in his manyfaced life. That is why he knows the human heart so well and his motto is: "Light conquers darkness". The theme of a Messenger, as well as the theme "The Saying about God" is close to the heart of the artist ever since his first artistic expressions. His first Messenger of 1897 is in the Tretiakoff Gallery in Moscow, and his first "Saying about God" belongs to the year 1895.

In this new series of paintings sent to Bruges, we have also a Message - "Message from Shambhala" (Shambale Daik in Tibetan). Amidst mighty rocks on the background of a golden cloud an arrow has been sent, wrapped in red silk with a significant message. Roerich's expedition has more than once met such arrow-messengers even now in Tibet, which are used to call the troops to arms against China.

"The Star of the Morning" shines above mountain monasteries of Tibet. "The Greatest of Tangla" which carries us into the high uplands of the Transhimalayas, is magnificently translucent. Only Roerich does not fear to paint such an infinite blue sky, the colossal dome of which is not marred by a single cloud. The artist likes this heavenly dome. Another version of it is represented in his recent paintings TERRA SLAVONICA, now in the Royal Museum of Belgrade. There you feel the sky of Slavonic Lands and here you are enchanted by the truly Heavenly Greatness of the Himalayas.

"Mount M.", "The Tibetan Camp of Koksar", "Basgoo (Strongholds of Tibet)" "Path to Kailas" - all these Hights, Strongholds, Ashrams ~~inspire~~ ~~the~~ uplift the spirit and give joy by their colours.

We sent farewell to this latest series of paintings, as to ambassadors

of Peace and Culture, which are so undeferrably needed at present.

Downhill the Himalayan mountain path pahari-hillmen carry two heavy cases. The name of the Belgian town Bruges written on them, sounds so unexpected amongst the snowy peaks of the Himalayas. Brugges - the native place and ashram of so many glorious artists - is forever connected with the names of Van Eycks and Memling. Unfamiliar sounds here the name of Monsieur Camille Tulpinckx the President of the Union of the Roerich Pact, who is laboring in Bruges so nobly in the name of this panhuman idea.

In an uncommon way Roerich's paintings proceeded downhill the mountain path. Everything is uncommon in the manifold creative life of the Master! Let us send our Greetings to these Messengers of Peace and Culture - to the Messengers of the Beautiful.

Kulu, Valley.

V.B.S.

May 30, 1932.