

SPECIAL FLAG IS SUGGESTED TO PROTECT ART TREASURES

Its Recognition by Belligerents Would Prevent Destruction of Irreplaceable Objects and Scientific Works in Wartime

Humanity is striving in divers ways for peace, and every one, in his own heart, realizes that this constructive work is a true prophecy of a new era. In view of this it might seem incongruous to hear discussions on the comparative desirability of various bullets or on whether one type of ship is closer to the conception of world unity than the cannons of two battleships. Let us, however, consider these discussions as preliminary steps toward the same great peace that will tame the belligerent instincts of humanity by the resplendent and joyous creations of the spirit.

The fact remains, however, that the shells of even one of these cannons can destroy the greatest treasures of art and sciences as successfully as a whole fleet. We deplore the loss of the library of Louvain and the unreplaceable loveliness of the Cathedral of Rheims; we remember the beautiful treasures of private collections which perished during the world's misunderstandings. We do not, however, wish to inscribe above them words of enmity; let us simply say, "Destroyed by human errors, and re-created by human hope." Nevertheless, errors in this or any other form may be repeated, and other precious milestones of human achievement can be destroyed.

Against such errors of ignorance we should take immediate measures; even though these may be only preliminary measures of safeguarding, some very successful steps can be made. No one can deny that the flag of the Red Cross proved to be of immeasurable value and reminded the world of humanitarianism and compassion.

To Protect Treasures.

For this reason, a plan for an international peace pact which would protect all treasures of art and science through an international flag has been outlined by the Roerich Museum for presentation through America to all foreign governments. The purpose of the project, which has been submitted to the State Department and the Committee on Foreign Relations, is to prevent the repetition of the atrocities of the last war on cathedrals, museums, libraries and other lasting memorials of creation of the past.

It is the plan of the project to create a flag which will be respected as international and neutral territory, this to be raised above museums, cathedrals, libraries, universities and any other cultural centres. The plan,

projected by the Roerich Museum, was drawn up according to the codes of international law by Dr. George Chklaver, doctor of international laws and of political and economical sciences, Paris University; lecturer in the Institute of International High Studies, in consultation with Professor Albert Geouffre de la Pradelle; member of the Hague Peace Court, vice president of the Institute of International Law of Paris, and member of the faculty of law, the Sorbonne. Both are honorary advisers of the Roerich Museum.

As set forth in Article I of the pact, "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."

Move Well Received.

When the idea of an international cultural flag was first propounded, we were not surprised to find that it met with unanimous interest and enthusiasm. Experienced statesmen wondered why it had not been thought of before. When we asked our honorary advisers, Dr. George Chklaver and Professor Albert Geouffre de la Pradelle, to frame this idea into an international formula, we received not only a splendidly formulated project of international agreement, but also many answers full of pan-human sympathy.

This international flag for the protection of beauty and science would not in any way demean any interests or lead to misunderstandings. On the contrary, it elevates the universal understanding of evolutionary discoveries, as though new human values had been created and we were moving on to a path of progress and peace. And this understanding of a creative striving toward peace becomes more real. Above all else, this guardian of peace reminds one of the necessity for impressing cultural treasures in the world annals. This is not difficult and in many countries it is already accomplished, although there are gaps and each enrichment in the universal consciousness must be greeted. As the Red Cross flag needs no explanation to even the most uncultured mind, so does this new flag, guardian of cultural treas-

ures, speak for itself. It is simple enough to explain, even to a barbarian, the importance of safeguarding art and science.

Need for Prompt Action.

We often repeat that the cornerstone of the future civilization rests upon beauty and knowledge. Now we must act upon this thought, and act quickly. The League of Nations, which has progressed toward international harmony, will not be opposed to this flag, for it expresses their aims of a world unity.

That the idea was originally conceived in the United States is not an accident. By its geographical position the United States is least personally affected by such measures of protection. Hence, this proposition comes from a country whose own art treasures are in no particular danger, illustrating the better that this flag is a symbol of peace, not of one country, but of civilization as a whole.

The flag designed for this project has three spheres within a circle on a white ground, symbol of eternity and unity. Although I do not know when this banner may wave above all the world's cultural institutions, the seed is already sown. Already it has attracted many great minds and travels from heart to heart, spreading once again peace and good-will among men.

Really it is imperative to take immediate measures to preserve the noble heritage of our past for a glorious posterity. This can only come if all countries pledge themselves to protect the creations of culture, which, after all, belong to no one nation but to the world. In this way we may create the next vital step for a universal culture and peace.

NICHOLAS K. ROERICH.
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