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Constructive Work

(D E C L A R A T I O N)

by Professor Nicholas Roerich

at the meeting of the Committee of the French Association of the
Friends of the Roerich Museum.

Paris, June 21, 1930.

This day is especially memorable for me; just thirty years ago, I left Paris, after having finished my art studies there under the direction of Fernand Cormon. I carried away with me, not only Master Cormon's teachings relative to art, but in addition his friendship and his advice -- the fruit of his experience of life-- which later I had many occasions to remember.

Among the eminent French artists that I met at this epoch, I was often struck by the quality that true culture alone can give. When Fernand Cormon or the illustrious Puvis de Chavannes expressed their views on Art, they always gave proof of an admirable tolerance. Thus, for example, I remember that in visiting an exposition with Puvis de Chavannes, I was surprised to note how he could find kindly and positive words for the most diverse artistic creations. From time to time, the Master passed by a work in silence-- this was the only sign of his disapproval.

Gradually, as the years go by, we begin to understand better the value of that positive tolerance, united to an intrepid, creative spirit. We recognize the fact that intolerance is nothing but ignorance. Knowledge and experience, free from all prejudice, can alone erect a solid construction.

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-2- Declaration to the Committee of the French Association of Friends.

I am very happy to be able to express in person to the Committee of the French Association of Friends of Roerich Museum my feelings of profound friendship, and to add a few words relating to the future activity of the French Association.

FRENCH ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDS OF ROERICH MUSEUM

In examining the performance of the Committee of the French Association since its beginning, I perceive immediately a most favorable sign. We have started our work in common in the name of the kindly principle of Unity; but the Union can only be established on the basis of an effective sympathy. Now, in observing the results obtained by the French Association, one understands immediately that you have known how to establish a real collaboration always fruitful, and consequently useful.

We have so often recalled our motto: "Art and Science are the pillars of the Evolution of the Future", that at this moment it seems to me unnecessary to reconsider these general ideas. It suffices to affirm the great influence exerted by the currents of exchange between the various countries; these exchanges not only enriching the human spirit, but really ennobling it.

NEW ASSOCIATION IN NEW YORK

During the course of the last few months, we have had from all sides of the ocean, numerous occasions^s to collaborate cordially. A French Association of Friends of Roerich Museum has been formed in New York, with the aid of that eminent representative of the Republic, M. Mongendre, ^{he} the Consul General. Just before my departure from New York I had the

-3- Declaration to the Committee of the French Association of Friends honor of inaugurating this group, and I was touched profoundly to see the glorious French flag unite with the starry banner of the United States in a magnificent play of color.

The greetings brought to us by the Consul General, M. Mongendre, Professor Meillet, of the College of France, and the other distinguished speakers, contributed to create, that evening, an atmosphere of real friendship.

The spontaneous ovations which greeted the strains of the Marseillaise showed, once more, how much the citizens of the United States appreciate the great Nation, its friend and associate.

Not long after, several societies^e affiliated with the Roerich Museum were formed, notably the Society of Saint Francis of Assisi^s, the Spinoza^z Association and the Shakespeare Association.

During the course of my recent stay in London, I was very happy to learn of the inauguration at the Roerich Museum, of a British Group, and also an Hellenic Association, "Origen"; almost simultaneously, a Brazill^lian Association of Friends of the Roerich Museum was founded at Rio de Janeiro.

VISIT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF COLOMBIA

Recently the Roerich Museum had the honor to receive a visit from the President of the Republic of Colombia. Following the friendly ties which were formed, one can easily fore^etell in the near fut^{u u}ure the formation of a Colombian Association.

It is thus that the union of spirits in the Name of Beauty, of Good and of mutual Comprehension, is formed.

FRANCO-AMERICAN COLLABORATION

Returning to the activities of the French Association of the Friends of the Roerich Museum, I should like to tell you how broad seem to me the possibilities of all kinds that open before us, certain of them appearing on first glance, un hoped for.

The American Public enthusiastically hailed the concerts of the Society of Ancient Music, by ^{M.} Casadesus, and it is to be expected that the next Representative ^E Exposition of French Modern Art will contribute its part towards reinforcing our friendly ties.

During the course of this year, we have had, at the Roerich Museum more than a hundred artistic and scientific displays of all kinds, destined to explain the creative genius of the various countries.

I hope that the French people who visit the United States with the view of lecturing there, will really be able to enrich the American soul, by explaining to them the French doctrines of Art and Literature, and also, by undertaking to make known to the people of the United States the glorious lives of the French heroes, whose feats can give an just idea of French grandeur. I think that competent authorities in France should consider the possibilities of organizing for American visitors, special trips to the regions where the memory of the national heroes is evoked by the scenes of their magnificent deeds.

In New York, we shall be happy, from time to time, to be able to show films of French monuments and historical sites, and episodes illustrating the glories of this Country.

Following through the same idea, we might propose, on behalf of our American Institutions, the organization of lectures and artistic

manifestations in France.

AUDIENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

My actual stay in France was marked by manifestations precious to me - of sympathy, friendship and spiritual rapport.

The audience granted to me ⁱⁿ of the 13th of June ^{1930,} by the President of the Republic left me with an unforgettable impression.

In eloquent terms, the President expressed his profound knowledge of the role in the world played by the activities of our Institutions, so that I could feel this real vibration of spiritual chords, which is so characteristic of glorious France. When the President said that I had "a French heart", it was an expression of sentiment that unites men and nations, and which prepares Humanity for ^{new} ~~the~~ possibilities. So, when the President declared that there was nothing to oppose the Union of France and the United States I could appreciate his lofty political thought, which actuates the towards a fruitful peace.

With broad and friendly strokes the President sketched the situation in Asia, and there again, one felt the precious quality of an action inspired by true culture.

The President charged me to transmit to all our friends his feelings and good-will and respect for our cultural works. I was very much impressed to see how well the President knows and appreciates our institutions in America and the French Association in Paris.

I was happy to present the President with the American edition of Himalaya and the French book published by the press "True and

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-6- Declaration to the Committee of the French Association of Friends.

Beautiful" (with the articles of Madame de Vaux-Phalipau and of Mr. Mr. Georges Chklaver.)

Upon leaving this significant audience I thought that it is precisely by similar relations, founded on culture, that the best possibilities are created.

Our essential duty is to bring up a new generation, both vigorous and well-informed. It is due to this broad understanding that the Nations are establishing an efficacious co-operation. Truthfully, this was for me a memorable day, for, it not only could I appreciate the elevated personality of the President, but also the nobility of the French Nation, with which we are so happy to be able to discuss the principles of true culture.

In reply to my telegram in which I reported to the Trustees of the Roerich Museum the audience which the President of France had just granted me, I received from Mr. L. Horch, President of the Roerich Museum the following dispatch; "The President and the Trustees of the Roerich Museum were greatly delighted with the audience which has been granted you by the President of the French Republic. President Doumergue has always maintained the ideal of the great French Nation, and its most lofty aspirations. His enlightened attitude in regard to the peaceful and cultural aims of our Institutions will always remain in the hearts of our numerous American friends, who are striving to create a more intimate union between France and America with the aid of Art and Culture. "

OTHER INTERVIEWS IN FRANCE.

Lately, it has been my privilege to meet numerous political and artistic personalities of France.

I am happy to state and to be able to write in our record that the same feelings of reciprocal understanding inspired all these interviews. This will serve, I hope, not only to fortify the present, but, also to forge brilliant possibilities for a vast future.

It will be my great happiness to spread this news among our co-workers and the Members of the Societies^{es} of the Friends of the Roerich Museum in all countries of Europe, North and South America and in Asia.

(next page follows here directly)

THE INVITATION OF THE CITY OF PARIS

Personally, I was profoundly touched by the gesture of the Municipal Council of the City of Paris, who voted to put at my disposal the rooms of the Palais des Beaux Arts with the purpose of installing there an exhibition of my paintings. I have not yet decided on the exact date of this exhibition, because wishing to make it as worthy as possible of the magnificent frame offered it by the "enlightened city", I should like to have, as part of it, some paintings consecrated to those subjects which are particularly dear to me and which are directly related to France. But this will take me some time.

THE NEW FLAG

Allow me to entrust to you today two flags; one of them, that of our Museum, and the other the banner designed to protect art treasures, ^{regarding} ~~respecting~~ which you have already expressed your sympathetic feelings. We are at present receiving letters from all quarters of the globe expressing enthusiastic adherence to this plan.

I am happy to inform you that the representatives of the "Puissances", meeting at Brussels, the 22nd of last May, at the session of the Office of Museums' of the Institute of Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations, have signed the recommendation of the preliminary plan, such as it was presented through the kindness of the Secretariat General of your French Association. This preliminary plan will be examined between the 18th and 22nd of July of this year by the Commission of Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations and we are hopeful that it will shortly be ratified by all the interested governments.

But, whatever the final fate of our projects, we can say that, thanks to our combined efforts, this new seed has been sown and it will bear its fruits in due time.

THE INSIGNIA OF THE ROERICH MUSEUM

Conforming to the decisions of the Council of Trustees of the Roerich Museum, we have ordered a special badge for the members of our Associations.

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Let us hope that this badge, this cross of Cultural Work, will bind even closer the members of our institutions, separated by space, but united in spirit.

QUESTION OF PERMANENT QUARTERS

Observing the development of the activities of the Committee of the Association of Friends of Roerich Museum, I think that permanent quarters should be assured them. Faithful to the spirit of union which presides over all our efforts, I thought that we should establish a friendly tie with a French institution pursuing similar aims--the safety and renaissance of Art and of Culture. The League for the Defense of Art, which has united so many eminent persons for the protection of those treasures dear to all of us, would perhaps, be an excellent collaborator, because the League, as much as I know of it, is an institution whose field of action is limited to France, while our activities spread over many countries; so, our two associations could complement each other and render mutual ~~an~~ service.

PAINTING FOR THE FRENCH ASSOCIATION

Madame de Vaux-Phalipau, who puts all her heart into service for the Association, has asked me to give one of my paintings for the future quarters of our Association; this will be the beginning of a part of the Roerich Museum in France. It was with pleasure that I consented to this request so flattering to me, and during my next voyage in India, where I shall visit in Naggar our "Institute of the Himalayas", I shall be happy to paint a picture for the quarters of the French Association.

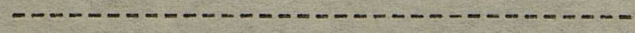
GIFT TO THE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

I take this occasion to inform you that the Institute of the Himalayas has proposed to Mr. ^aMangin, Director of the National Museum of Natural History of Paris, a presentation of collections of "flora" of the Himalayan region. Mr. Mangin with his customary kindness and understanding, has consented to accept this gift. Thus is created a new link in our Franco-American cooperation.

EXPEDITION IN JUGOSLAVIA

I should like to mention another manifestation of our collaboration--to let you know the proposal which comes to me from the Jugosalvian Academy of Arts and Sciences--which has recently elected me Honorary Member--concerning the organization of an artistic Expedition across the historical sites of Jugoslavia. The letter of the President of the Academy also contained a communication relative to the interest that His Majesty, the King of Jugoslavia bears towards our institutions. I was delighted to hear the gracious comments on my art that King Alexander made on this occasion.

The fact that this invitation was received during my stay in France created in my eyes an even closer tie with the rest of our activities.



It is with the greatest satisfaction that we view to what extent the program of events of our various societies grouped around the Roerich Museum, are free from all shackles and preconceived limitations. This liberty of movement in the vast domain of cultural activities seems to me to be the guage of the develppment and of the future prosperity of our Associations.

Too often things are complicated by reason of various routine habits. But everything becomes easier when there is a kindly and benevolent enthusiasm, directed towards Science and Beauty.

If, because of ignorance someone criticises us, we can answer him victoriously: "We are sincere. We are attempting to make everyone's life nobler and more beautiful. We destroy nothing, but we construct. We adopt everywhere a positive attitude, and we avoid all negation! Without being amorphous pacificists, we should like to see the "Peace Banner" float like an emblem of a new and magnificent era. I do not think we are abstract idealists. Altogether the contrary, it seems to me that to reflect on the means of beautifying and ennobling life, both individual and collective, is to turn towards the most immediate reality.

This soaring towards the common good, as well as the development of the feeling of the Beautiful, will give us the necessary strength and will assure for our institutions a continual influx of new forces.

France, which seems to me like a precious receptacle of civilization, gives us a glorious example.

Like a Phoenix, rising from its own ashes, always stronger and more beautiful, great and glorious France is always regenerated after each trial which it endures, in the course of its history, evoking from these very trials the impetus towards Progress!

I express my feelings of friendliness and attachment to the French nation, and to all our dear French Friends!