

1

BANNER *of* PEACE

By Nicholas Roerich

Third International Convention
for
Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace
WASHINGTON, D. C.
November 17th and 18th, 1933

Reprinted from
"NEW HAVEN TEACHERS' JOURNAL"
October 1933
New Haven, Conn.

Banner of Peace

(Washington Convention for Roerich Peace Pact, 1933)

The whole world ponders about peace. Everyone in his language, within his possibilities, pronounces this great conception which leads humanity to self-perfecting.

It does not matter if everything cannot be done at once. But let space be cemented with this mighty call. May our age bear the seal of peace, creative labor, and true cooperation.

On November 17, the Convention of the Banner of Peace in Washington will discuss the most immediate measures for introducing into life our Banner-Protector, which like a watchful guardian should be unfurled over all treasures of Art and Knowledge. It will wave over monuments of Religions and Culture, calling for preservation of the real treasures of mankind. May all friends of peace, all friends of the preservation of treasures of human genius, be with us on that day!

I am fully convinced that this idea will enter into life. The thought of protection of cultural treasures of humanity preoccupied me for several decades, and the sad events of life itself strengthened my project still more. Already in 1904, addressing the Society of Architect Artists in St. Petersburg, I outlined this idea, calling attention to the tragic condition of many state architectural monuments. My extensive travels to ancient monasteries and historical cities, also the archaeological excavations in such important places as Novgorod and other regions linked with the most ancient traditions, gave me rich material to affirm the necessity for urgent measures to protect cultural treasures. Later in 1914 after the destructions, when many irreparable historical monuments perished, I made a similar report to the late Emperor Nicholas II and to the late Commander-in-Chief, Grand Duke Nicholas. Both reports met with great sympathy and only such an extraordinary havoc as the war prevented its immediate development. Then, as President of the Exhibition of Allied Nations where Flemish, French, British, and the arts of other allied nations were beautifully represented, I had again a happy opportunity to propound this idea and was convinced that sooner or later the protection of cultural treasures would become a sacred reality in the world.

With new ardour these thoughts preoccupied me when we had to witness no longer the vandalism of warfare, but the vandalism of the time of peace. For an untrained eye it is quite impossible to imagine how many cultural treasures that can never be replaced are exposed to danger and perish without leaving any traces. One of our foremost duties is to apply all our efforts to direct the public attention to their real treasures. Each day brings news of some new destruction; we are already imbued with the idea that precious monuments must not be carried away but must be safeguarded where they stand, the more so because the possibilities of modern transportation make even the remotest places accessible. I am deeply convinced that universal attention will be paid to cultural treasures, and as its symbol the universally unifying Banner will bring a profound and absolute usefulness to the cultural development of peoples.

I am not astonished that we receive so many enthusiastic responses to our Banner of Peace. The Past is filled with deplorably sad and irreparable destructions. We see that not only in times of war but also during other moments of unrest, creations of human genius are destroyed. At the same time the elite of humanity understands that no evolution is possible without the accumulations of Culture. We understand how indescribably difficult are the ways of Culture, hence the more carefully must we guard the paths which lead to it. It is our duty to create for the young generation traditions of Culture. There, where is Culture, there is Peace; there is achievement, there is the right solution for the difficult social problems. Culture is the accumulation of the highest Bliss, highest Beauty, highest Knowledge. In no other way can humanity pride itself on having served sufficiently the florescence of Culture. After a state of ignorance, we reach civilization, then gradually acquire education, then comes intelligence, then follows refinement, and this synthesis opens the gates to high Culture.

We must admit that our precious and unique treasures of Art and Science are not even properly catalogued. And if our Banner of Peace may be the impetus to urge such a result for universal treasures, this alone would be the fulfilment of a colossal task. How much of the useful and beautiful could be easily attained! Let us imagine a universal day of Culture, when simultaneously in all schools of the world will be extolled the true treasures of nations and humanity.

Among the many works of enthusiasm must be pointed out the great sympathy of the Women of America. The representatives of 5,000,000 have pledged their support for the Peace Banner. Vast is the list of organizations, societies, libraries, museums, schools, and statesmen, whose members have expressed the great hope that this project will enter into life. Several organizations have already hoisted the Banner of Peace. The Museum Commission of the League of Nations under the presidency of M. Jules Destree, Belgian Minister, has unanimously accepted this project. In 1931 the first special Conference was held at Bruges. Mr. C. Tulpinck, President of the Union International pour le Pacte Roerich, presided, and Dr. Adatci, President of the Permanent Court of International Justice, was Protector of the Conference. In connection with this Conference, the proposed League of Cities, united under the same Banner of Peace, was of great interest. Our friend, the poet Marc Chesneau, represented the old city of Rouen. Dr. Georges Chklaver's article, "Le Pacte Roerich et la Societe des Nations", highly recommended the Pact from the point of view of law. Truly the protection of treasures of Culture belongs to those all-unifying foundations upon which we can gather in friendship without any petty feeling of envy and malice.

In 1932, on August 9, the Second Conference in Bruges, in which seventeen countries took part, was convened by the "Union International Pour le Pacte Roerich" for the purpose of bringing about the defense of artistic and scientific treasures. The Conference, greeted in the name of His Majesty King Albert of Belgium and by a message from the Belgian Prime Minister, took place amidst great enthusiasm and was concluded with a series of projects for introducing our Pact to the whole world. Besides the already existing Union, the City of Bruges placed at the Union's disposal a separate building for the inauguration of a Roerich Foundation for Peace, Art, Science, and Labor.

For this museum many valuable exhibits have been donated. Thus the City of Paris presented an artistic collection, and several private collectors have also expressed their desire to donate collections to this museum.

Amongst the people, who took a close participation in the discussions of the Conference, have to be mentioned the President of the Union, C. Tulpinck; the representative of the City of Paris, Councillor Brunesseauz, the Consul General of France, the Hon. Leon Guermonprez who had been officially delegated to represent the French Government; the Duke of Argyll; Mr. Murray—delegate of Great Britain; the well-known Professor of International Law, Baron de Taube; the Delegation of the Roerich Institutions headed by the President of the European Center in Paris, Mme. de Vaux Phalipau and the General Secretary Dr. G. Chklaver, Count de Roenefort, the architect Rey de Villette, the representatives of Czecho-Slovakia, Greece and seventeen other countries took part in the exhibition and conference. The Conference in Bruges was greeted in the name of His Majesty King Albert of Belgium and by a message from the Belgian Prime-Minister. Amongst messages and greetings were highly sympathetic messages from: Marshall Lyautey, from the President of the Court of International Justice at the Hague Dr. Adatci, letters from Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, Sir Jagadis Bose. Prof. Sir V. Baman, from the Principal of the School of Arts and Crafts Lucknow, A. K. Haldar; the Maha Bodhi Society; from Maurice Maeterlinck, Senator Copeland of New York and numerous women's Leagues and scientific organizations and from representatives of the world of Culture. Having taken a series of practical measures for the near future, the Conference closed its session with the firm conviction that our Pact would be established without delay and would find world adoption.

And now in Washington will assemble the friends of Peace. President Roosevelt is open to everything positive and constructive. Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt writes about our Pact: "I think the ideals represented by the Roerich Pact cannot help but appeal to all those who hope that the best in the past may be preserved to guide and serve future generations."

A member of the Cabinet, Secretary Henry A. Wallace, in the course of a letter to me writes: "I have for several years been interested in your endeavor to create a community of feeling among all of the nations concerning those things which have to do with the arts and sciences. Your endeavor to furnish a symbol for the thought that beauty and knowledge should tie all the nations together in appreciation of a common human purpose, however separate their apparent paths may be—has been of profound interest to enlightened people over the entire world for several years. It is appropriate that you should have a meeting in Washington next fall to consider the things for which the Banner of Peace stands. . . . I believe so profoundly in the things for which the Banner of Peace stands that I am only too happy to offer you any co-operation in my personal capacity to help make your efforts along this line successful".

Amongst the latest expressions of sympathy with the Pact, I cannot omit mentioning the powerful statement of the Italian Ambassador at Washington, Signor A. Rosso to our delegation. He said: "I feel no one can be against such a great idea. Whoever would go against the Roerich Pact, will have the sanctuary of public opinion to deal with."

Verily humanity is tired of destructions, vandalism, and negation. Positive creativeness is the fundamental quality of the human spirit. In our life

everything that uplifts and enobles the spirit must hold the dominant place. The milestones of the glorious path must from childhood impel our spirit to the beautiful future. Be assured it is not a truism to speak about the undeferrable and urgent strivings to Culture. If some ignoramus finds this idea superfluous and needless, we will say to him: "Poor ignoramus, you are out of the hands of evolution, but remember that we are legion; that in no way shall we yield in our idea of a Peace Banner. If you are the obstructionist, we shall transform your obstacles into possibilities.

The Washington Convention gathers under most favorable signs. Let there resound once again the mighty prayer for Peace of the entire world. As the Red Cross affirms physical health, so may the Banner of Peace establish and affirm the spiritual health of mankind!

Nicholas Roerich.

Himalayas, 1933.