

## SELF-DESTRUCTION

In the middle of the XVIIth century Stepanov reported to the Yakut chieftains "... and because of the uprisings of these people, life on the great river Amur has become hard and unbearable." Such reports and the local chronicles related in detail the difficulties with which the building up of this frontier country proceeded; not so much because of the foreigners and members of other tribes, but precisely because of various strange internal rebellions. The breaking out of these rebellions usually is not described, but there are recounted most distressing irreparable consequences. And the result was that because of the internal disorders blows were dealt upon values of external significance.

Was it because of a lack of vision and imagination that these aimless, self-destructive flashes took place? And now, are we not witnesses of the same kind of logically unexplainable clashes, which are taking place with the very same impermissible coarseness, just as in remote ages? Does not limited thinking, as one of the reasons, lie at the very core? There are inexpressible words in the beats of the human heart as it strives toward something better; but the mind, deprived of wings, limits itself by the conditions of today only. It is indignant in the face of these chance happenings; but precisely haphazardly, and not in any other way, does it wish to find a solution.

The most complicated controversy, the piling up of newly-invented terminology as a seeming token of erudition - all this does not lead to but draws away from the needs of existence. And yet now is so needed the simple, hearty word. Not a three-storied, cumbersome term, but a particle of illumined life of fulfillment is awaited. People, folk masses, wish to live. They wish to adorn life as much as possible. We see how ancient tribes under even the most exiguous circumstances aspired and found original ways for such adornment. Earth's masses wish to learn. The people understand very well that knowledge is not by any means an arbitrarily heaped up incomprehension but something that may be imparted in very simple, clear, not snarling, not malice-bearing words.

Of course, everyone who has had occasion to talk to people in very remote localities knows of this quite sensible striving toward the simplest expression. We ourselves in recalling our school and university years turn with special warmth to those teachers who taught clearly and simply. It matters not what the subject was, whether higher mathematics, or philosophy, or history, or geography - absolutely everything could be and was presented in clear terms by the gifted instructors. Only the limited and the untalented became entangled in their own verbal accumulations, and often, to the secret amusement of the students, tried painfully to get out of the difficulties which they themselves had created. Frequently such ill-fated pedagogues ended the meandering explanations with a tragic "well, you understand." And precisely because of this incomprehensibility offensive nicknames were created, and uncontrollable jeering spouted forth, and an internal split resulted.

Precisely now many fields are overloaded with newly-invented complications. And yet at present people are passing through a particularly responsible period. No one should now be satisfied with the middle-of-the-road thinking of recent years. On the one hand nets are cast into the future at times with the most savage pitch. On the other hand consciousness is directing thought to those primary sources whence the keen ear catches a great deal that unexpectedly corresponds to the latest theories. A period wherein this combination of the newest with the most ancient occurs is a responsible one. Strange as it may seem, the 19th century, with its many researches, appears to be one of the least convincing. The very primitive structures of nihilism in this century render it unconvincing. Each negation, every insistence on void and non-existence, must be rejected. They are rejected not only by philosophy and the studies of antiquity, but also by the latest discoveries in the physical sciences. Leading scientists quite calmly speak of their religious and philosophical views, of which their fathers often would not have dared to speak openly, for the sake of preservation of their "scientific integrity." In this regard, the moves which easily turn into achievement are indisputable. Truly, an achievement, in its essence, cannot be limited. Precisely in an achievement is there attainable the most ancient wisdom as well as the answer

2

to the most modern problem. And in this we will be evaluating something not only in regard to its antiquity. We shall study it fully, conscientiously and benevolently. And only these honestly unlimited investigations will enable us to retrieve that which can be most concretely applied to the problems of the future. Again, if someone will insist that he will take only a little bit from ancient wisdom, he will reveal himself as a hypocrite; because this "bit" may be applied only after a wide, deep study. And he who wants to put into the foundation of a structure any negation will thus mix into his cement a poisonous, corroding substance.

Many new discoveries have been given to people in recent years. And one becomes convinced, because of them, of the indescribable link of ancient times with our problems. If serene words are found about the possibility of life and advancement, then the dark rebellions will recede into the realm of legends. People reading about them will only regret the lost opportunities and rejoice that the new boundaries of knowledge will help us restrain ourselves from self-destruction. Serenity and simplicity - these are what the heart is waiting for.

Peking  
December 28, 1934

How odd that things which are both benevolent and significant remain so often unrecorded anywhere! Just today we heard that the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Peking was saved only by the personal intercession of the Tashi Lama. In the history of religions such signs of benevolence should be carefully preserved. It is regrettable that around the religions too much evidence of coldness and negativity has accumulated. When one hears, in old Peking, a beautiful story of how a body of priests and religious societies once went to the Tashi Lama to beg him to help preserve the most worthy Russian Mission in Peking which had guarded many fine traditions for so long, and how benevolently he responded to this plea, one is sincerely glad. And not only was this plea accepted benevolently, but desirable results followed, and this significant act of high benevolence has entered into the history of the Russian Mission in Peking.

When humanity is possessed by the devils of malice and mutual destruction, every token of affirmativeness and kindly help is especially valuable. True, a great deal is known about the good acts and magnanimity of the Tashi Lama. But it is one thing when his countrymen relate it and quite another when strangers also bear good testimony about it.

People often do not realize and reflect how valuable is the inculcation of good signs. There is a certain kind of person who warns against all enthusiasm, and even against speaking a good word out loud. Naturally, with such a way of thinking all submerges, if not into total darkness, at best into greyish twilight. Antagonists of any kind of enthusiasm would like to have people respond to nothing, react to nothing, and remain shamefully indifferent to both good and evil.

In our anxious days there are many such grey dwellers. In great measure the responsibility for the deeply imbedded confusion in the social structure lies with them. This shocking and, at the same time, trembling confusion is nothing but formlessness and ugliness. The very words confusion and perplexity are not far from distortion, doubt and fear. In confusion vague insinuations are engendered. It also gives birth to all manner of anonymous gossip. When the heart loses the tremor of exaltation it can become prey to the tremor of confusion. And just as the tremor of exaltation will impel upward and toward the beautiful, so will the tremor of confusion be limiting, drooping, frightening. What could be uglier than the spectacle of fear? The very highest concepts, of honor, dignity, devotion, love, achievement, can, after all, be violated and mutilated precisely through fear. Because of fear people keep silent, renounce and betray. And what a mass of silent renuncements and cowardly silences are revealed in daily life!

For renuncements no high words or beautiful surroundings are needed. Usually for renouncement, for negative silence, for belittlement, the dusk is more suitable. They live in a grey atmosphere wherein clear-cut forms are blurred as by twilight and everything is indefinite. Vagueness of thoughts, indecisiveness, is in reality a confusion. It does not sing, nor mold beautiful forms, but distorts all in trembling reflections. Thus, a bird flying over the water touches the calm surface, and long afterward the forms which before had been beautifully reflected will be atremble.

One should cure oneself of confusion and fear. As one should undergo lengthy restoration of one's strength after many illnesses, so also is there needed a recovery from confusion. One should not allow the confusion to rot in boils and abscesses. New strong thoughts and powerful actions will be salutary, and can carry the spirit out of confusion into a renovated condition. Naturally, by change of location alone, or of the living conditions, confusion will not be conquered. The potential of the spirit, the consciousness, must be struck by something - still better, should become enraptured by something.

It is impossible to say that rapture, or, otherwise speaking, enthusiasm, cannot be accessible even to confused souls. There are still such actions, such conditions in the world, as may transport the heart and thus enable it to conquer the confused tremors. Beautiful creativeness, lofty knowledge, and finally the pure heart's striving toward the Heavenly World - all these miracles of which there are so many in earthly life - can easily lead even a drooping spirit into the gardens of rapture.

*there* If people should attempt to erase from their existence the words "enthusiasm" and "rapture," at times ridiculed by them, how would they fill up this frightful void in their consciousness? In such desolate hearts anguish and lack of faith begins to dwell, and their appears that deadly mustiness which is found in abandoned empty places. Entering an abandoned house, people say: "It will take a long time to make it livable." And truly such neglect even threatens with physical ailments.

To make a dwelling place livable does not mean simply to light a fire. Precisely human presence is needed, in other words, the beat of the human heart is needed, in order to enliven and spiritualize the arrested life.

One of the simplest examples of spiritualization will be each news about some good, unusual and benevolent action. Thus, let us rejoice at each benevolence. Because it dispels one's confusion and replaces ugliness with beauty.

Peking  
December 29, 1934