

C O P Y

March 30, 1953

Dear Mr. Fosdick:

I have been waiting to write to you now, for quite a time, expecting developments, hung up by delays.

Some months ago, now, I heard that Dr. Dhingra of Unesco a friend of the Roerich family would be eventually returning to India where he is professor at a University. He has all the Roerich pictures, as you know, handed to him by Svetoslav Roerich. Part are with him others elsewhere with Hindus in Paris. In all I believe 40.

I proposed taking them and leaving them with the Volney in view of an exhibition. I agreed with the direction of the Volney gallery to found there a Roerich centre round the pictures. Hilbert the sculptor who is a good friend and the art director of the gallery said he thought that only with a collection like this would there be any chance of starting.

I had a good deal of trouble in contacting Dhingra, whom I know, but who is never at home and like all Indians often fails to reply. At last I saw him. He said "I am perfectly willing to turn over the collection provided Svetoslav consents."

I then sent an airmail to Svetoslav at the Bank in Bombay suggesting not only that he turn over the paintings, to allow us to form a centre but that he should send some of his own and, if possible be present in Paris to inaugurate an exhibition. I have had no reply and Chklaver once told me that the Roerichs never write or at least very rarely.

Meanwhile another development has arisen.

Sometime last summer I wrote to Shibayev suggesting that if he could get an Indian group together I might be able at the Volney to make a sort of centre for young Indian art of the traditional order. I do not want abstract work since it does not represent the soul of a nation, nor its poetry.

I have just received his reply. He contacted the All India Arts society of which he sent details and I have replied by airmail as to conditions etc.

In his letter he said the Roerichs had passed through Delhi enroute to Kalimpong, so I hope my letter will be sent on.

When I saw the Roerich pictures with Dhingra I had a shock. I realized that all the art leaders, critics and indeed all who decide about the arts would consider them academic, photographic and belonging to the last century. This is not my own opinion and I hold the same views that I wrote of in my book. But after ten years as art writer among all the avant-garde schools I had to make myself a sort of readjustment.

I have now come to the conclusion, that the best solution would be to have Indian art as well as Svetoslavs work alongside the Roerich paintings. They really fit in with traditional or classical Indian art.

I am now awaiting reply from Shebayev to my airmail and as you know things go slow in India, indeed time seems to stop, probably to make way for eternity!

Shibayev, I must say, is very willing but I am afraid it will always be a slow going business to carry on with them. Gupta of 'Aesthetics' started briskly, asked me for an article which I sent last year by airmail and never had so much as an acknowledgment! Perhaps this paper has gone under like so many art papers?

I am convinced that we should start with the pictures since it is the most essential part of Roerich.

As for 'La Maison' we have had meetings, have been asked to find money, but have no substantial start. However, they expect by May to have the prefabricated building on the ground and then things will begin. Mme. Grange proposes to broadcast for the Roerich prize

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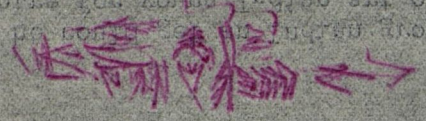
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then, when they are ready. You will be surprised to hear the Paris Daily Mail has ceased. I now have only Pictures. The London D.M. is a rag and though they publish occasionally short articles of mine it means nothing to us here since it is choked by ads.

As Gordon Graig wrote to me 'the Paris Daily Mail was a model of editing.'

Still I have plenty to do - too much. I have just finished pruning over two hundred peach trees and have all the ground to look after - about an acre.

I should prefer to live this way and reduce everything to great simplicity.

I will let you know by airmail should I get any further news from India.

I am glad you have 'Pictures' and will get Offin to send it regularly to you.

Perhaps you will be able to visit Paris this year, in which case, we could see how best to organise all these different matters.

Cordialement

Barnett D. Conlan.