

PHILLIPS MEMORIAL GALLERY

1600 Twenty-First Street

Washington, D.C.

October 24, 1933

Mr. Louis L. Horch, President
Roerich Museum,
New York City.

Dear Mr. Horch:

You asked me to send a message to your sessions in Washington for the International Flag. I am very glad to do so. It is my belief that as a practical measure to protect centers of religion, education, science, and art against the violent ravages of war the banner proposed by Nicholas Roerich will fail in its noble purpose. The logic of war requires the most savage and fiendish destruction not only of life but of property; not only of man but of all his works; not only of human values but of all cultural, intellectual and aesthetic treasures; in short of civilization itself. We must not and we cannot tolerate the idea of war. The prospect of it should not be accepted as inevitable. For if we proceed as if what has been must continue to be - then Man is only a negligible moth fatally attracted to an all consuming flame. It were better that we had never been endowed with affections and aspirations, with hearts, brains and sensitive perceptions, if it is proved impossible to prevent the horror of human sacrifice on the primitive altars of nationalism. War implies atrocities! If we can accept war we must also accept and expect total destruction of everything that is fine. How can we, and, for the matter of that, why should we suppose that our shrines will be spared when the sanctity of human life is scorned, when the mothers of men and the future thinkers and dreamers, benefactors, scientists and artist, are all doomed to be cannon fodder, done to death in bloody mud that the nationalistic flags may fly defiantly! We cannot come to terms with the crime of war, and any agreements to modify its destructive furies would only retard the task of the peacemakers.

Nevertheless there is a great need today for international minds and international movements of all kinds. International flags symbolizing the brotherhood of men everywhere and the special affinities of like thinking individuals of identical ideals and purposes may actually some day transcend all the national barriers and triumph over all the national evils which make for war. An International Flag for art, science and religion, for the bonds which unite as opposed to the base passions which divide, for the wonder of creation as opposed to the mere dirt of war's destruction - an International flag to fly over institutions of learning and of art can be the best possible symbol for the will to peace which alone can save the world from itself. The Red Cross of merciful ministrations and this International banner for the shrines of the spirit, these are the only flags which can stand in our churches. And let us believe that they are destined to be the flags of the future! Certainly, at a time like this, they are the only symbols to which we can look up with reverence and allegiance as well as with profound yearning.

Sincerely yours

DUNCAN PHILLIPS