

THE ROERICH PACT
AND
BANNER OF PEACE

[AIMS AND HISTORY]

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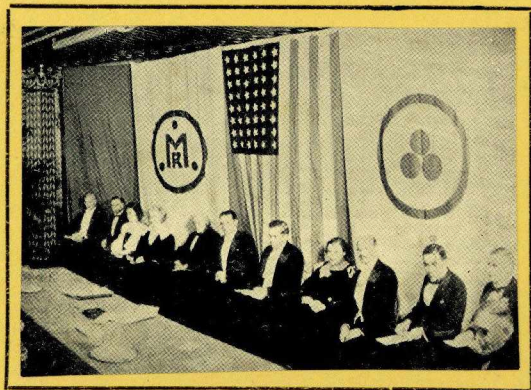
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THE ROERICH PACT AND BANNER OF PEACE

Its Aims and History to date

The 17th of November—the anniversary of the Roerich Peace Banner Day—was celebrated with great solemnity and enthusiasm in New-York, Paris and other centers of the world, where this epoch-making cultural treaty has lately made such progress towards recognition and adoption by various nations. The Banner of Peace, as is well known now, is the symbol of the Roerich Pact under which the agreeing countries pledge themselves to guard, esteem and sponsor all those immeasurable and irreplaceable treasures of the achievement of the human spirit, which otherwise, as has unfortunately been proved only too often, are neglected and destroyed, either by vandalism, or lack of care and understanding, both in times of war and so-called peace. This great humanitarian idea thus provides in the field of mankind's cultural achievements the same guardianship as the Red Cross provides in pity for the physical suffering of man. As Articles I and II of the Pact state: "Educational, artistic and scientific institutions, artistic and scientific missions, the personnel, the property and collections of such institutions and missions shall be deemed neutral and as such shall be protected and respected by belligerents. Protection and respect shall be due to the aforesaid institutions and missions in all places, subject to the sovereignty of the High Contracting Parties, without any discrimination as to the State allegiance of any particular institution or mission. The Institutions, Collections and Missions thus registered may display a distinctive flag, which will entitle them to special protection and respect on the part of the belligerents,

of governments and peoples of all the High Contracting Parties."

Prof. Nicholas de Roerich—whom the Honorable George Gordon Battle named "undoubtedly one of the greatest cultural leaders of all times"—in a recent address at the opening of a new "Banner of Peace Committee" beautifully expressed the ideals of the Pact in the following words:—

"The world is striving towards Peace in many ways and every one realizes in his heart that this constructive work is a true prophecy of the New Era. Of course arguments about the comparative qualities of various kind of shells or about the advisability of replacing the guns of two battleships by one ship of a newer type,—do not contribute harmonically to constructive ideas for peace. But let us hope that even these discussions are preliminary steps towards the same great concept of Peace, which will take place, thanks to a taming of belligerent instincts of nations, by great brilliant creations of the Spirit. But the fact remains in the meantime, that shells of these guns can destroy the greatest treasures of art and science as thoroughly as those of an entire fleet... We deplore the loss of the libraries of Louvain and Oviedo and the irreplaceable beauty of the Cathedral of Rheims, we remember the beautiful treasures of private collections, which were lost during world calamities. But we do not want to inscribe on these deeds any words of hatred; let us simply say: "Destroyed by human ignorance—rebuilt by human hope!" Nevertheless errors of one form or another may occur again and thus other valuable achievements of humanity remain in constant danger of being destroyed. Against such ignorant errors we must immediately take precautions and definite measures. Hence first of all let us sacredly protect the creative treasures of humanity. First of all let us agree on that, which is the most simple—so that, as with the Red Cross, the Banner may significantly summon the conscience of men to the protection of that, which in essence,

belongs not to one nation alone, but to the entire world, and constitutes the real pride of the human race.

The design of the Banner of Peace shows three spheres surrounded by a circle in magenta colour on a white background. Of the many national and individual interpretations of this symbol, which is so beautiful in its simplicity, the most usual are perhaps those of: Religion, Art and Science as aspects of Culture—the surrounding circle; or that of: Past, Present and Future achievements of humanity guarded within the circle of Eternity. "Both these interpretations—says Prof. de Roerich, the creator of the Pact and Banner—are just as good, for they represent a synthesis of life, and that is my ruling precept."

A brief outline of the history of the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace gives the following important milestones:

Conceived and proposed by Prof. Nicholas de Roerich as early as in 1904 to the Society of Architects and in 1914 during the war to H. M. the Tzar Nicholas II and the Grand Duke Nicholas (when in both cases it was received with highest interest but delayed owing to wars), the project was formally promulgated in New York in 1929, according to the codes of International Law; the text of the Pact having been drafted by Dr. Georges Chklaver, Doctor of International Law and Political Sciences of Paris University. In the same year a Committee of the Banner of Peace was founded in New York and the principles were published through the press. The following year similar Committees were founded in Paris and Bruges, in the latter under the title "Union Internationale pour le Pacte Roerich." In the autumn of 1931 the Union convened the First International Conference, which proved the great interest of many Governments and in the next year another enthusiastic World Conference took place in the same city. Thousands of approving opinions came from religious, educational, artistic, scientific

and other cultural bodies and personages from all over the world and it is only right and fair to state that none of the greatest men of our times omitted to take part in voicing their approval. To quote the Italian Ambassador at Washington, Signor A. Rosso: "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." It is also of interest that the great military authorities (like the late Marshal Lyautey, Admiral Taussig, General Gouraud, etc.) were in complete favour of the Pact. The first volume of collected statements and letters was published in New York and Paris under the title "The Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace". In the same year in Bruges the "Fondatio Roerich pro Pace, Arte, Scientiae et Labore" was inaugurated after the Session of the Second International Conference in that City. The following year—1933—saw the Third International Convention of the Roerich Pact, held on November 17th and 18th in Washington at the Mayflower, where 36 nations sent their representatives and this Convention unanimously passed the resolution to "recommend the adoption of this humanitarian measure to the Governments of all Nations" for "adoption or adhesion by unilateral action, through proclamation of the executive; by bilateral action through international agreements and by multilateral action through declaration of international conferences." Hardly a month later, the Seventh Conference of the Pan-American Union at Montevideo passed the unanimous resolution to accept the above and to urge their participants—the 21 governments of the North, Central and South Americas—to sign the Pact and thus to apply the great principles in life. The Washington Convention of the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace also elected a "Permanent Committee for the Advancement of the Adoption of the Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace" located at 310 Riverside Drive, New York, with Prof. and Mme. de Roerich as Honorary Presidents; the Honorable Henry A. Wallace, U. S. Secretary of Agriculture, as Honorary Chairman; Mr. Louis L. Horch, President of Roerich Museum, as its Chairmau; Miss F. R. Grant, Vice-Chairman

and Prof. Ralph V. D. Magoffin of the New-York University as its Secretary-General. This body negotiates with all governments, organizations and individuals interested in the promotion and adoption of the Pact and receives their expressions of formal adherence. The Proceedings of the Washington Convention have just been published in New York in book-form.

The Paris Committee of the Pact is under the presidentship of Baron M. A. de Taube, Member of the International Court at the Hague, and Dr. Georges Chklaver—Doctor of International Law—is Secretary-General. The "Union Internationale pour le Pacte Roerich" in Bruges has M. Camille Tulpinck, Vice-Consul of Greece, as its President and Prof. M. Adatei, former President of the International Court at the Hague, as its Protector.

The current year—1934—saw the establishment of a "Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace Committee" in the Far East in Harbin, Manchukuo, with Archbishop Nestor as Honorary President, N. L. Gondatti—President and Prof. G. K. Hinz as Vice-President. A similar Committee was also inaugurated in Bruxelles with Mr. E. de Munck as President at Mr. Hendrickx, barrister, as Secretary-General and under participation of Count C. de Wiart, Minister; the Governors of Luxembourg and Western Flanders and a member of the Chamber of Deputies and a member of the Court of Cassation, on the Committee.

At the same time the following countries, which are members of the Pan-American Union have either deposited their signatures of adherence or have appointed plenipotentiary delegates to do so, at the next Pan-American Conference to be held on Pan-America Day, April 14th 1935. Panama (which thus was the first country officially to notify of its readiness to ratify the Roerich Pact), Honduras, the United States, Ecuador, Uruguay, Guatemala and Brazil. Further Chile and China have informed of their readiness to ratify the

Pact shortly and many countries of Europe have informed the Board of the Permanent Committee that their respective Governments have the Pact under consideration. In Japan the Banner of Peace was actually already hoisted over the Ministry of Education on Nov. 17th 1933—the day of the Washington Convention and many educational and other cultural organizations have already unfurled the Banner.

As regards the United States, President F. D. Roosevelt has on August 11th officially empowered Secretary Henry A. Wallace as plenipotentiary to sign the Inter-American Treaty on the Roerich Pact. The Honorable Henry A. Wallace has recently given out to the Press the following statement, which after a review of the history of the Pact, concludes:—

“I regard the Roerich Pact as an inevitable step in international relations. At no time has such an ideal been more needed. While the individual nations are working out their separate economic and national problems, it is also necessary that they recognize their responsibility as part of the community of nations. I am not one to urge visionary substitutes in the place of effective action in a world of hard economic facts, yet I do say that it is high time for the idealists who make the reality of tomorrow, to rally around such a symbol of international cultural unity. It is time that we appeal to that appreciation of beauty, science, education which runs across all national boundaries to strengthen all that we hold dear in our particular governments and customs. It is for this reason that I regard the ratification of the Roerich Pact as so significant a step. Its acceptance signifies the approach of a time when those who truly love their own nation will appreciate in addition the unique contribution of other nations and also do reverence to that common spiritual enterprise which draws together in one fellowship all artists, scientists, educators and truly religious of whatever faith. I feel that this age owes a great debt to Nicholas Roerich in the creation of this ideal—for such ideals alone afford reality to our

efforts for creating material wealth and working out improved social machinery for its distribution. While we work out these myriad individual problems we must have a unifying principle to which all our hearts can give supreme allegiance. In this we can work with faith and anticipation towards those spiritual and cultural realities of which the Roerich Pact is the symbol.”

It is indeed a great asset to know that in our present material and critical times there are not only thousands of individuals but also leading statesmen, who see and urge the fact of paramount importance—that the future of humanity is shaped more by actual spiritual strivings and cultural achievements and that the present age owes everything positive, that it has, to true Culture and that thus the safeguarding of these pan-human achievements is so imperative.

Here in India one finds also a wide appreciation of the ideal for which the Roerich Pact stands. It would be impossible to quote all these signs of cultural understanding in so short a review as the present one. But besides the adherences to the Pact as expressed by Sir Rabindranath Tagore, Sir Jagadis C. Bose, Sir S. Radhakrishnan, Sir C. V. Raman, Dr. James H. Cousins, Dr. Kalidas Nag, Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, the late Prof. S. R. Kashyap, S. V. Ramaswamy Mudaliar, O. C. Gangoly, Asit Kumar Halder, N. C. Mehta, the late Ven. Sri Devamitta Dharmapalla, etc. and institutions like the Andhra Historical Research Institute, the Allahabad Municipal Museum, the Bharat Kala Bhawan in Benares, the Maha Bodhi Society, the Women's Indian Association, the Y. M. B. A. of Ceylon, the Madanapalle College, the Travancore Cultural Association, etc. etc. and almost all the organs of the press,—the following two short quotations are expressive of the general enthusiastic attitude towards the Pact.

Mr. Gurdial Mallik, of the League of Nations' Union, writes in the Sind Observer on Banner of Peace Day, after a short description of the aims: “In the realization

of this great and glorious ideal it is necessary to have the cooperation of the intelligentia of the world to organize a strong public opinion in favour of the preservation of the artistic and cultural treasures of every country, so that mankind may have a continuous record of its achievements... To this end it is desirable that the governments of world would all ratify the Roerich Pact guaranteeing this preservation and treating these treasures as the heritage not only of any particular nation, but of the whole humanity and as such to be immune from the ravages of war and destruction."

Another distinguished writer, Swami Jagadiswarananda, states in a message to the Banner of Peace Convention: "Professor Roerich, the founder and leader of this Unique humanitarian movement, is himself the personification of Universal Art and Universal Culture. He has truly been called by Dr. James H. Cousins as 'Himalayan in Soul,' for he is really the Prophet of the New Humanity and the Messenger of a New Cultural World... Let us pray for the long life and sound health of Professor Roerich, our Leader, who has opened a significant Chapter in human history by inaugurating this movement and the Pact. Let the present Convention of Art and Culture prove to warring nations of the world by waving the Roerich Banner of Peace, that Art and Culture are the Divine property—the Universal Treasure of all mankind and write on the portal of every institution of the world: "Help and not fight, assimilate and not destroy Harmony and Peace, and promote not dissension!"

(Supplement to the preceding Article)

Since writing the foregoing brief outline on the Roerich Pact early this year, new significant events have taken place, which make it necessary to add the following Chapter.

ROERICH PACT SIGNED BY UNITED STATES AND ALL LATIN AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS

On April 15, 1935, at noon, in the office of President F. D. Roosevelt, at the White House in Washington, the United States of America and all the other twenty Latin American countries—members of the Pan-American Union: Argentine, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Cost-Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El-Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Uruguay, Peru, Columbia and Venezuela—have signed the Treaty of the Roerich Pact.

The American Press attached great importance to this sign of cultural unity and understanding, which not only united the whole of North and South America, but which it is expected will also shortly be joined by all the other nations of the world. All leading American papers printed columns of the event, the Presidential address and speeches of the Government officials and foreign diplomatic representatives; and newspapers all over the world, including India, published particulars of this historical occurrence.

The signing of this Treaty was a very solemn occasion. The President had invited to his office besides the diplomatic representatives of the twenty American republics, also the Secretary of State, Mr. Cordell Hull; the Secretary of Agriculture, Henry A. Wallace; the Directors of the Pan-American Union, Dr. L. S. Rowe and Dr. E. Gil Borges, and the Trustees of the Roerich Museum, members of the Permanent Committee of the Roerich Pact. After the signing of the Pact, Secretary H. A. Wallace presented the pen,

with which the Pact had been signed, to Mr. Louis L. Horch, Chairman of the Permanent Committee of the Roerich Pact as a historical souvenir.

At the close of the signing, President Roosevelt made the following address over the radio, which was broadcast over the whole world: "It is most appropriate that on this day, designated as Pan-American Day, by the chief executives of all the republics of the American continent, the Governments—members of the Pan-American Union—should sign a treaty which marks a step forward in the preservation of the cultural achievements of the nations of this hemisphere. In opening this Pact to the adherence of the nations of the world, we are endeavouring to make of universal application one of the principles vital to the preservation of modern civilization. This Treaty possesses a spiritual significance far deeper than the text of the instrument itself. It is but one of the many expressions of that basic doctrine of continental solidarity, which means so much to the present and to the future of the American republics. On the occasion of this celebration of Pan-American Day let us again dedicate ourselves to the task of translating into deeds the essential unity of interest of the nations of this continent. Let us also bring renewed allegiance to those high principles of international co-operation and helpfulness, which, I feel assured, will be a great contribution to civilization by the Americas."

Other speeches were delivered by Secretary H. A. Wallace; Dr. Ricardo Alfaro, Minister of Panama; Mr. Louis L. Horch, President of Roerich Museum.

Secretary Wallace compared the Treaty to the Red Cross and underlined the necessity of "the protection of those cultural treasures" which the enlightened spirits of all lands recognize as worthy of preservation no matter how tense and bitter the strife in the physical and economic world... To-day it is appropriate that we should give recognition to the genius of Nicholas Roerich, in whose mind this Pact and Banner first originated...It would seem desirable to hold up before the world, in times like these, the ideal of the Unity of the Human Heart, regardless of nation, in the worship of Beauty, of Culture, of Religion, of Science and of Education. There are thousands of people in each of

the nations of the world, animated by these finer, broader human aspirations and they welcome the mechanism of the Roerich Pact as a means of making more manifest on earth those intangible forces, which they have long recognized as the true guides of international good feeling...I believe the Roerich Pact is in conformity with the deepest, most sacred laws of the universe and that it has become an international reality at an especially propitious time! .."

Mr. Louis L. Horch in his speech gave an outline of the Roerich Pact and concluded: "The pledge between nations which has been consummated to-day at the White House by twenty one nations of the American continent in signing the Roerich Pact has put into effect an agreement respecting the inviolability of the products of the human genius, thus safeguarding the true heritage of man for posterity. This enlightening event marks a significant milestone in the cause of international understanding and friendship as well as a step forward in the spiritual and cultural progress of mankind. On this Pan-American Day we send salutations to our sister Nations!"

The Minister of Panama, His Excellency Dr. Ricardo J. Alfaro, declared: "The historic act which has just taken place is one that marks a signal victory in the perennial struggle of the better sentiments of man against the ravages of war." He then drew an outline of the history of all the previous international conventions and conferences, commencing with the Red Cross Pact seventy one years ago and said: "And then a great idealist and a fervent apostle of peace, Professor Nicholas Roerich, conceived the plan of an international convention for the neutralization and protection of the cultural treasures of the world. And to-day the Republics of the Western hemisphere sought and attained the honour of carrying the lofty project to a successful conclusion. The Montevideo Conference sponsored the Roerich Pact and this day the Republics of America have subscribed a Covenant, open also to the signature of all other nations, whereby for the first time in history the neutrality and protection of Culture are incorporated into one single and complete body of conventional international law. The deep significance of this occasion has been enhanced by the gracious hospitality which the President of the United States has shown the Plenipotentiaries of the Signa-

tory Nations by inviting them to perform the historic act in the White House."

The U. S. Secretary of State, Mr. Cordell Hull, who delivered a speech the same evening at the Pan-American Union, concluded it as follows: "Let us appeal to all nations to join and to march forward together under the Banner of peace, commerce and honest friendship. Let those who repudiate these righteous principles and seek to retard human progress and to foment strife and to provoke war, be characterized by all enlightened nations as enemies of civilization and as world-outlaws."

Thus on April 15, 1935, has come to consummation that great humanitarian ideal for which the most distinguished expounders of True Culture and Spiritual Aspirations—Professor Nicholas Roerich and his wife Mme. Helena Roerich—have given so self-sacrificingly all their life and energy and guiding advice, of what the author of this historical outline has had the great privilege to be a constant close witness. Thus humanity has forever recorded in history its grateful appreciation of these illustrious Initiators and Patrons of the Movement, for the work they have done for the Benefit of Mankind!

India:
May 7, 1935.

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