

NICHOLAS ROERICH (Naggar)

**On Culture, Values, and Peace
(Selected Essays and Letters¹)**

Content

1. The Banner of Peace
2. The Sacred Sign of Peace
3. The Heart of Culture
4. The Red Cross of Culture
5. The Mission of Womanhood
6. Glory to Women, Bearers of Culture
7. Roots of Culture
8. In spite of difficulties (To the Bulgarian Society, 1930)
9. Re-evaluation
10. Defense of Values

1. The Banner of Peace²

This sign of the triad which is to be found all over the world may have several meanings. Some interpret it as a symbol of past, present and future, enclosed in the ring of Eternity; others consider that it refers to religion, science and art, held together in the circle of culture, but whatever be the interpretation the sign itself is of the most universal character.

The oldest of Indian symbols, Chintamani, the sign of happiness, is composed of this symbol and one can find it in the Temple of Heaven in Peking. It appears in the Three Treasures of Tibet; on the breast of the Christ in Mending's well-known painting; on the Madonna of Strasbourg; on the shields of the Crusaders and coat of arms of the Templars. It can be seen on the blades of the famous Caucasian swords known as 'Gurda'.

¹ The following Essays and Letters were written on diverse occasions and published in diverse journals, magazines, and collections – *Realm of Light* (NY: Roerich Museum, 1931), *Fiery Stronghold* (Boston: The Stratford Company, 1933), *Beautiful Unity* (Bombay: Youths Art and Culture Circle, 1946). Our selection is thematic, merely axiological, and not chronological.

² Roerich, Nicholas. "The Banner of Peace," in *Flamma*, No. 7, Autumn, 1939, 161-162.

It appears as a symbol in a number of philosophical systems; it can be found on the images of Gessar Khan and Rigden Djapo; on the "Tamga" of Timurlane and on the coat of arms of the Popes. It is to be seen in the works of ancient Spanish painters and of Titian, and on the ancient ikon of St. Nicholas in Ban and that of St. Sergius and the Holy Trinity.

It can be found on the coat of arms of the city of Samarkand, on Ethiopian and Coptic antiquities, on the rocks of Mongolia, on Tibetan rings, on the breast ornaments of Lahul, Ladak and all the Himalayan countries, and on the pottery of the Neolithic age.

It is conspicuous on Buddhist banners. The same sign is branded on Mongolian steeds. Nothing, then, could be more appropriate for assembling all races than this symbol, which is no mere ornament but a sign which carries with it a deep meaning.

It has existed for immense periods of time and is to be found throughout the world. No one therefore can pretend that it belongs to any particular sect, confession, or tradition, and it represents the evolution of consciousness in all its varied phases.

When it is a question of defending the world's treasures, no better symbol could be selected, for it is universal, of immense antiquity and carries with it a meaning which should find an echo in every heart.

To day when humanity is burying its treasures to save them from destruction, the Banner of Peace stands for other principles.

It affirms that works of art and of genius are universal and above national distinctions, it proclaims 'noli me tangere' – "Do not treat the world's treasures in a sacrilegious way."

2. The Sacred Sign of Peace³

Recently we deplored the destruction of paintings of Goya and of the ancient Church treasures in Spain as well as the destruction of the churches in Russia since the revolution; then we heard of the burning of the valuable Shanghai Library and now we read in the newspapers that the President's Palace in Havana was looted by a mob. Thus, besides destruction by war, we notice continuous vandalism. Can one keep silent when knowing of such destruction? Can we permit future generations to believe that we negligently allowed barbarians to destroy that which glorifies the high culture of mankind?

It is our duty to reiterate persistently the imperative need to safeguard the precious treasures from annihilation through crass ignorance. People take little account of the united

³ Roerich, Nicholas. "The Sacred Sign of Peace," in idem. *Fiery Stronghold*. Boston: The Stratford Company Publishers, 1933, 186-192.

measures that must be undertaken to avoid these most deplorable new indictments against our present age.

Let us look into the essence of things without being seduced by petty details. Usually these trifles alone hinder the discernment of actual facts. Our Banner, dedicated to the protection of all the true treasures of humanity, is being much discussed at present. There are many new proposals. Some are against open manifestations, lectures and pilgrimages in connection with this idea. Some state that one should only whisper about the destructions which take place, as though we could conceal so public a disgrace. Still others state that not only culture but even civilization is imperiled. And there are voices, which even suggest the immediate construction of a new Noah's Ark. It is possible that civilization itself is already in peril!

Let us hope it is not so.

Many new names are suggested for the Banner, sufficiently long to contain all descriptions. But we know the danger of such long definitions when a short commanding SOS should be sounded.

Some suggest that the Banner be sold everywhere to spread it. Still others wish to keep the Banner and all considerations about it, in a hidden vault. Some wish to see the symbol of the Banner in the lapel of every thinking man. Others wish to conceal it and disclose it only during some new extraordinary mishaps. Some consider the wide interest and inquiries about the Banner as a most beneficial sign. But for others, for some inexplicable reason, this is a sign of extreme danger. Some consider that the Banner should be utilized only during war-time and preferably limited to Europe. Others justly affirm that the treasures of Egypt, Persia, India, Japan, China, the Americas and the entire world demand the same immediate protection. Some think that the League of Nations is an organization which makes decisions for the entire world, others point out that its jurisdiction does not cover even half the globe. Such is the diversity of opinions!

Some propose that this Banner should be shown during all international exhibitions that display the flags of all nations. But others believe that it is impossible to have this Banner even in private premises, as it may hinder warfare. To some it appears to be a threatening sign of impotent "pacifism"; to others the Banner appears as a glorious defense of the dignity of mankind. Some regard it as imperative to insist openly on the safeguarding of cultural treasures everywhere. And others, again, desire to postpone all discussion, until after the passage of some law, although they themselves do not know from where they may expect this law—like a "deus ex machina."

What is the meaning of all these apparently contradictory but insistent counsels, suggestions and even demands? They simply signify the great interest in this Banner, which

cannot fail to call forth the response of the human heart. We must become accustomed to this diversity of expression of the human mind.

One must know that no world problem was ever decided without the raising of all kinds of symbols. In all processions, an abundance of placards and emblems are carried, these in their inner essence serving the same ideal. Thus, even if someone becomes angered about the Pact and Banner, this is already good. Even though he be excited, in his anger he still thinks of the protection of treasures by which the human race evolves.

It has often been said that an overt enemy is still closer to the truth, than an indifferent fool, who is neither hot nor cold, and who, according to all cosmic laws, will finally disintegrate. But life itself points to the complete urgency to do battle against vandalism. Each daily newspaper, every daily record directly or indirectly indicates the same need. If anyone suggests speaking in subdued tones, we must tell him: "When someone is ill at home, when the heart is torn by grief, would not it be inhuman to demand a tone of icy indifference?"

When something is dear to our hearts we cannot speak of it in frigid terms.

Everyone in this world who has loved someone or something, knows that it is impossible to speak of the beloved with mediocre expressions. The human spirit, during such moments of great tension, always finds a thundering vocabulary of enthusiasm and vigor. No graves, no extinguishers can quench the fire of the heart, if it senses the truth. How, then, were attainments and martyrdoms born, if not from the realization of the great Truth? From where was that invincible daring, that inexhaustible resourcefulness that humanity remembers even from its school books, generated? The lovers of frigid words should forgive the enthusiasm of others who exist by its life-giving, strengthening fire. But let all suggestions be heard, for one cannot undo that which already exists. To those who propose to speak in frigid terms of the most precious concepts, we shall say: "All right, we shall also listen to you. We shall whisper, but it will be so thunderous a whisper as to reach every human heart."

Even silence may be louder than thunder, as is so beautifully related in the Old Testament. But can we forbid the human heart to beat for that which is so vital and dear to it? How can we put an end to earthly and heavenly songs! To annihilate the magnificence of human creative songs would be to embitter and finally to kill the heart. But where is that remarkable individual who boasts that he can always do without the heart?

If in our hearts we call the Banner of Peace the Banner of Beauty this short name will of course resound in the heart but it would be inapplicable in life, because people are ashamed to speak of the beautiful.

Thus also do people act when they come upon the Great Realities. That which they ponder in the quiet of night, appears unrealizable and even shameful to them by day. When we look over everything already published and written about the Pact and Banner, every response that has come from distinguished personalities and from unknown workers, we want to be with these enthusiasts who were not afraid to sign their full names in order to affirm the protection of human treasures. There are before us thousands of letters received from the Americas, from Europe and Asia. One would like so much to enumerate the multitude of names who have become friends through the noble sentiments they express, but this would take many pages.

According to the ancient traditions, an entire city was once spared because of a single righteous man. Then judging by the letters received, and marking upon our map the places of their dispatch, one obtains a remarkable design of the sites where people are thinking of the preservation of the world's treasures, beyond the limitations of nations and creeds. And how many more have not been asked! New friends who have heard about the Banner-Protector by accident have continuously come from far-away. Therefore, let us not prevent any remote and solitary seekers from reaching the One Light. They all, in their own way, strive for constructive good.

In a far-encompassing whisper, let us tell all those who come about love and friendliness; they did not come from egotistic motives, but they came in the name of spiritual treasures, in the name of everything beautiful that is spread in creative labor and knowledge. Whoever wants to cry out, let him do so. Whoever wants to whisper, let him whisper. But let us not impose silence upon any human heart, if it be open to Beauty and Good. If the unique vocabulary of attention and good becomes more voluminous than we thought, then let us only rejoice at this and let us continue to call for the preservation of the true treasures of the world. May our Banner be that sacred symbol of Peace, which by its presence will remind humanity of its evolutionary destiny!

I rejoice that the friends of Peace, Beauty and Knowledge will gather in Washington to affirm the Laws of the Spirit!

If the Red Cross flag protects physical health, then may the Banner of Peace preserve the spiritual health of mankind.

Himalayas, 1933

3. The Heart of Culture⁴

Culture is reverence of Light. Culture is love of humanity. Culture is also fragrance, the unity of life and Beauty. Culture is the synthesis of uplifting and sensitive attainments. Culture is the armor of Light. Culture is salvation. Culture is the motivating power. Culture is the Heart.

If we gather all the definitions of Culture, we find the synthesis of active Bliss, the altar of enlightenment and constructive Beauty.

Condemnation, disparagement, defiling, melancholy, disintegration and all other characteristics of ignorance do not befit Culture. The great tree of Culture is nourished by an unlimited Knowledge, by enlightened labor, incessant creativity and noble attainment.

The cornerstones of great civilizations support the stronghold of Culture. But from the tower of Culture there radiates the jewel-adamant, from the loving, discerning and dauntless Heart.

Love opens these beautiful Gates. As with each true key, so also must this love be true, self-sacrificing, daring, and fiery. Where we find the sources of Culture, they are fiery and issue from the very depths. Where Culture has once been born, it cannot be killed. One may annihilate civilization, but Culture, the true spiritual treasure, is eternal.

Therefore, the field of Culture is a joyful one. Joyful even during arduous labor. Joyful even during the tense battles with the most obscure ignorance. The flaming heart is without limitations in the great Infinity.

The Festival of Labor and Constructiveness! A summons to this Festival means a reminder of eternal labor, of the joy of responsibility and of human dignity.

The labor of the worker for Culture is like the work of a physician. The true physician is acquainted with more than one disease. And not only does the physician cure that which has already occurred, but his wise foresight anticipates the future. The physician not only eradicates the illness, but he labors to improve the health for the whole of life. The physician descends into the darkest cellars in order to carry light and warmth there. The physician is not forgetful of all the amelioration and beautification of life, in order to give joy to the understanding spirit. The physician not only knows of the old epidemics, but he readily acquaints himself with the symptoms of new diseases, which have been induced by the decay of the foundations.

⁴ Roerich, Nicholas. "The Heart of Culture," in idem. *Fiery Stronghold*. Boston: The Stratford Company Publishers, 1933, 107-109.

The physician has sane words of counsel for the young and for the old, and is ready to give everyone encouraging advice. The physician does not cease to extend his Knowledge, otherwise he could not answer the needs of the present. The physician does not lose patience or tolerance, because a restraint of feeling would repel the suffering ones against him.

The physician does not fear the sight of human ulcers, because he is concerned only with their cure. The physician collects various curative herbs and stones; he knows the research for their benevolent application. The physician is not weary of hastening with aid for the suffering ones at all hours of day or night.

All these qualities are also inherent in the worker for Culture. He is equally ready at all hours of day or night to contribute his help. The worker for Culture always beneficently answers: "I am always ready," like the motto of the Sokols. His heart is ever open to everything in which experience and Knowledge may be useful. While helping, he himself continually learns, because "in giving, we receive." He is not afraid, for he knows that fear opens the gates of darkness.

The worker for Culture is always youthful, for his heart does not wither. He is flexible, because in movement there is force. He stands vigil on the parapet of Bliss, Knowledge and Beauty. He knows what true co-operation is.

All co-workers for Culture are united by threads of the heart. Mountains and oceans are no obstacles to these flaming hearts. They are not dreamers but builders and smiling plowmen.

In sending this greeting of Culture, one cannot do so without a smile, without the call of friendship. Thus we shall meet, thus we shall gather together and labor for Bliss, Beauty and Knowledge. And we shall do this without delay, without losing a day or an hour, in blissful constructiveness.

September 1, 1932

4. The Red Cross of Culture⁵

In a recent cable from New York, we have read that there were about 800,000 unemployed in that city alone. In the United States the number of unemployed exceeds nine

⁵ Roerich, Nicholas. "The Red Cross of Culture," in idem. *Fiery Stronghold*. Boston: The Stratford Company Publishers, 1933, 453-459.

million. In addition, we know that this number does not include a multitude of professional workers, even though they are going through poverty and an unemployment no less severe. Such numbers are a true disaster; they show that the crisis has not only penetrated all strata of society, but is already a destructive factor. By the same mail we are informed that the very existence of the Metropolitan Opera House is threatened. Letters inform us not only about new curtailments of educational institutions but also about losses of many millions by people who were considered invincible pillars of financial wisdom.

When, under our eyes, such pillars of life-long wisdom are being shaken, does this not indicate a sign that these materialistic foundations have already reached their limit and are passing away? And is not this sign one more testimony that it is necessary to raise the forgotten and dusty banners of spirit out of the dust in order to counterbalance the apparent destruction with invincible values?

When, if not now, should the hearts of children be kindled by the records of heroic deeds of true education and Knowledge? Perhaps there has never as yet been a time when one needed so urgently to penetrate into the difficulties of the family and, based upon historical examples, indicate exactly what means were used to overcome the recurring crises in the history of humanity. One cannot hide any longer that the crisis has taken place; it is impossible to console oneself with the hope that daily collections will feed all the unemployed and starving. It is quite obvious that which has occurred lies much deeper.

The folk wisdom long ago had the saying, "Money lost, nothing lost; courage lost, all is lost." Now we must remember this wise proverb, because we have gotten into the habit of speaking about the crisis; those who have suffered as well as those who have for some reason suffered only a little, equally blame the crisis, equally blocking all their initiative and creative efforts.

Thus, if basic counteraction is not begun, this crisis may be only a prelude to something much more colossal.

We optimists must primarily divert any panic, any despair, whether on the stock market or in the Holy of Holies of the Heart. There is no horror which, after a greater tension of energy is evoked, cannot be transmuted into a luminous solution. It is especially horrifying to hear people who are not ill-intentioned but burdened by the crisis, begin to say that now is not the time to think of Culture. We have already heard similar words, inadmissible, in their cowardice and despair.

Know, my dear readers, that now one must think with particular urgency, not only about culture as such, but about how to apply this source of life for the new generation. One may imagine how the trend of thought of youth, which has just begun to form, will express itself, if it hears in school and at home about the horrors of despair, only about the

necessity of renouncing that which is most vital, and forgetting the very sources of Light and Progress.

The terrible expressions "One cannot," "This is not the time," "Impossible," lead the new consciousness into a dark prison. And nothing, nothing in the world will illumine these obscurities of the heart if they are once admitted. Nor must we think only of youth; we must at the same time also think about childhood. Every educator knows that the foundations of a person's attitude towards the world, often ineradicable throughout one's entire life, are being laid, not during adolescence, but far earlier. It is often only the silent gaze of a child which reveals that the surrounding conditions are not at all beyond his comprehension, as it seems to adult conceit. How many basic problems are being solved in the brain and heart of a four or six-year-old child!

Everyone who has watched the development of children will of course remember those remarkable definitions, remarks, and counsels which have been uttered by the child quite unexpectedly. But besides these spoken expressions, what innumerable sparks of consciousness are also revealed in the silent look of a child. And how frequently these little ones divert their gaze from the grown-ups, as though protecting some decisive thought which, according to the opinion of children, the grown-ups would probably not understand.

And now one should fill this agile mind of a child with the most luminous thought, not with empty hopes, because idealism is expressed not in nebulous words, but in an immutable force, which can be proven by historians as a most exact mathematical problem.

Is it not now the time in our schools, beginning from the lower classes, to bring in the attracting and inspiring message of the heroic deeds of humanity, of its most useful discoveries and of that luminous Bliss, which of course is predestined, but which has not yet been consummated because of the absence of vision.

We began with the mention of New York, amazed by the last newspaper reports, amazed by the fact that in the seemingly wealthiest city, the municipality is in immediate need of dozens of millions, in order to prevent starvation.

We are quoting this newspaper communication because it is not only far from the truth, but in its essence, it doesn't even express the entire truth. That which was communicated about New York refers of course to all cities, not only to those of America, but of the entire world. Often these communications are concealed either by conditioned limitations or by the dark dust of eruptions as is now being reported from South America, in the accounts of airplanes that were sent to places stricken by cataclysms where "nothing was to be seen." Verily from many parts of the globe "nothing is to be seen", and when the darkness of the eruption disperses, then we see a still greater calamity of the human spirit.

He who now considers the inevitability of the crisis is in no way a Cassandra, uttering ominous prophecies, "which at least in the case of Cassandra were fulfilled." He who now points out the crisis is assuming a role analogous to the flagman of a train who, seeing the impending catastrophe, waves his flag of warning, hoping with his entire heart that the engineers will be vigilant and see his warning. Let us be such flagmen.

Let us raise the banner for the protection of Culture! Let us remember the Universal Day of Culture suggested last year as a day in schools when recitations of the greatest achievements of humanity, instead of the ordinary lessons, would kindle young hearts, through their luminous message. If last year we had in mind a League of Youth and at least one day which would manifest the Beautiful Garden of humanity, then we now ask that the urge for this manifestation be increased. A single day will no longer strengthen the consciousness which is now shaken by social and family misfortunes. One must speak more frequently about the saving, creative, and inspiring source.

To educate, does not mean to give a record of technical information. Education, the forming of the world-consciousness, is attained by synthesis; not by the synthesis of misfortunes, but by the synthesis of the joy of perfection and creativeness. But, if we shut off all flow of this joyous illumination of life, then what type of educators will we be? What education can the pedagogue offer who spreads around him sorrow and despair? Not far from despair is also the pretense of joy; here, it is, that each forced smile that has been called, not without reason, the smile of the skull. It means that we must convince ourselves how necessary and vital the program of Culture is as a salutary beginning, as a giver of life.

From the medical world we know that the so-called, vitalizing remedies cannot act suddenly. Even for the best vitalizer, time is needed so that it should penetrate to all nerve centers, to stimulate them not only mechanically (because each stimulant induces a reaction) but truly to strengthen and revitalize the nerve substance. If we see in all examples of life, the necessity of a certain period for the process of revitalization, then how urgently necessary it is to think and to begin to act under a sign like the Red Cross of Culture.

Humanity has become accustomed to the sign of the Red Cross. This beautiful symbol has penetrated life not only in times of war, but has afforded to all existence an affirmation of the concept of humanitarianism. And the same realization of humanitarianism, the same immediate necessity from small to great, must surround this sign of Culture similar to the Red Cross. One must not think that it is possible only to think of Culture at certain times when digesting the tasty food of a dinner. One should know that it is just as needed during hunger and cold. As the sign of the Red Cross shines luminously to the wounded, so should the Sign of Culture burn ardently to the physically and spiritually hungry.

Is it now the time to obstruct, to protest, to disagree and to wrangle in a petty manner? When a Red Cross ambulance hurries through the streets, all traffic stops to make way for it. Likewise for the urgent Sign of Culture, Let us also give up at least some of our usual habits and all the vulgar sediments and dusty limitations of ignorance from which, in any case, we will sooner or later have to purify ourselves.

For people who have not come close to questions of education, the Sign of Culture may seem only an interesting experiment. Of course, we will not hide our opinion that people will thus show their lack of education in history. But if it seems only an experiment to some we also will agree to this, because no one may say that this experiment can be destructive or create decay. Creativeness of thought about Culture is so apparent that it is even ridiculous to speak of it.

During serious danger on a ship, the command is given "Act according to your ability."

And also now thinking about Culture one must say to friends and enemies, "Let us act according to our abilities." It means let us double all our forces for the glory of the creative concept of Culture whose vitality cannot be deferred.

Himalayas, April 17, 1932

5. The Mission of Womanhood⁶

From the most ancient days, women have worn a wreath upon their heads. With this wreath they are said to have pronounced the most sacred incantations. Is it not the wreath of unity? And this blessed unity....is it not the highest responsibility and beautiful mission of womanhood? From women one may hear that we must seek disarmament not in warships and guns, but in our spirits. And from where can the young generation hear its first caress of unification? Only from the mother.

To both East and West, the image of the Great Mother—womanhood, is the bridge of ultimate unification. To the Hindu of yesterday and today sings his song to the all-powerful Mother, Raj-Rajesvari. To her, the women bring their golden flowers and at her feet they lay the fruits for blessing, carrying them back to their hearths. After glorifying her image, they immerse it in the water, lest an impure breath should touch the Beauty of the World. To the Mother is dedicated the site on the Great White Mountain which has never been climbed. Because, when the hour of extreme need strikes, it is said that there she will

⁶ Roerich, Nicholas. "The Mission of Womanhood," in idem. *Fiery Stronghold*. Boston: The Stratford Company Publishers, 1933, 443-447.

stand and will lift up her Hand for the salvation of the world. And encircled by all whirlwinds and all Light, she will rise like a pillar of space, summoning all the forces of the far-off worlds.

In this way it happens that when the West speaks of the "Hundred Armed One" of the Orthodox Church, it is but another facet of the images of the many-armed, all benevolent Kwan-Yin. When the West exalts with reverence the gold-embroidered garment of the Italian Madonna, and feels the deep penetration of the paintings of Duccio and Fra Angelico, we are reminded of the symbols of the many-eyed Omniscient Dukkar. We remember the All-Compassionate, the multitudinous aspects of the All-Bestowing and All-Merciful. We remember how correctly the psychology of the people has conceived the iconography of symbols and what an enormous Knowledge lies hidden at present under the inanimate lines. There, a smile appears where preconceptions disappear and prejudice is forgotten!

And as if freed of a great burden, they speak of the Mother of the World. With affection we may recall the Italian cardinal, who was in the habit of advising worshipers, "Do not overburden Christ, the Savior, with your requests, for He is very busy: Better address your prayers to the Holy Mother. She will pass your prayers on to whomever is necessary."

The images of the Mother of the World, of the Madonna, the Mother Kali, the Benevolent Dukkar, Ishtar, Kwan-Yin, Miriam, the White Tara, Raj-Rajeswari, and Niuka. All these great images, all these Great SelfSacrificing Beings merge together in one conception as one benevolent Unity. And each of these, in spite of the difference of language, comprehensible to all, ordains that there should be, not division, but construction. They say that the day of the Mother of the World has come. In the smile of Unity all becomes simple. The aureole of the Madonna becomes a scientific physical radiation, the aura long since known to humanity.

The symbols of today, so poorly interpreted by rationalists, instead of being regarded as supernatural, suddenly become subjects for investigation to the sincere research worker. And in this miracle of simplicity and understanding, one distinguishes the breath of the evolution of Truth.

A Hindu of today who has graduated from many universities addresses the Great Mother, Raj-Rajesvari Herself in full reverence.

At the same time, at the other end of the world, people sing: "Let us glorify Thee, Mother of Light!"

And the old libraries of China and the ancient Central-Asiatic centers preserve, since the most ancient days, many hymns to the same Mother of the World.

Throughout the entire East and in the entire West there lives the image of the Mother of the World, and deeply significant salutations are dedicated to this High Entity.

The great Features of the Face are often covered and under the folds of this veil, glowing with the squares of perfection, may one not see the One Great Unifying Aspect, common to Them All!

Peace be to the World! Blessed be woman, messenger of peace.

I ask you, representatives of womanhood, to support our Banner of Peace, which has as its aim the protection of artistic and scientific treasures of mankind. These treasures of the human spirit are so often endangered by destruction not only during war but also during all kinds of inner unrest.

The Mission of womanhood is great. As we have stated already: "When there are difficulties in the home, we turn to the woman. When accounts and calculations are no longer of aid, when enmity and mutual destruction reach their limits, we turn to the woman. When evil forces overcome one, then woman is invoked. When the mechanical mind becomes helpless, then one remembers the woman. Verily, when wrath obscures the judgment of the mind, only the heart finds saving solutions. And where is the heart which can replace the woman's? And where is the courage of an ardent heart, which can be compared with the courage of woman at the brink of the insoluble? What hand can replace the calming touch of conviction of a woman's heart? And what eye, having endured the pain of suffering, will respond so self-sacrificingly, in the name of Bliss?

Among these great leading missions, stands unyieldingly the cultural mission to affirm and propagate the creativeness of mankind. Sponsoring creative thoughts, the consciousness strives towards true progress.

Three million women of America supported the Banner of Peace. All women of the world will act likewise. The Red Cross has saved many suffering ones. Thus also will the Sign of Culture strengthen in consciousness the true values of the spirit.

You, daughters of the Great Mother of the World, your hands weave the Banner of Peace unfurled in the name of the most Beautiful!

Urusvati, Himalayas, 1933

6. Glory to Women, Bearers of Culture⁷

From heart to heart!

Culture is reverence of Light. Culture is love of humanity. Culture is fragrance, the unity of life and beauty. Culture is the synthesis of uplifting and sensitive attainments. Cul-

⁷ Roerich, Nicholas. "Glory to Women, Bearers of Culture," in *Mira* 1933, Vol. 30, No.9, 1933:3-4.

ture is the armor of Light. Culture is salvation. Culture is the motivating power. Culture is the Heart.

If we gather all the definitions of Culture, we find the synthesis of active Bliss, the altar of enlightenment and constructive beauty.

Condemnation, disparagement, defying, melancholy, disintegration, and all other characteristics of ignorance do not befit culture. The great tree of Culture is nourished by an unlimited knowledge, by enlightened labor, incessant creativeness, and noble attainment.

The cornerstones of great civilizations support the stronghold of Culture. But from the tower of Culture, there radiates the jewel—adamant from the loving, realizing, and dauntless Heart.

Love opens these beautiful Gates. As with each true key, so also must this love be true, and Culture self-sacrificing, daring, fiery. Where we find the sources of Culture, they are fiery and issue from the very depths. Where culture has once been born, it cannot be killed. One may annihilate civilization, but Culture, the true spiritual treasure, is eternal.

Therefore, the field of Culture is a joyful one, joyful even during labor, joyful even during the tense battles with the most obscure ignorance. The flaming heart is without limitations in the great Infinity.

The Festival of Labor and Constructiveness! A summons to this Festival means a reminder of eternal labor, of the joy of responsibility and of human dignity.

The labor of the worker for Culture is like the work of a physician. The true physician is acquainted with more than one disease. And not only does the physician cure that which has already occurred, but his wise foresight anticipates the future. The physician not only eradicates the illness, but he labors to improve the health for the whole of life. The physician descends into the darkest cellars in order to carry light and warmth there.

The physician is not forgetful of all the amelioration and beautification of life, in order to give joy to the understanding spirit. The physician not only knows of the old epidemics, but he readily acquaints himself with the symptoms of new diseases, which have been induced by the decay of the foundations.

The physician has sage words of counsel for the young and for the old, and is ready to give everyone encouraging advice. The physician does not cease to extend his knowledge, otherwise he could not answer the needs of the present. The physician does not lose patience or tolerance because a restraint of feeling would repel the suffering ones from him.

The physician does not fear the sight of human ulcers because he is concerned only with their cure. The physician collects various curative herbs and stones; he knows the

research for their benevolent application. The physician is not weary of hastening with and for the suffering ones at all hours of the day or night.

All these qualities are also inherent in the worker for Culture. He is equally ready at all hours of the day or night to contribute his help. The worker for Culture always beneficently answers: "I am always ready!" His heart is ever open to everything in which experience and knowledge may be useful. Helping, he himself continually learns, because "in giving, we receive." He is not afraid, for he knows that fear opens the gates of darkness.

The worker for Culture is always youthful, for his heart does not wither. He is movable because movement is force. He stands vigil on the parapet of Bliss, Knowledge, and Beauty. He knows what true cooperation is.

All coworkers for Culture are united by rays of the heart. Mountains and oceans are no obstacles to these flaming hearts. They are not dreamers but constructors and smiling ploughmen.

In sending this Greeting of Culture, one cannot do so without a smile, without the call of friendship. Thus we shall meet, thus we shall gather together and labor for Bliss, Beauty, and Knowledge. And we shall do this undeferrably, without losing a day, nor an hour, in blissful constructiveness.

Mothers, wives, and sisters—transform the dusky daily life into the festival of Great Service, and show the coming generation that every labor, while of spiritual aspect, creates high quality. This sublime quality should enter human life from dawn to sunset, and in this constant self-perfectedment, we will find the creative smile of happiness.

Mothers, wives, and sisters—create heroes!

May the blessings of the Mother of the World be with you!

7. Roots of Culture

(On the Tenth Anniversary of the Master Institute, 1931)⁸

Ten years have already passed since we laid the foundation of the Master Institute of United Arts. How unnoticeably these ten years have gone by! Because during a multitude of circumstances and events, time moves with especial rapidity. As if it were yesterday one recalls how with M. M. Lichtmann we were hurrying to rent space in the Hotel des Artistes in New York. By accident we found ourselves delayed on the way, and due to this accident,

⁸ Roerich, Nicholas. "Roots of Culture," in idem. *Realm of Light*. New York, Roerich Museum Press, 1931, 58-62.

as we entered the subway, we were accosted by a Greek artist with the unexpected extraordinary exclamation:

"I have been looking for you for three months already! Do you need a large studio?"

"Of course we do. Where is it?"

"In the building of the Greek Church on 54th Street."

"All right, tomorrow we will go to look at it."

"No, impossible! I cannot keep it any longer; if you wish to see it, let us go at once!"

And so instead of the Hotel des Artistes, we are seated with Father Lazaris of the Greek Cathedral, who insists that I must be of the Clergy. And here we decide to rent the space. And under the Cross of the Greek Cathedral is laid the foundation of the long-since conceived Institute of United Arts. It is a large studio, but only one room.

Some one says to us: "Could you possibly dream of having an Institute of United Arts in one studio?"

I answer, "For the conception of creation, one does not need a room larger than the cell of Fra Angelico. Each tree must grow. If the work is vital, it will develop, if it is destined to die, in any case it will have to die in one room."

And so the first piano studies resound through the studio, and the first dreams about painting, vocal and sculpture classes are realized. Soon the studio has to be divided into three parts, and life itself supports the idea of unity.

Those connected with us are such experienced, creative guides as Giles, Such, Mordkin, the Lichtmanns, Grant, Germanova, Bistrum, Andoga, Wagenaar and Appia. Already we have seventy co-workers, working in different departments and hundreds of students fill the classes and halls. Already the new generation of teachers is growing, and Ellen Kettunen, Frieda Lazaris, Linda Cappabianca and others of our pupils form the second line of attack. Twelve years ago, based on long academic experience, I decisively affirmed the following statement:

"Art will unify all Humanity. Art is one—indivisible. Art has its many branches, yet all are one. Art is the manifestation of the coming synthesis. Art is for all. Everyone will enjoy true art. The Gates of the 'Sacred Source' must be wide open for everybody, and the light of art will influence numerous hearts with a new love. At first this feeling will be unconscious, but after all it will purify human consciousness, and how many young hearts are searching for something real and beautiful! So, give it to them. Bring art to the people where it belongs. We should have not only Museums, Theaters, Universities, Public Libraries, Railway Stations and Hospitals, but even Prisons decorated and beautified. Then we shall have no more prisons."

I remember that at that time, certain friends smiled to each other, whispering, "Beautiful dreams, but how will life react to them?" But our chief principle is: "Admittance and benevolence." We and our co-workers do not like the dead, "No"; and with each possibility make the effort to say, "Yes." It is not without reason that all people express their affirmations by an open sound, and for negation have chosen the dumb, semi-bestial, "No."

What other considerations have been confirmed by the experience of the last ten years? Life has confirmed that all unity is useful; confirmed that it is practical (we do not fear this word) to have various branches of art under one roof, having one common library, a common office, a common artistic activity, common guidance and the closest intercourse between the separate branches. It is practical to afford the students the opportunity of trying their forces in various branches until they finally make their choice. It is practical that there be interchange of musicians, artists and designers. It is practical to show full trust in the teacher, letting him manifest his methods in life. The results will indicate whether he is right, because as in one's entire life, we must judge by results. It is practical to give opportunity to students as soon as possible to try their forces in life, teaching them courage and safeguarding them from vulgarity. It is practical as was carried out by Howard Giles and Emil Bistram, to have music during the work in art classes and to give lectures which by their artistic and philosophic content, may raise and unite the spirit of the entire artistic working guild.

It is practical to give examples from the history of art; thus we will once more learn to what extent art was the creative, peaceful basis in the entire life of the State. Chiefly, one must reject less, remembering that the majority of denials have ignorance as their basis; thus the teachers turn into guides, transmitting to the students not only technique, but also life's experience, sharing with them the valuable acquisitions which will prove a strong shield for the new generation.

How often humanity, entangled in its problems, attempted to deny the significance of the teacher. In epochs of decadence, it was seemingly possible to shake the basic conception of the spiritual hierarchy. But not for long did this darkness last. With the epochs of renaissance, again the great leadership of teaching was inevitably crystallized and people again began to feel the ladder of ascent and the blessed hand of the Leader. Many times small minds hesitate, fearing that they may be oppressed by the personality of the Teacher. Especially those who have little to lose often worry lest they lose something. In this regard, we now enter a very significant epoch. In certain strata of humanity, the spirit of denial has just succeeded in evoking a protest against the Teacher. But as always happens, denial can arise only temporarily, and the creative origins of humanity again lead the wanderers of life into the path of affirmation, of fearless search—to the path of creation and beauty. People

again remember about the Teachers. Of course these teachers must not pertain to a grandfather's study with all its petrified remains. The Teacher is He who reveals, enlightens and encourages. He who will say, "Blessed are the obstacles. Through them we grow." He who recalls the beautiful Golgothas of knowledge and art, because therein lies the creative achievement. He who is able to remind, to teach the means of achievement – he will not be rejected by the strong spirits. He himself, will realize the value of the Hierarchy of knowledge; and in his constant movement will create the ascending researches.

So many schools and useful disseminators of knowledge can be organized in our societies. To all of them the same advice can be given; each tree can be planted only as a small sapling. Only gradually it will become tried and find steady roots. Therefore, if there is heartfelt desire to help the dissemination of knowledge and beauty, let it be fulfilled without delay. Let it not be handicapped by small possibilities. Practicality is not in the measure, but in the inner substance of the seed.

Himalayas, 1931

8. In spite of Difficulties (To The Bulgarian Roerich Society, 1930)⁹

Your last two letters, written in Paris and New York, were communicated to me. Thank you for your sincere lines. Thus, exactly must we act in our service to the Great Light. The entire world is divided now into the destroyers and the builders. And each one, who understands the high significance of Culture, will be among the builders, among those who strain their energy in order to defend the world from the malevolent assaults of darkness. Great must be the ignorance and blindness of those who cannot even distinguish the Light from the Darkness. You understand why the parent of Darkness, from ancient times, has been called the sower of refuse. It is he who so clouds with dust the eyes of the ignorant, that they are entirely unable to distinguish the day from the night.

In sending you my book, "Flowers of Morya's Garden," I have done so in the name of Saint Sergius. Direct your worthiest strivings to this Great Protector, this Builder of the true, spiritual Culture. "Flowers of Morya's Garden" is, as you know, published for the benefit of the famished —for the spiritually famished. Because physical starvation is

⁹ Roerich, Nicholas. "In Spite of Difficulties (To the Bulgarian Society, 1930)," in idem. *Realm of Light*. New York: Roerich Museum Press, 1931, 143-145.

nought in comparison with starvation of spirit. And for each one who thinks of Bliss, the immediate task is to help. Only in giving do we receive. Then only do we receive that truly great Bliss which the Ancient Wisdom preordains and knows and which is so realistically expressed in true Christianity.

There are two conceptions, Bliss and Heroic Achievement, firmly defined in the Russian words *Blagodat* i *Podvig*, but which lack adequate expression in other languages. These, one must understand as reality. Clinging to Bliss, one must infuse it actively into daily life. For what else can transform the homely routine of each day into beauty? Only this—Great Bliss! What a wondrous word! Because this realization creates miracles. And the most brutal heart pays homage to the highest Light, which is no less a reality than the sun. But we also, with each torch of ours, evoke the supreme fiery elements; which means that in each heart may also be kindled a purifying flame of all-understanding and all-containment. I am no lover of "mysticism" or "occultism," because both are synonyms of nescience.

As I have so often pointed out in "Paths of Blessing" which you now read, we must strive to clarity, to lucidity, to the truth, in which is revealed the great radiant hierarchy.

From your letters I learn that you are enduring hardships. One must say that now it is difficult for all. Hence we may all rejoice if we have been deemed worthy to be summoned to work, inspired by the example of the great deeds of the most Holy Sergius—the deeds of him, who so often suffered revilement and was abandoned even by his chosen brethren, yet conquered all difficulties only by the power of spirit, continuing unceasingly to build dwellings of Bliss as guiding milestones.

As you know in America, we are building a Chapel in the name of Saint Sergius. Like sentinels of Bliss these signs will stand upon the ways of the gathering of experience. How many of our brothers, now scattered, cull great experiences and knowledge, which will sustain them upon the benevolent ways. I have sent you my address about Culture. Verily, let us all give thought to this great conception, to this step to light. I know that the thought of Culture will benevolently re-echo in your heart and in the rhythm of this sacred tremor, new, invincible forces will suffuse your beings.

Greetings!

9. Re-evaluation¹⁰

In the remote Himalayas, newspapers have reached us. In one we read that more than two thousand banks in the United States have discontinued operations. Another informs us of the failure of a powerful bank in Switzerland. The third announces the closing of banks in Germany, Austria and Hungary. And finally the news that the gold standard has been abandoned.

Well, well! Let us remember what we wrote ten years ago about "heaps of valueless banknotes," in the full meaning of this word. Is it not time to remember the tales related of the first revolutions in Germany and Russia; when people who had huge fortunes in paper money, suddenly realized to their horror that their assumed fortunes were in fact only paper when instead of spending money to print labels for beer bottles, the brewers preferred to paste banknotes of high denominations on their bottles. And in our collections we still have German postage stamps of a face-value of twenty billion German Reichsmarks. How much further may one go?

These are not fairytales, but living facts. Yet even during these times of paper disaster, good old Rembrandt never betrayed his collectors. And it never entered anyone's head to label beer-bottles with original creations of artists. Thus, even during the most difficult times, the human spirit never forgot the true, irreplaceable values of mankind. Perhaps humanity remembered these values only dimly as in a dream, overcoming with reticence the entire heritage of prejudice and ignorance; nevertheless, it did recall them. And even persons of the most desperately negative character, although remaining silent, never dared to contradict that which constitutes the whole meaning and purpose of human life.

Until quite recently humanity professed an unusual reverence and esteem for bankers. They were at times even elected as members of Governments. True, these Governments did not last long and passed without a trace into oblivion. Financiers should not take this statement to mean that we are altogether against them. Among them we know quite a number of very cultured persons who devote much of their time to educational problems. And one should not forget that these cultured representatives of the financial world have responded very quickly to true values at times. I remember how one of them told me, "And yet I would prefer to have a collector of art objects for a son-in-law; after all, it is safer."

Of course when we speak of collecting an object we should understand its inner quality. We do not mean the common purchasers of art objects who show their outer pros-

¹⁰ Roerich, Nicholas. "Revaluation," in idem. *Fiery Stronghold*. Boston: The Stratford Company Publishers, 1933, 34-38.

perity by a certain display of furniture and bibelots which are brought to their home by obliging antique dealers. We mean of course those true collectors who build up their treasury in the name of the beautiful, in the name of the imperative demand of their dynamic spirits, those who impress their individuality upon the characters of their collections, thus proving themselves to be true co-creators. We should take off our hats before such preservers of values.

One may only wish that all storms of life should pass by such collectors without affecting them in any way and that each revolt of ignorance should bring them new possibilities and new energy.

We cannot follow the laws of life of artistic creations. Beyond the boundaries of seeming coincidences, we invariably meet the great Cosmic Justice. Amidst dazzling snow-white peaks it is difficult to discern which is higher and stronger, but each of them is subject to unchanging laws. This is similar with human creations. Who can follow this most intricate complex of the conditions of creativeness? But it is not for us to judge them. We should but rejoice and be uplifted in spirit while approaching the constructions of Beauty. With great care, we should guard their existence, for we cannot think like those who consoled themselves: "Après nous—le déluge!" We are responsible for these creative treasures.

Someone interposes, "We already know all this." No, my dear one you do not know this; for if you knew it you would construct your lives differently. But if you do know this and do not apply this valuable Knowledge into life, the worse it is for you. For your sake, let us think that you are not aware of these values. But if you insist that you knew all this long ago, we must regretfully classify you as ignoramuses! For only the ignoramus light-heartedly judges and condemns. And the same ignoramus is primarily most gullible; he accepts all paper values, each beer-label, just because his grandfather drank from the same bottle or because the beer-labels are bought by gentlemen in shiny top-hats and ladies who, despite their figures, annually change the fashion of their dress.

What further disasters are needed in order that the gullible and light-minded should listen to the voices of their hearts, which in some sleepless hour of dawn, whisper to them that truth is not interwoven with top hats, nor with a new fashion of dress that makes even walking difficult.

But the laws of life forge an immutable evolution. It is the greatest happiness to see how, despite all prejudices and superstitions, life builds its steps and evinces the significance of creative labor.

By speaking of the re-evaluation of values, we perhaps use an inexact expression. We should simply say evaluation of values, for by re-evaluation we imply the acknowledgment of values which after all have never really been accepted as such.

How useful is the study of history, especially when we can liberate ourselves from preconceived, conventional ideas and purify our thinking for a true understanding. Again and again, let us remember precisely what monuments and what types of deeds the history of the world records as worthy and transmits as its heritage to future generations. Unbiased history has long ago given us a true appraisal of values. Then why make up and whisper conceitedly about changed conditions of living? The value of the heart, the value of the Beautiful, the value of Knowledge is always identical and precious. History does not preserve beer labels; through all its appealing symbols, it untiringly teaches us where the true, indestructible value lies. Each bit of news about the crash of conventional values is nothing save a new knock of fate at the door. Remember those persistent knocks of fate in Beethoven's Symphony. Just as inexorably will Cosmic Justice knock at the doors of mankind until the human heart opens towards the joyous realization of true, indestructible values.

But let us never conclude with regrets. Not all people care for top hats, not all are devoted to the conventionalism of their attire. We know that the hearts of the great masses of humanity are striving to move from the conventional to the real, are striving instinctively and often semi-consciously towards the covenants of sublime Teachings. And not only the hearts of the widespread masses, but also the child's heart is always open to the Beautiful as long as it is not besmirched by the experiences of life. In the name of this child's heart which is open to the assimilation of everything beautiful, which is ready to accept true values, we send our best thoughts. And great is the host of these striving co-workers, visible and invisible. Therefore, neither the crashes of thousands of banks, nor a tempest of cancelled and cremated banknotes, can upset us; instead they will fill our consciousness with the radiant dawn of true values.

10. Defense of Values¹¹

Speaking of the Pact for the preservation of artistic and scientific treasures, I agree with you that all conventional leagues and "uncultured non-cooperations," as Masaryk called them, lead to nothing. From this standpoint, pacts are nothing more than scraps of paper. My idea, however, is very different. For a long time I have been a member of the French Red Cross, having been elected a life member, so I am well aware of the history of this admirable institution from the day of its founding by H. Dunant.

¹¹ Roerich, Nicholas. "Defense of Values," in *The Scholar*, Vol. XIV, No. 11, 1939: 491-493.

I remember the irony and derision that hailed his idea, and this great Swiss was labeled utopian and mocked for his impracticable ideas.

Seventeen years of steady labor were required before he was able to realize his humanitarian scheme, and what seemed impossible was eventually realized.

Even today, you will find people who take an evil pleasure in stating that Italian bombs recently destroyed Red Cross hospitals. Barbarous incidents, however, do not affect the lofty ideals of the Red Cross. One can spit at and insult divine images, but this is not likely to change their character. When Millet's *Angelus* was disfigured by vandals, it did not lose its significance.

My idea concerning the preservation of artistic and scientific treasures aims at creating an international impulse to protect all that is precious and valuable to life.

If the Red Cross sign recalls humanitarianism, then a similar sign ought to remind mankind of its cultural treasures.

From his early school years and throughout all of his social manifestations, man should have a clear conception of the significance and the importance of art and science.

Pictorial impressions are the most lasting and decisive. If children, then, are taught from their early years to respect the Red Cross of Culture, then their consciousness is much more likely to rise to a higher plane. In our correspondence on such matters, we have received many interesting suggestions. In Paris, the well-known literary paper—*Les Nouvelles littéraires*—has invited correspondence on the subject and will be publishing letters from General Gamelin, Paul Jameau, Ugo Oggetti, Philadelphus, and other prominent people. The subject was brought to the fore in an article by our friend De la Pradelle concerning the preservation of works of art in times of war. A professor once wrote to me: "You rouse me and make me ashamed of myself, and leave no room for pessimism and dejection." If a man feels ashamed, then it means that he has begun to ponder over the value of art and science, which we should all do, morning, noon, and night. My effort then has been to stimulate thought toward a higher level rather than argue over scraps of paper.

If, as in the case of H. Dunant, we must put up with all sorts of abuse, this will not discourage us. The archives of literature and the opinions of all sorts of individuals point to endless strife and effort in this direction. Humanity is a long way from peace; nevertheless, in all lands people today aspire toward the "peace of all the world."

This would seem to be a sublime utopia, and yet the human heart will never pray for war, even though this remains the infamous condition of our time.

Space is filled with prayers for the peace of the whole world, and in this saturation of space, there is light and optimism. And if it is not to be for us today, then let us hope that it will be for the humanity that is to come, and that we have been told to love. There may be

very different opinions as to the present state of mankind, and one can look upon scientific progress with pessimism or optimism. Currently, however, malice and hatred are pouring up from the pit of darkness, and it is very difficult for people to see clearly. The weak in spirit do not understand how those who are predisposed to right conduct are often kept apart by trifling prejudices, which we ought to overcome by setting an example to the younger generation. Not so much time now remains for us to labor in this world and to set forth all we have learned from our contact with the most varied types of people.

Suspicion, belittlement, and indifference there cannot be where the heart is concerned, and so, let us continue to express the desires of the heart.

In all of us there is a fund of precious recollection that can be of use in all circumstances. You know that I and all of us have to undergo slander. Not long ago a friend wrote from Paris to say that certain people had invented all sorts of fictions about me, going as far as to allege that I did not paint my pictures. All this, however, has no effect because truth is a thing that will come out. Long ago it was said, "Grief today, tomorrow joy."