

NICHOLAS ROERICH. THE MYSTERIOUS BRIEF REFLECTIONS ON THREE ROERICH CONTROVERSIES

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Abstract

The paper discusses three controversies connected with Nicholas K. Roerich: was he a Bolshevik spy, were there any ulterior motives behind his Central Asian Expeditions, and was he the reincarnation of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama of Tibet. It also includes a brief biography of N.K. Roerich.

Key words

Nicholas K. Roerich, Tibet, Russia, Central Asian Great Game, Theosophy.

Abstrakt

Tajemniczy Mikołaj Rerich.

Refleksje na temat trzech kontrowersji związanych z Roerichem

Artykuł omawia trzy kontrowersje związane z Mikołajem K. Roerichem: czy był on bolszewickim szpiegiem, czy za jego ekspedycjami do Azji Środkowej kryły się jakieś nieznane jeszcze motywy, oraz czy wierzył, iż był reinkarnacją Piątego Dalajlamy Tybetu. Artykuł zawiera także krótką biografię Roericha.

Słowa kluczowe

Mikołaj Roerich, Tybet, Rosja, Środkowoazjatycka Wielka Gra, teozofia.

One should not coerce others, nor should one even try to persuade them. One may only suggest, strengthening it with the cement of feeling.
Agni Yoga (1929), verse 394

Introduction and acknowledgements

Nicholas Konstantinovich Roerich¹ (1874–1947) is probably one of the best-known Russian painters and thinkers both in his native country, in the English-speaking West, and in India. He defies easy classification – he was a painter, an archeologist, a historian, a philosopher, a tireless campaigner for peace and protection of cultural monuments in times of both war and peace, a stage-designer, a founder of several institutions of art, a poet, finally a traveler in Central Asia, even a hero of a still unexplained alleged tax evasion scandal in the United States. Indeed, it would be easier to say what he was not than what he was, as the above list is far from complete.

However, he is still surprisingly little-known in Poland. Two of his books have been translated into Polish², but his paintings remain unknown to the Polish audience, and his achievements in the humanitarian and cultural monuments protection fields seem to be known only to international lawyers.

One thing that can be said about his paintings is that they share one feature with the art of Michelangelo, William Blake and Van Gogh – he who has seen one painting by Roerich shall always recognize him. He just cannot be mistaken for anybody else, even for his younger son Svetoslav Roerich, also a painter of genius.

The lives and achievements of Roerich and his family have recently been the subject of several papers by Małgorzata Gdok-Klafkowska³. In her paper of 2011 Małgorzata

¹ The name is spelled “Ryorig” in Russian” and “Roerich” in English, French and German. In Polish the most logical spelling seems “Rerich”, but many sources both printed and electronic use the English spelling “Roerich”.

² M. Rerich. *Ałtaj–Himalaje*. Transl. by E.P. Melech. Introd. by B. Gaforow. Series Rodowody Cywilizacji. Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1980; N. Rerich. *Znaki*. Transl. by A. Szymański. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1983.

³ M. Gdok. *Yuri Nikolayevich Roerich 1902–1960, an Outline of His Life and His Works in Tibetan Studies*. [In:] “Lingua Posnaniensis” 1996, vol. 38. Poznań, pp. 115–141. M. Gdok-Klafkowska. *The Dream of Kanchenjonga. The Roerich Family and Himalayan Studies*. [In:] *Buddhist Himalaya. Studies in Religion, History and Culture*, vol. I: *Tibet and the Himalayas*. Ed. by Al. MacKay and A. Balikci-Denjongpa. Gangtok: Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, 2011, pp. 305–322. M. Gdok-Klafkowska. *Mikołaj Konstantynowicz Rerich jako prekursor komunikacji międzykulturowej*. [In:] *Homo Communicans*. 2: *Человек в пространстве межкультурных коммуникаций*. Ed. by K. Janaszek, J. Miturska-Bojanowska, R. Gawarkiewicz. Szczecin: Grafform, 2012, pp. 50–52. M. Gdok-Klafkowska. *Agni*

Gdok-Klafkowska gave a comprehensive annotated bibliography of the recently-published Roerich studies in Russian, to which I refer those who are interested in the Roerichs and can read Russian.

In 2007, at the international conference marking the Golden Jubilee of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology in Gangtok, Sikkim, India, our joint presentation of a paper on Nicholas Roerich's Sikkim connections stirred a lively discussion, during which several questions were asked concerning the less known or more controversial aspects of the activities of that extraordinary man. In a way, the present paper picks up the thread from there, of course being only my own thoughts on those points. I think time has come to present them in the open.

We gratefully acknowledge our indebtedness to LesLee Alexander, Alexandre Andreyev, John Bray, Ruth A. Drayer, and Alex MacKay, for their invaluable help with books and additional information.

Our special word of thanks goes to Professor Chie Nakane, Professor Emerita of Social Anthropology at the University of Tokyo, for placing the latest Japanese work on Amdo Gendun Choshpel at our disposal.

On my own side I have the honor of paying homage to the late Elizabeth Clare Prophet (1939–2009, once known to millions as Guru Ma) as well as of expressing my gratitude to Karen LeBeau and to The Summit Lighthouse, for the giant work they all have accomplished in propagating the Roerich Heritage in the English-speaking world and for their invariably helpful answers to all my questions.

One more remark. The British and American writers on Roerich and Russian politics in Central Asia tend to concentrate on the purely political aspects of the Great Game, and if they mention its religious and spiritual aspects, it is usually with hardly-masked amazement or irony. However, a look at the map will remind the sceptic that Russia – and the USSR – has Mongolia, Manchuria, and China right across the border, Tibet and India are also not too far away, and there is a significant Buddhist population within Russia/USSR/Russian Federation: the Buryats, the Kalmyks, and at least a part of the people of Tuva (formerly known as Urianghai). The Russian Oriental studies have always been at the world's highest level. Helena P. Blavatsky (1831–1891), the creator of modern Theosophy, was Russian, though she wrote in English, and Theosophy was spreading rapidly among the higher spheres on Moscow, Sankt-Peterburg and other Russian cities at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries; let it not be forgotten that Konstantine Tsiolkovsky, the father of space travel, was also interested in Theosophy and wrote several works on subjects related to it.⁴ The events we are interested in

Joga jako płaszczyzna dialogu między Wschodem a Zachodem. [In:] *Homo Communicans*. 2: *Человек в пространстве...*, pp. 79–83. M. Gdok-Klafkowska. *Helena I. Rerich (1879–1955) i jej rola w rozwoju ruchów Pax Cultury i Agni Jogi.* [In:] “Zwierciadło Etnologiczne” 2012, No. 1 (Szczecin), pp. 33–37. M. Gdok-Klafkowska, P. Klafkowski. *Mysł o przyrodzie w filozofii rosyjskiej. Szkice do portretu.* [In:] *Ekorozwój i Agenda 21: Interdyscyplinarny model kształcenia.* Ed. by P. Pieczyński. Szczecin: Collegium Balticum, 2007, pp. 135–146.

⁴ Compare: M. Gdok-Klafkowska, P. Klafkowski. *Mysł o przyrodzie w filozofii rosyjskiej...* P. Klafkowski. *Czy ludzkość ma jeszcze szansę? Konstanty Ciołkowski, Mikołaj Roerich i Danił Andrejew.* [In:] *Dialog kultur i społeczeństw.* Ed. by B. Afeltowicz, J. Miturska-Bojanowska, H. Walter. Szczecin: volumina pl, 2016, pp. 83–92.

followed the collapse of the Manchu Empire in China (1911), the treaty between Tibet and Mongolia that formerly declared the independence of both countries (1913), the October Revolution (1917), and the second Mongolian declaration of independence in 1921, so they really meant the end of an epoch. Many of the contemporaries believed that all these events were fulfilling ancient Buddhist and Central Asian prophecies (of Shambhala, Maitreya, the rise of a new Chingis Khan in the person of Baron Ungern-Sternberg etc.). The mystic side of the last years of Tsarist Russia is probably best exemplified by the importance at the Tsar's court of Rasputin and the Buriat-born doctor Pyotr A. Badmaev who practiced Tibetan medicine in Sankt-Peterburg (both rose to importance, at least partly, because of giving treatments to the haemophiliac Tsarevitch Alexei). If we remember all that, many of the events described below may suddenly make more sense than it at first appeared.

Nicholas Roerich, a Biographic Note

As the present paper refers to many events that may not be generally known, it seems advisable to begin with a capsule biography of Nicholas K. Roerich. Our hero was born in Sankt-Peterburg in 1874, in a rich family of a respected notary. As a young child he had serious health problems and the doctors recommended him staying outdoors as much as possible, which resulted in his early interest in nature, landscapes, archeology and history. Already as a child he showed an exceptional gift for drawing. He completed two courses of studies – law at Sankt-Peterburg University and painting at the Academy of Arts. His diploma work, the painting titled *Messenger*, was bought by Andrei Tretaykov and can still be seen in the Tretaykov Gallery. In 1900 he spent a year in France studying painting with Fernand Cormon⁵. On his return to Russia he married Helena Ivanovna Shaposhnikova (1879–1955); they had two sons, Yuri (1902–1960) the Oriental scholar and Svetoslav (1904–1993) the famous painter. In 1913, in Paris, he was the stage and costume designer for the first performance of Igor Stravinsky's ballet *The Rite of Spring*⁶; the original suggestion of the topic and the plot of the ballet is also his, and his name is printed besides Stravinsky's in the published scores of the work.

In 1916 his health deteriorated rapidly and his doctors recommended moving to Finland for its good air.

After the October Revolution he was asked to become the Minister of Culture, but declined on account of his poor health. When the Russian–Finnish border was closed in May 1918 he became a *de facto* exile, though not a political one. The family travelled

⁵ Fernand Cormon (1845–1924) was once considered one of France's most important historical painters, but now he is nearly forgotten. His style is often described as academic, though many of his paintings have a clear mystic touch. His painting *The Death of Ravana, the King of Lanka* of 1875 is based on the Indian mythology that Roerich was fascinated with. Both Toulouse-Lautrec and Van Gogh have been Cormon's students.

⁶ The premiere of *The Rite of Spring* has been carefully reconstructed by the British ballet and Roerich scholar Kenneth Archer and Mariinsky Orchestra and Ballet, Sankt-Peterburg. It is available as DVD BelAir Classiques BAC241, released 2008.

in Scandinavia, then stayed in London for some time, and finally moved to the United States in 1920, where Roerich quickly became extremely popular, “a star” or “a celebrity” in today’s terms. In 1923, in New York, Nicholas Roerich Museum was opened, functioning until today, the first American art museum devoted to a single artist.

At the end of 1923 the family arrived in India, fulfilling Nicholas and Helena’s life-long dream. In 1923–1925 the Roerichs travelled in India, Sikkim, and Bhutan. In 1925–1928 Nicholas lead the famous Roerich Expedition to Central Asia and Tibet. On their return, the family settled in the township of Naggar, in the Kulu Valley, then in the province of Punjab. It was there they set up the Urusvati Himalayan Research Institute⁷, the first interdisciplinary center of Himalayan studies in all their aspects, from cosmic rays, through botany, biology and geology, to pharmacognosy (one of Nicholas Roerich’s dreams was to find a medical herb that could help curing cancer)⁸, history, and linguistics.

The route of the Roerich Expedition included a one-month detour in Moscow and a few weeks of researches in the Altai and Buryatia. As we shall see, this brief episode still invokes numerous suspicions and controversies.

He maintained good contacts with the United States, where he became a friend of Henry A. Wallace (1888–1965), President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s Secretary of Agriculture since 1935 and Vice-President of the United States in 1941–1945. In 1934–1935 he led the American Botanical Expedition to Manchuria, Mongolia and China; the main objective of the expedition was the search for draught-resisting grasses that could be planted in the US. His attitude to America was full of enthusiasm, but this is no place to discuss it in details.

Ever since he witnessed the deterioration of Russia’s ancient cities of the “Golden Ring”⁹ in the early years of the 20th century, and heard of the destruction of cultural monuments during the Russo-Japanese war of 1904, Roerich dreamt of an international pact that would guarantee the protection of cultural monuments, as well as their personnel, both in times of war *and* peace. The fact that he was also a lawyer, though he

⁷ The idea of setting up such an institution was announced in Darjeeling, but the actual institute consisted of two separate buildings at Naggar, Kulu Valley, a short walk up the hill from Roerich’s house.

⁸ This point was stressed several times by Svetoslav N. Roerich and his wife Devika Rani Roerich, in their conversations with me at the time I had the honor of being their guest in Naggar in 1976. They both confirmed that Nicholas Roerich believed there was a herbal cure for cancer, and that one should look for it in Tibet or Mongolia. The Urusvati Institute included medical and botanical sections and laboratories, with Svetoslav Roerich heading the botanical unit. On the subject of Tibetan medicine in Russia see Т. И. Грекова. *Тибетская медицина в России, история в судьбах и лицах*. Санкт-Петербург: Атон, 1998.

⁹ The collective name of eight larger and several smaller ancient Russian cities north-east of Moscow. Roerich was sent there by the Russian Archaeological Society in 1900 to paint the architectural monuments and document their state of preservation; he made another tour of ancient Russian cities in 1903–1904. The result was one of the most famous series of his paintings, *Old Russia* (almost 90 paintings). Most of them can now be seen at the Museum of the East in Moscow. On the paintings’ turbulent history see R.C. Williams. *Russian Art and American Money 1900–1940*. Cambridge, Mass. and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1980, p. 44.

never practiced law, was of great help, he was also a friend of several eminent Russian lawyers (particularly of Georges Chklaver, 1897–1970). His efforts in this field brought him the Nobel Peace Prize nomination in 1929. The whole story is too long to be told here, but let us note its climax: on April 15, 1935, the Treaty on the Protection of Artistic and Scientific Institutions and Historic Monuments, best known as the Roerich Pact, was signed in Washington. The Pact received the support of President Roosevelt and the US Government signatory was Henry A. Wallace. This Treaty guaranteed the protection of academic and art institutions, and culture monuments, together with their personnel, in times of war and peace.

As a kind of cultural equivalent of the Red Cross sign Roerich suggested the symbol that is now known as PAX CULTURA, Peace Flag or Roerich Flag: three small red circles within a larger one on white field¹⁰. This symbol meant *here are cultural treasures, do not attack or destroy!* The symbol can be interpreted as science, art, and religion united in culture, or, in terms of Indian philosophy, as past, present and future united in infinity of the Wheel of Time. Since 1954 the Roerich Flag has been replaced by the Blue Shield¹¹ as defined by the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict¹².

Unfortunately, for reasons that are still not fully explained, the same year witnessed the rapid decline of Roerich's popularity in the United States; we shall return to this point later on in this paper. He never returned to New York, but kept in touch with the various cultural institutions he set up in America. During the Second World War he was very active in promoting and securing the British and American help to the Soviet Union in its war against Germany. He died in Naggar in 1947.

The physical amount of his work is simply staggering – approximately 7 thousand paintings of all kinds, several volumes of academic and philosophic writings, several stage designs for various operas and ballets that became historic (notably *The Rite of Spring*), numerous art institutions he set up, a volume of poems, finally much creative writing that is still not fully known. Unfortunately, we still do not have a collected edition of his writings.

¹⁰ See Plate 3 at the end of this paper. Roerich always stressed that he did not design this symbol himself, pointing to its frequent appearance in both Eastern and Western art.

¹¹ See Plate 4 at the end of this paper.

¹² This is the Hague Convention of 14.05.1954. It should be noted that the International Roerich Pact Committee has turned over all its documentation to the organizers of the Hague Convention, as the aims of the two were almost identical. However, the Roerich Pact speaks of protection the cultural monuments *both in times of war and peace*, while the Hague Convention limits itself only to the times of armed conflicts, which is a far-reaching difference. For more information about the Roerich Pact in Polish see: L. Gralow. *Pakt Rericha. Ochrona skarbów kultury*. Warszawa: L. Gralow, 1936; S. Nahlik. *Grabież dzieł sztuki, rodowód zbrodni międzynarodowej*. Wrocław–Kraków: Ossolineum, 1958; K. Malinowski (Ed.) *Biblioteka Muzealnictwa i Ochrony Zabytków*. Seria B T. IV: *Międzynarodowa Ochrona Dóbr Kulturalnych, ochrona prawna w razie konfliktów zbrojnych*. Zbiór tekstów wybrał oraz opatrzył wstępem i komentarzem Stanisław Edward Nahlik. Warszawa: Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki, Zarząd Muzeów i Ochrony Zabytków, Ośrodek Dokumentacji Zabytków, 1962; H. Nieć. *Ojczyzna dzieła sztuki, międzynarodowa ochrona integralności narodowej spuścizny kulturalnej*. Warszawa–Kraków: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1980.

On the other hand, we do have an authoritative edition in Russian of the 14 volumes of the *Agni Yoga* (also known as the *Living Ethics*), a syncretic philosophic-religious system the Roerichs propagated all their lives, originally published between 1924 and 1938, first in Russian, subsequently in English and many other languages¹³. The followers of this system all over the world identify themselves with the sign of a small rectangular plate with Sanskrit words MAITREYA SANGHA¹⁴, usually – but not necessarily – in red on white¹⁵.

There is a point that must be clarified here. The English-language sources often refer to our hero as Professor Roerich. He definitely was a professor – he set up his own art school in Sankt-Peterburg in or around 1906 – and he had the right to the title. The problem is that the American press usually called him a professor in the context of his interest in India, Tibet, and Mongolia, thus creating an impression he was a professor in Oriental studies, which he was not.

There are several biographies of Roerich in Russian¹⁶, English, German, and other languages, but a definitive academic biography, with full annotations and references, still remains to be written.

The Roerich Heritage of Peace Through Culture and Universal Ethics is very much alive and increasingly important in our violent and confused world. Its various aspects are topics of numerous international conferences usually held in Russia or India. It is a pity these do not (yet?) reach Poland.

The Many Faces of Nicholas Roerich

The points that raise most controversies in connection with Nicholas Roerich are connected either with politics or with the occult, both being risky subjects. Nicholas and Helena Roerich were believers in Theosophy and Helena P. Blavatsky's works¹⁷, but admitting one's interest in these subjects in today's academic world usually means scorn and ridicule. However, as these questions arise again and again, they cannot

¹³ See M. Gdok-Klafkowska. *The Dream of Kanchenjonga...*, pp. 318–319 for bibliography of books on Agni Yoga, and M. Gdok-Klafkowska. *Агни-Йога, Учение зчивой этики...*, pp. 79–83 for an introduction to this system. Agni Yoga consists of 14 volumes in Russian and 17 volumes in English; the difference stems from the fact that the last volume in Russian has been divided into four parts in English because of its length. The editions in English and Russian are considered equally authoritative. The Russian edition is now published by the MCR (Международный центр Рерихов) in Moscow, and the English edition, by the Agni Yoga Society, New York. I would also like to mention a Russian edition in two volumes – *Agni Yoga, Учение зчивой этики* – published by the EKSMO Publishers, Moscow 2003; this edition contains a detailed chronology of the first volume that is usually not given in other editions.

¹⁴ These words mean *Maitreya's Community*, Maitreya being the name of the Buddha who is to come in future as the last Buddha of the present age.

¹⁵ See Plate 5 at the end of this paper.

¹⁶ For a list of Roerich's biographies in Russian see M. Gdok-Klafkowska. *The Dream of Kanchenjonga...*, p. 308.

¹⁷ Some sources suggest that it was Helena who introduced Nicholas to Theosophy. It was also Helena Roerich who translated H.P. Blavatsky's *opus magnum*, *The Secret Doctrine*, into Russian.

forever be swept under the carpet of the “purely academic”. Whoever is seriously interested in Nicholas Roerich and his family – some of the most remarkable people of our times – has to be prepared to tackle such points. Theosophy is not considered an academic topic and if it is mentioned in religious-science textbooks it is usually in the context of *ex cathedra* absolute rejection, but it was extremely important to the Roerichs and much of their heritage cannot really be understood without knowing at least the basic tenets of it. One does not have to accept it, but in the context of the Roerichs, one cannot ignore it, either¹⁸.

Probably one of the best known Roerich controversies is his story of the mysterious book kept in Hemis Monastery in Ladakh and containing an account of Jesus Christ's stay in India during his “missing years”. This story has acquired its own and quite considerable literature both for and against it. Whatever one's stand here is, this topic can be considered sufficiently known and it does not fall within the scope of the present paper¹⁹.

From his writings one thing seems obvious – Nicholas Roerich was extremely fond of everything secret and mysterious. He enjoyed the role he fit to perfection – the one of a Wise Guru from Russia (from WHERE?) talking to rich American audiences about India, Tibet, and Mongolia, the lands and cultures his listeners knew nothing about. Whispers of the forbidden secrets of the East followed him wherever he went, no doubt with his knowledge and consent, and attracted even more people to his lectures and exhibitions of paintings. The message Roerich tried to break to the West was and remains of paramount importance – *Peace Through Culture* and *Universal Ethics*, or to use their best-known names, *PAX CULTURA* and *AGNI YOGA* – and therefore increasingly larger and larger crowds at Roerich events meant more opportunities for the Cause (to use the capital letter in a Theosophic way).

There are three questions that return again and again wherever Roerich is mentioned: the story of his claims to have been the reincarnation of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama of Tibet, his alleged dreams of setting up a united Buddhist state in Central Asia with the help of the self-exiled Sixth Panchen Lama of Tibet (which involves the various guesses concerning the ulterior reasons of his Central Asian expeditions), and finally the overall question: was he a Communist, a Bolshevik, a spy, all of it or none of it (strike out the inapplicable)?

The above questions have taken a new dimension in recent years thanks to the publication of Zina Fosdick's memoirs²⁰ and several manuscript works by Helena Roerich, Nicholas Roerich's wife²¹. There is an unfortunate side to it – the publication of works

¹⁸ See the book in Polish, A. Wańka. *Teozoficzna panreligia*. Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 2006. This excellent monograph written by a Roman Catholic priest is remarkably impartial and deserves a careful study.

¹⁹ See E.C. Prophet. *The Lost Years of Jesus. On the discoveries of Notovich, Abhedananda, Roerich, and Caspari*. Malibu, California and Livingstone – Montana: Summit University Press, 1984.

²⁰ Zinaida Grigor'evna Fosdik (1889?–1970), who was born in Odessa and lived in New York since 1914, was one of the closest friends of the Roerichs. Her attitude to them is best exemplified by the title of her memories: *Мои учителя, Встречи с Рерихами, По Страницам Дневника 1922–1934* [*My Teachers, Meetings with the Roerichs, Pages from Diaries 1922–1934*]. Москва: Сфера 2002.

²¹ For all the particulars see M. Gdok-Klafkowska. *The Dream of Kanchenjonga...*, pp. 311–312 and

of private, deeply personal, and spiritual character seems to have done more harm than good, as these items are now used as if they were academic sources of information. Helena Roerich often stressed that the time was not yet ripe to publish this or that, and it seems she was all too right on the point! People have not changed much, and as always, they are generally more interested in loud sensations than in quiet wisdom.

Gdok-Klafkowska's paper of 2011 listed all the Russian language sources known to us in 2007²². From my own point of view, I would like to add some important works in English, Meyer and Brysac (excellent work but with rather clumsy system of footnotes)²³, Culver and Hyde²⁴, Stasulane (one of the best monographs on N. Roerich that I know)²⁵, Dryer (an excellent work but very badly edited and lacking sufficient footnotes and references)²⁶, and Hopkirk²⁷. One should also mention a recent and fairly detailed biography of Roerich in German by Waldenfels²⁸.

One book is a class of its own and needs a very special word of thanks – *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Cultures*, an inexhaustible mine of information not to be found anywhere else, at least not in English²⁹.

Let me also mention the works to which I have no access, so as to pre-empt criticism from those having better libraries or finances: Maria Carlson's history of Theosophy in Russia³⁰, Edwin Bernbaum's work on Shambhala³¹, Shaumian's history of Tibet in the context of Tsarist Russia and the Great Game³², the three books in Russian on the Roerich Expedition written by its senior members (Dekroa³³, Portniagin³⁴,

318–319.

²² M. Gdok-Klafkowska. *The Dream of Kanchenjonga...*

²³ K.E. Meyer, S.B. Brysac. *Tournament of Shadows, the Great Game and the Race for Empire in Central Asia*. New York: Basic Books, 1999, pp. 462–463.

²⁴ J.C. Culver, J. Hyde. *American Dreamer, A Life of Henry A. Wallace*. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001.

²⁵ Stasulane A. *Theosophy and Culture. Nicholas Roerich*. Roma: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 2005, pp. 291–292.

²⁶ R.A. Drayer. *Nicholas and Helena Roerich, the Spiritual Journey of Two Great Artists and Peacemakers*. Wheaton, Illinois and Chennai – India: Quest Books, 2005.

²⁷ P. Hopkirk. *Wielka Gra*. Poznań: Zysk i S-ka, 2011. The Polish translation (2011) of *The Great Game. On Secret Service in High Asia*.

²⁸ E. Waldenfels. *Nikolai Roerich Kunst, Macht und Okkultismus*. Berlin: Osburg Verlag, 2011.

²⁹ B.G. Rosenthal (Ed.) *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Cultures*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997.

³⁰ M. Carlson. *No Religion Higher Than Truth. A History of the Theosophical Movement in Russia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993; К.Н. Рябинин. Развенченный Тибет. Урал: Амрита, 1996.

³¹ E. Bernbaum. *Shambhala. A Search for the Mythical Kingdom Beyond the Himalayas*. New York: Shambhala, 2001.

³² T. Shaumian. *Tibet. The Great Game and Tsarist Russia*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000.

³³ N. Dekroa (= N.V. Kordashevskiy) was the Expedition's security officer. See N. Dekroa. *Тибетские странствия полковника Кордашевского (с экспедицией Н.К. Рериха по Центральной Азии)*. Санкт-Петербург: Aiurveda Press, 2000.

³⁴ П.К. Портнягин. *Современный Тибет. Экспедиционный дневник 1927–1928*. "Aryavarta Jour-

Riabinin³⁵), finally the more recent works by A. Andreev³⁶ whose prices place them beyond my means³⁷.

Let me now briefly present my views on the three questions presented above. I think I ought to repeat that these are my own reflections, nothing more than that, and that I obviously have no proof to support them.

Was Nicholas Roerich a Communist, a Bolshevik, or a spy?

As Małgorzata Gdok-Klafkowska stated in her paper of 2011, Roerich – though an émigré – was not a typical political exile fleeing the October Revolution³⁸. Even if, at some time, he did write or speak in public against the Soviet rule³⁹, he appears to have been not an enemy, rather a harsh though understanding critic. It seems he really loved his country *no matter who ruled it*, and always wanted to work for it, if not outright to return to it one day.

Was he a Bolshevik? Was he a Communist? Had he been one, what would have been more obvious than accepting the post of a Culture Minister he was offered in Petersburg in 1918, maybe on condition that he takes it when his health improves?⁴⁰

It seems that the credit for accusing Nicholas Roerich of Bolshevism (indeed, if he considered it an accusation) goes to the Right Hon. Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Marshman Bailey C.I.E, the British Political Officer for Sikkim and Tibet, who was stationed in Gangtok in 1921–1928 (he lived 1882–1967).

Dryer tells the story of how Colonel Bailey decided Roerich was a Communist⁴¹. The point was simple. When in Sikkim, Roerich met Col. Bailey and his party. Some time prior to that meeting one of Roerich's Sikkimese guides told him that really all men are equal no matter how much wealth they have. To Roerich this statement seemed an echo of Swami Vivekananda's teachings and he was so impressed that the enthusi-

nal" 1998, vol. 2. Санкт-Петербург, 1998.

³⁵ K.N. Riabinin, who was a doctor, took care of the health matters, and P.K. Portniagin was in charge of supplies and transportation. See Bibliography Section III.

³⁶ А. Андреев. *Тибет в политике царской, советской и постсоветской России*. Санкт-Петербург: Издательство СПбГУ, Нартанг, 2006; А. Андреев. *Перухи. Мифы и факты*. Санкт-Петербург: Нестор-История, 2011; А. Andreyev. *The Myth of the Masters Revived. The Occult Lives of Nikolai and Helena Roerich*. "Eurasian Studies Library" 2014, vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers).

³⁷ Other than with direct quotations from Fosdick and references to Dorjiev's books, this paper is based solely on the English language sources, which enables me to show one particular point of view and try arguing with it.

³⁸ M. Gdok-Klafkowska. *The Dream of Kanchenjonga...*

³⁹ А. Andreyev. *Soviet Russia and Tibet. The Debauch of Soviet Diplomacy*. "Brill's Tibetan Studies Library" 2003, vol. 4 (Leiden and Boston: Brill), p. 294; R.A. Drayer. *Nicholas and Helena Roerich...*, p. 200; А. Stasulane. *Theosophy and Culture...*, p. 291–292.

⁴⁰ At that time Roerich had serious health problems and his doctors advised him to live in Finland due to its better climate and air. The exact nature of his problems is not known, but his biographers note that his health was so bad he had written his last will, so it must have been serious.

⁴¹ R.A. Drayer. *Nicholas and Helena Roerich...*, pp. 101–102.

astically repeated the guide's words to Bailey, giving them his own full support. This, apparently, convinced Bailey that Roerich was a Communist, so he denounced him to both the British and the Tibetan Governments. If this tale is true, and it certainly has the ring of truth, then there are probably more Communists in the world that even Bailey might fear! This episode is not dated, but Drayer says Bailey denounced Roerich to the British and the Tibetans "a few days before Roerich's fifty-third birthday"⁴².

Let us have a closer look at Bailey's opinion about Nicholas Roerich as quoted by Drayer: "(October 1927) Professor Roerich intends visiting Tibet and that he is a Bolshevik... I met Professor Roerich in Darjeeling in May 1924 and his son George stayed for a few days with me in April 1924 in Gangtok. At that time they were anti-Bolshevik...."⁴³.

There is something amazing here. At the time Bailey met the Roerichs for the first time, in 1924, he was sure they were not Bolsheviks. He never met them again until 1928, but in 1927 he denounced them to the Tibetan Government as Bolsheviks, and really sentenced the Roerich Expedition to death. The Tibetan Government detained them at Nagchu, even to the Tibetans the coldest and worst place in Tibet to stay in winter; after all, the Roerichs were detained on Bailey's denunciation, so he bore the responsibility for it. One might wish to see Bailey's face when he learnt that the Roerichs had survived the ordeal, even though three Mongols and two Tibetans travelling with the expedition died of cold. After all, he had to be their host yet again, in May 1928. A year later, as reported by Meyer and Brysac, Bailey referred to N. Roerich in the following way to an unspecified colleague in Washington: "The man is... a humbug, a bad painter... but in character rather agreeable in a vague way, and almost certainly not a Bolshevik agent"⁴⁴. He confirmed the opinion to his mother: "They were not Bolshie then but... now are working for them. They tried to get into Lhasa but the Tibetans wouldn't let them. Don't mention the above to anyone"⁴⁵. He does not say that the Tibetans stopped the Roerich Expedition at least partly because of his warning. *Kill a Commie for mommy* ... somehow it sounds familiar.

Finally, the spying charges. This is obviously a very different matter and only the full access to archive materials may ever prove or disprove them. Many books on Nicholas Roerich by British and/or American authors are full of allegations or suspicions of this kind. Let us ask the basic question – whose spy would he be? The Soviet one in India, Tibet, and the US? The White Russian or American spy in Moscow at the time of the Roerichs' brief visit to the USSR in 1926? The American spy in Central Asia? Both, in Harbin, Manchuria, and China? I leave aside the suspicions that he may have been an American spy, but a Soviet one? It seems hardly possible that Feliks Dzerzhinsky⁴⁶

⁴² Ibidem.

⁴³ R.A. Drayer. *Nicholas and Helena Roerich...*, p. 232.

⁴⁴ K.E. Meyer, S.B. Brysac. *Tournament of Shadows...*, p. 472.

⁴⁵ Ibidem.

⁴⁶ The Roerichs stayed in Moscow June through September 1926 (R.C. Williams. *Russian Art...*, pp. 126–128). J. Decter. (*Nicholas Roerich, The Life and Art of a Russian Master*. Rochester, Vermont: Park Street Press, 1989, p. 203), has this to say: „Some weeks later, Roerich and George (+Yuri, PK) were sitting in the CHEKA reception room waiting to see Felix Dzhherzninsky, the head of that orga-

would employ so unpredictable a man as a Soviet spy. If half of the stories of his temper during his two expeditions are true, such appointment would only mean trouble.⁴⁷

What were the true motives behind his expeditions?

It is generally believed by historians and Roerich's biographers that his two expeditions to Central Asia in 1925–1928 and 1934–1935 have been backed by some ulterior motives. Was he, as some suggest, really trying to find Shambhala in the Altai in 1926?⁴⁸ Did the Roerichs really find the Belovodye – the White Waters – and were told by its people to keep quiet about it? Is this why George Roerich's official report of the expedition leaves the Altai episode unmentioned?⁴⁹ But again, why has Nicholas Roerich devoted a whole chapter of his own book to it? Why has the son said not even one word about something that was so important to his father?

It seems of no doubt that Roerich truly considered himself a messenger of the Western Buddhists to Tibet and Mongolia. Did he really dream of setting up a united Buddhist state⁵⁰ (consisting of Tibet, Mongolia, possibly Buryatia and at least some parts of Manchuria) in Central Asia, possibly with the help of the self-exiled Sixth Panchen Lama?⁵¹ Is this why Roerich is heaping praises on the Sixth Panchen – although he invariably calls him “*Tashi Lama*”⁵² – while he has only words of harsh criticism for the Great XIII Dalai Lama? Meyer and Brysac state that “the return of the Panchen to Tibet was the one goal on which the Tibetans, Chinese, British, and Russians were agreed”⁵³. A few lines below, they add a significant statement: “The British wanted the Panchen to return, but not under the aegis of the Russians, which helps explain their obsession

nization, when Dzherzhinsky suddenly dropped dead in his Office”. Are we to understand that the Mahatmas have killed him, just in case he might wish to arrest the Roerichs and send them to prison camps?

⁴⁷ I have no access to the diaries of Dekroa, Portniagin and Riabinin, but R.C. Williams. *Russian Art...*, pp. 138–139 repeats the words of the senior American member of the 1934–1935 Roerich Botanical Expedition which make it clear Roerich was not an easy expedition leader to work with.

⁴⁸ On the basis of Roerich's published works in both Russian and English it seems of no doubt he believed in the existence of the subterranean kingdom of Shambhala somewhere under the Himalayas, and connected the story with the Altai traditions of the underground country of Belovodye.

⁴⁹ George Roerich's *Trails to Inmost Asia, Five Years of Exploration with the Roerich Central Asian Expedition*, New Haven 1931, does not say anything about the Expedition's work in the Altai, while his father's *Altai–Himalaya*, New York 1929, has a whole chapter devoted to it.

⁵⁰ Decter makes such claims, but gives no references to support them. Compare: J. Decter. *Nicholas Roerich, The Life and Art of a Russian Master*. Rochester, Vermont: Park Street Press, 1989, pp. 188–189.

⁵¹ The Sixth Panchen Lama fled to China in 1923. His reasons are attributed to the taxing of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery by the Tibetan Government of the XIII Dalai Lama, but the episode is not fully explained yet.

⁵² The name is not incorrect – the monastery of the Panchen Lamas is called *Tashi Lhunpo* – but the Tibetans always referred to him as Panchen Lama or Panchen Rinpoche.

⁵³ K.E. Meyer, S.B. Brysac. *Tournament of Shadows...*, p. 467.

with the Roerich Expedition”⁵⁴. If this is true, obviously the US sponsors of the expeditions – and particularly of the Botanical Expedition of 1934–1935 – would have to be in the know, first of all Henry Wallace, Roerich’s direct link to President Roosevelt. But if so, why did Wallace make such an abrupt turn when the conflict exploded between Nicholas Roerich and Louis Horch, who administered the Nicholas Roerich Museum in New York in Roerich’s absence? What links, if any, connected Horch and Wallace?⁵⁵

Culver and Hyde have the following to say: “In mid-June 1935 Wallace wrote Horch that in a few days he would be at the Newark airport for two hours on his way to Connecticut and would like to meet privately. Whatever was said during those two hours changed everything”⁵⁶. It seems obvious that it was Wallace who made Horch turn against Roerich, not the other way round.

Let us remember that the above meeting took place only two months after the climax of Roerich’s efforts of almost four decades – the signing of the Roerich Pact in Washington on April 15, 1935. The Pact was supported by the US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and the United States signatory was the same Henry Wallace, the US Secretary of Agriculture in 1935 and the Vice President in 1941–1945. A possibly significant point here is that President Roosevelt’s mother was a descendant of Franklin Delano II (1808–1898), the man who spent many years in China where he is said to have made and lost millions. Culver and Hyde hint in a footnote that President Roosevelt may have been favorably disposed to Nicholas Roerich and his ideas because of his (= Roosevelt’s) mother⁵⁷.

However, neither Horch nor Wallace have ever disclosed the details of that fateful conversation that marked the end of Nicholas Roerich’s unlimited popularity in America. Was it only the case of ca. 50 thousand dollars that Roerich allegedly had not paid in taxes? That must have been small change to men like Horch and Wallace. It seems that someone clearly wanted to get rid of Roerich, and it must have been SOME someone. At the moment we cannot even guess who he was and what his motives were.

To add one more trouble, at that same time Roerich was criticized by American press for his behavior in Manchukuo, the puppet state US did not recognize: Roerich presented the honorary medal of the Roerich Museum in New York to the puppet emperor of Manchukuo, supposedly claiming he did it on behalf of the US Government. However, Roerich was not an American citizen, so the act – though, if true, an irresponsible one – could easily be dismissed as not involving the US in any way.

Another point – even the most detailed accounts of Roerich’s expeditions agree there is no evidence whatsoever of any contacts between Roerich and the Sixth Panchen Lama⁵⁸. This, in turn, puts a question mark on his alleged plans to get the

⁵⁴ Ibidem.

⁵⁵ For a more detailed account of the conflict between Horch, Wallace, and Roerich see R.C. Williams. *Russian Art...*, pp. 140–144. The statements by Williams concerning Roerich promising American support to Mongolian liberation movements are not confirmed in many the source works at my disposal.

⁵⁶ J.C. Culver, J. Hyde. *American Dreamer...*, p. 141.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, p. 136.

⁵⁸ A. Andreyev. *Soviet Russia and Tibet...*, p. 303.

Panchen's help in setting up a Buddhist state in Central Asia. All we have are Roerich's words of April 19, 1926 to Alexander Bystrov, the USSR Consul at Urumchi, concerning Roerich's hope of getting in touch with the self-exiled Panchen.⁵⁹

And yet another related point. It seems obvious to Roerich biographers that, if he had any long-range political plans connected with Tibet, the exiled Panchen Lama, or the alleged Buddhist state in Central Asia, the one man he would have to be in close contact with was Agvan Dorjiev⁶⁰. As far as I know, Roerich's relations with Dorjiev have not been studied in detail as yet.

There may be yet another side to all this. Many sources indicate that all kinds of suspicions about Roerich really began with his brief visit to the USSR in 1926. Is it necessary to conclude he was a Soviet spy? It seems that the British and American biographers of Roerich base such conclusion not on the fact he was allowed to enter the USSR, but because he was allowed to leave it⁶¹. However, the USSR of 1926 was not yet Stalin's land of terror. Roerich's sister and brother lived there and nothing threatened them. Two of Roerich's friends from the university held the highest government ranks – G. Chicherin the Foreign Affairs Commissar, and A. Lunacharsky the Commissar of Education (including art and culture). Two of the most important and influential Soviet writers – Vladimir Mayakovsky the poet and Maxim Gorky the novelist – were Roerich's friends and advocated his visit. It is also known that Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin's widow, was interested in meeting Roerich. On top of all that, let us not forget that two of Roerich's powerful American sponsors, Sina⁶² and Maurice Lichtmann, ar-

⁵⁹ K.E. Meyer, S.B. Brysac. *Tournament of Shadows...*, pp. 462–463.

⁶⁰ Agvan Dorjiev (Tib. Ngawang Dorje), 1854–1928, was a Buryat Buddhist monk who rose to the rank of the adviser to the XIII Dalai Lama and is generally regarded to have been the most important link between Russia (both before and after the October Revolution) and Tibet. It is known that Dorjiev and Roerich met already at the turn of 1908/1909, when Dorjiev set up a committee to support the idea of building a Buddhist temple on the outskirts of Sankt-Peterburg (see J. Snelling J. *Buddhism in Russia, the Story of Agvan Dorzhiev, Lhasa's Emissary to the Tsar*. Shaftesbury, Dorset – Rockport, Massachusetts – Brisbane, Queensland: Element Books, 1993, p. 136). I have consulted two of Dorjiev's works available to me – his memoirs and his account his his trip round the world (A. Dorjiev A. *Dorjiev. Memoirs of a Tibetan Diplomat*. Ed. and transl. by Thubten Jigme Norboo and Dan Martin. "Hokke Bunka Kenkyou. Journal of the Institute for the Comprehensive Studies of the Lotus Sutra" 1991, vol. 17 (Tokyo: Rissho University) and A. Доржиев. *Занимательные заметки, описание путешествия вокруг света (Автобиография)*. "Памятники письменности Востока" 2003, No 133), and Roerich's name does not appear in either. Of course, it may also mean that the matters between the two men were too confidential to allude to them in print. See also A. Андреев. *Храм Будды в Северной Столице*. Санкт-Петербург: Нартанг, 2004.

⁶¹ A good example from K.E. Meyer, S.B. Brysac. *Tournament of Shadows...*, p. 466: "Roerich repeatedly denied that his was a Soviet expedition, but without the tacit blessings from Moscow he could not have proceeded from Siberia through Mongolia and Tibet, nor would he have been able to procure the five cars lent by the Soviet trade mission in Outer Mongolia for the five cars lent by the Soviet trade mission in Outer Mongolia for *the Shambhala project*". Tibet had no relations with the USSR, so any "tacit blessings from Moscow" would not help the Roerich Expedition with the Tibetan Government.

⁶² That is Zinaida G. Fosdik, M. Lichtmann's wife, see fn. 20 above.

rived in Moscow almost exactly at the same time as the Roerichs did, no doubt as some kind of security in case things went wrong.⁶³

Too much is sometimes made of the help that the Soviet Government gave the Roerich Expedition. Some claim that the Soviets supplied Roerich with arms and ammunition. As we learn from Williams: “The Soviet government provided passports and two Browning revolvers to the expedition and Louis Horch added another 100.000 dollars to Roerich’s bank accounts in exchange for his five series of paintings (*His Country, Sikkim, Tibetan Path, Himalaya, and Banners of the East*)”⁶⁴. Let us remember that the word *passport* in 1926 did not mean today’s document confirming the identity and nationality/citizenship of the bearer, but simply stood for a travel permit (= permission to pass). Two Brownings do not make an army and can hardly equal a hundred thousand dollars.

Did Roerich claim to be the reincarnation of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama of Tibet?

The third and last Roerich controversy brings us to the realm of the spiritual. What is the original source of the claim?

Meyer and Brysac say the following: “There (= in Darjeeling), if we are to believe British intelligence reports, Roerich also met with Tibetan monks who recognized him – by virtue of the seven moles on his neck that formed the astronomical design of the Great Bear – as the reincarnation of the great Fifth Dalai Lama”⁶⁵. The exact source is not given. The date is not given, but the context suggests 1923 as the year of the event.

Andreyev repeats the story with some differences⁶⁶. The seven moles move to Roerich’s right cheek (though no photograph of Roerich that I have seen seems to show them, and seven moles ought to be noticeable), and the entire story is given as a confirmation of Helena Roerich’s earlier discovery of the same. Andreyev gives his source as Sidorov (compare: Sidorov’s book *Na vershinax*⁶⁷). I have no access to that edition, but the book is included in the third volume of Sidorov’s collected writings in five volumes⁶⁸.

⁶³ In this context one feels tempted to ask on what charges should the Roerichs be arrested and imprisoned? They were not political enemies, Nicholas Roerich was tireless at propagating Russian culture in the US and could be an important link between the USSR and the US, and any accusations of anti-Soviet activities were out of question. One often gets the impression that the writers accusing Roerich of being a Soviet spy are really just disappointed he was not arrested and sent to prison camps right on his arrival in the USSR in 1926.

⁶⁴ R.C. Williams. *Russian Art...*, p. 128.

⁶⁵ K.E. Meyer, S.B. Brysac. *Tournament of Shadows...*, p. 457.

⁶⁶ A. Andreyev. *Soviet Russia and Tibet...*, p. 295.

⁶⁷ Valentin M. Sidorov (1932–1998) was the key man in the great revival of interest in Roerich in the USSR in the 1980s. The title of the book in question translates as *On the summits*. See M. Gdok-Klafka. *The Dream of Kanchenjonga...*, pp. 317–318.

⁶⁸ В Сидоров. Семь дней в Гималаях. Москва: Издательство Художественная литература, 2000, pp. 3–142.

Andreyev also gives two references to Sine Fosdick's diaries⁶⁹. Let us have a look at them.

On July 29, 1922, Fosdick wrote: "In between, N.K. (= Nicholas Konstantinovich) voluntarily revealed himself to have been the Dalai Lama of Tibet, as M.M. said. He is a high spirit and has a giant mission in the Russia of the future"⁷⁰.

Leaving aside the ambiguity of "He" (does it refer to N.K. or to M.M.?), let us concentrate on the latter. Who is, or was, M.M.? As the context clearly indicates the initials stand for Master Morya, the Mahatma Guide of the Roerichs⁷¹. He usually communicated through Helena Roerich, so Andreyev's attributing the information to her is justified – in a way. Master Morya, also referred to as El Morya or El Morya Khan, was claimed by Helena P. Blavatsky to have been one of her chief teachers and guides. Let us not forget that both Nicholas and Helena Roerich were Theosophists. The passage indicates that Roerich made such claims on Master Morya's authority before meeting the Tibetan lamas in Darjeling a year later.

On August 14, 1928, Fosdick wrote: "N.K. was the Fifth Dalai Lama who built the Potala. He jokingly remarked that he advertizes himself by talking well about him (= the Fifth Dalai Lama) in his own work. The ancient art of Tibet is fine, but not the new one and (no) imitating of China and India"⁷².

So, it seems, Roerich believed himself to be the reincarnation of Great Fifth Dalai Lama (1618–1673) on the authority of Mahatma El Morya⁷³. So far there are only two Dalai Lamas the Tibetans call Great, the Fifth and the Thirteenth. Does this make any sense? It is true that there was much confusion in Tibet after the death of the Great Fifth, and three different monks were believed by different parties to be his true reincarnations⁷⁴. As my Tibetan teachers explained, it *IS* possible that in time of trouble such a high spiritual being as a Dalai Lama – the visible manifestation of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara – may "split" and reincarnate his three constituents – body, speech, and mind – separately, to become one when the time of trouble passes. In this way, the triple reincarnation of the Great Fifth – one now officially listed as Sixth, one as Seventh, and the third one generally regarded an impostor and a puppet in the hands

⁶⁹ A. Andreyev. *Soviet Russia and Tibet...*; З.Г. Фосдик. *Мои учителя. Встречи с Перухами. По страницам дневника 1922–1934*, pp. 77 and 289, entries for 29 July 1922 and 14 August 1928.

⁷⁰ З.Г. Фосдик. *Мои учителя...* Transl. from the Russian by PK.

⁷¹ Master Morya was first mentioned by Helena P. Blavatsky. For a detailed discussion of the influence of Theosophy on Nicholas and Helena Roerich see Andreyev 2008 (in Russian) and 2014 (in English).

⁷² З.Г. Фосдик. *Мои учителя...* Transl. from the Russian by PK.

⁷³ So far only two Dalai Lamas are referred to by the Tibetans as Great, the Fifth One Ngawang Lobzang Gyatsho (1617–1683) and the Thirteenth One Thubten Gyatsho (1876–1933).

⁷⁴ See for full details: Dharmatāla Damchö Gyatsho. *Rosary of White Lotuses, Being the Clear Account of How the Precious Teaching of Buddha Appeared and Spread in the Great Hor Country*. Transl. from the Tibetan and annotated by P. Klafkowski. "Asiatische Forschungen" 1987, Bd. 95 (Wiesbaden), pp. 302–323 (original pagination), pp. 259–277 (Western pagination); Klafkowski P. *The Secret Deliverance of the Sixth Dalai Lama as Narrated by Dharmatāla*. "Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde" 1979, Heft 3 (Wien); Petech L. *China and Tibet in the Early XVIII Century*. Leiden: Brill, 1972.

of a Mongol Khan in Tibet – have become one in the person now officially listed as the Eighth Dalai Lama⁷⁵. Therefore, Roerich's claims do not seem to hold water. Also, it seems unbelievable that such information should be disclosed – to a foreigner! – by monks from one of Tibet's important monasteries, as Andreyev has it⁷⁶.

The Fourth Dalai Lama Yonten Gyatsho (1589–1617), a native Mongolian, still remains the only Dalai Lama so far who was not a Tibetan.

Of course, it is possible that the British intelligence sources referred to by Meyer and Brysac and Andreyev will become available someday. However, as far as the accuracy of British intelligence services goes in Russian contexts, let me recall that H.E. Richardson, the last British Representative in Tibet, wrote to his colleague Basil Gould on July 1, 1946: “They say that he (= Amdo Gendun Chosphe⁷⁷) is corresponding regularly with /Nicholas/ Roerich, a Soviet Tibetologist”⁷⁸. As we see, British Russophobia was not always backed by knowledge.

He Who Laughs Last Laughs Best

Meyer and Brysac quote the following words by Roerich noted down by Riabinin: “Roerich says that if the Dalai Lama refuses to accept the Mission of the Western Buddhists and if America is not given an urgent reply, then the separation of the Eastern and Western Buddhists is inevitable. Instead of gaining the friendly help of powerful America, there will be difficult consequences for Tibet”⁷⁹.

In the final count it is clear that Roerich was right. Tibet discouraged both the Russians (by refusing to have any direct relations with the USSR), the Americans (by mishandling the Roerich Expedition that claimed, even if incorrectly, to represent the United States), and even its closest neighbors the Indians (by raising territorial claims against India already in its independence year 1947). The Tibetan Government blindly

⁷⁵ Jampel Gyatsho, 1758–1804.

⁷⁶ A. Andreyev. *Soviet Russia and Tibet...*, p. 295.

The monastery in question is the Moru Monastery, also known as Maru Gompa (dmar ru dgon pa). Some information about it is given by Ferrari, A. *Mk'yen brtse's Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet*. “Serie Orientale Roma” 1958, vol. 16. Roma: Instituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Orienta, pp. 41, 87, and 94–95.

⁷⁷ Amdo Gendun Chosphe⁷⁷ (A mdo dge 'dun chos 'phel), who lived 1903?–1951, was one of the best known and most controversial Tibetan monks of his time, involved for a time with the short-lived Tibet Improvement Party. He spent his last years in jail in Lhasa. In the 1970s, several Tibetans told the undersigned that at the time of Gendun Chosphe's arrest in July 1946 many people in Lhasa were convinced that H.E. Richardson denounced him to the Tibetan Government as a Marxist disguised as monk, a friend and assistant of Roerich (of course, of George/Yuri Roerich, not Nicholas), and so a man with suspicious Soviet connections. More about it can be found in: M.C. Goldstein. *A History of Modern Tibet 1913–1951. The Demise of a Lamaist State*. Berkeley–Los Angeles–London: University of California Press, pp. 452–463.

Gendun Chosphe is probably best remembered today for his book in Tibetan on the arts of love, the Tibetan equivalent of the Kamasutra.

⁷⁸ M.C. Goldstein. *A History of Modern Tibet...*, p. 462.

⁷⁹ K.E. Meyer, S.B. Brysac. *Tournament of Shadows...*, pp. 469–470.

believed the likes of Colonel Bailey, which left it completely alone on its Roof of the World. When China invaded, Britain turned its back on her former ally, India was too weak to do anything (having just been partitioned and burdened with two Pakistans at its borders), and both the US and the USSR were not interested in helping the country that refused to have any direct dealings with them. Great Britain and the US have blocked Tibet's last-minute desperate attempt at joining the United Nations Organization. Roerich's words came true, with a vengeance.

Plates



Plate 1. Nicholas K. Roerich 1874–1947⁸⁰



Plate 2. Helena I. Roerich 1879–1955⁸¹

⁸⁰ Source: [Online:] <https://www.google.pl/search?q=Nicholas+K.+Roerich+1874%E2%80%931947&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiOirum2dPQAhXDfywKHfgDBUIQ_AUICCGB&biw=1600&bih=794#imgrc=omk3EwSPZCn03M%3A> (10.09.2016).

⁸¹ Source: [Online:] <<http://channelings.tripod.com/id153.html>> (10.09.2016).



PAX CULTURA

Plate 3. The *PAX CULTURA* Flag also known as the Peace Flag or the Roerich Flag⁸²



Plate 4. The Blue Shield Sign introduced by the Hague Convention of 1954⁸³



Plate 5. The *MAITREYA SANGHA* sign of the Agni Yoga Societies all over the world⁸⁴

⁸² Source: [Online:] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roerich_Pact#/media/File:Pax_cultura.svg> (10.09.2016).

⁸³ Source: [Online:] <https://www.google.pl/search?q=The+Blue+Shield+Sign+introduced+by+the+Hague+Convention+of+1954&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj71IO_3dPQAhUBvBQKHYYUAusQ_AUICCGB&biw=1600&bih=794#imgrc=UFcZF5-RqJN_QM%3A> (10.09.2016).

⁸⁴ Source: [Online:] <https://www.google.pl/search?q=MAITREYA+SANGHA&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj6hOrt3tPQAhXLIswKHVRbAZkQ_AUICCGB&biw=1600&bih=794#imgrc=StqrIJ7HuhrEJM%3A> (10.09.2016).

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