

SUMMARY

A New East and West Dialogue over Millennia

Acad. S.F. Oldenburg

This is the first publication of a little known essay by the eminent Russian Orientalist, Academician S.F. Oldenburg, preserved in the scholar's personal collection of documents in the archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg. Written presumably in the late 1920s (or early 1930s), it discusses the problem of bridging the East-West cultural gap, something which Oldenburg calls «East and West unification». The author, though recognizing the striking difference between the Eastern and Western traditions and life-styles, claims that the two opposing worlds will join together in the future. Oldenburg speaks of the sacred principles of the Peoples' Union and the spiritual common ground which will make possible such a unification.

N.K. Roerich's Manchurian Expedition: In Search of a «New Land»

V.A. Rosov

This article is intended as a kind of commentary on the recently discovered travel diary of Nicholas Roerich, describing his one and half year long journey in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia in 1934-35. The well-known painter and traveller who left his mark in the exploration of Central Asia appears before us for the first time in the garb of a skillful diplomat and politician. The fact that Roerich's activity in the area had a clearly geopolitical character is undoubtedly of great interest for modern scholars. Among those involved in Roerich's designs were the key political figures of the US, such as President F.D. Roosevelt, the secretary of agriculture H.A. Wallace, and senator W. E. Borah.

Roerich, jointly with his American followers, sought to realize his «Great Plan», by laying foundations of an autonomous Siberian state, a kind of Buddhist confederacy — the New Land. During his stay in Harbin in Manchuria he succeeded in winning the support of the Russian emigre circles, primarily that of the ex-tsarist generals as well as the Cossacks. The military aspect of Roerich's activity in the Far East is given a particular attention in the article.

The Manchurian expedition was intimately linked with the so-called Kanzas Project, a clandestine scheme to be implemented on the territory of the Mongolian Gobi. This project served the political interests of the USA in Asia and was largely supported by a group of major American businessmen.

The Manchurian Expedition Diary, 1934-35

N.K. Roerich

The Manchurian Diary is actually a series of letters, written by Academician N.K. Roerich to his friends and colleagues in the Nicholas Roerich Museum in New York. This peculiar form of narration allowed the traveller to discuss both the scientific issues and a variety of subjects, unrelated to the expedition, such as the signing of the Roerich Pact in Washington and the conflict in the Russian emigre circles in the Far East.

The published letters cover mostly the final stage of the expedition work in spring-summer 1935 when Roerich's team proceeded to Inner Mongolia and engaged in the collection of the draught-resisting grasses, herbs and medicinal plants on the fringes of the Gobi Desert.

The publication includes a detailed commentary.

An Unknown Episode from the History of the Great Game:

The Case of a Dispatch of a Russian Agent to Tibet, 1869-73

A.I. Andreyev

The article sheds light on some hitherto unknown facts relating to the secret plans for a dispatch of a Russian agent to Tibet, made by the Russian Geographical Society jointly with the Main Staff of the War Ministry as early as 1869, i.e. some time prior to Przevalsky's first pioneering expedition to Central Asia. The Russian officials who devised these plans were apparently following the example of British-Indian scouts, so-called «pundits», as their agent was to be a person of a Buryat-Mongol descent, disguised as a pious Buddhist pilgrim, as is evidenced by the cited documents. An occasion for the realization of this cunning scheme presented itself when the Mongolian princes and lamas decided to send a religious embassy to Lhasa to look for the next incarnation of the recently deceased 7th Bogdo-gegen, Jebdzun-Damba Khutuktu, the head of the Mongolian Buddhist church. However the Russians were not quick enough to seize that opportunity. It was in 1873 only when the Mongols were making preparations for a second embassy, this time to bring the baby-incarnation to Urga, that St Petersburg made another try which presumably was a success.

The rest of the article discusses the intriguing issue of who the Russian agent dispatched to Lhasa in 1873 might be, by hypothetically pointing at Agvan Dorjiev, the well-known Buryat lama who would later become the Dalai Lama's tutor and political advisor, as well as Przevalsky's own exploration throughout 1870s-1880s, largely stimulated by the pundits competing reconnaissance in Tibet.

Valentin Bulgakov, the Creator of Museums, Letters and Exquisite Plays

This is a selection of the hitherto unknown literary work by Valentin Bulgakov. Bulgakov became widely known in Europe in 1920s-1940s not only as a writer and art and archive collector of the Russian Diaspora but also as an eminent public figure and participant in the pacifist movement. He was on friendly terms with many outstanding leaders of the world culture, such as Rabindranath Tagore, Albert Einstein, Tomash Masaryk and others.

V.F. Bulgakov was the founder of the first Museum of the Russian emigration abroad. This subject is discussed in detail in the writer's memoirs «The Russian cultural and historical museum in Prague».

The epistolary heritage of Bulgakov is also abundant. Among his correspondents were I.A. Bunin, A.M. Remizov, M.I. Tsvetaeva, N.O. Lossky and others. The correspondence published reveals Bulgakov's links with the East, as is evidenced by his letters to Nicholas Roerich and Maria Frankfurter.

A good example of Bulgakov's dramatic art is his fantastic play «The Heavenly Flower» which was inspired by some old Chinese legend. The publication of the play is prefaced by an essay «Who wants to pick up the Heavenly Flower?». Its author, Dr. V.A. Rosov, dwells on the process of creation of the play as well as the influence exerted on Valentin Bulgakov by his teachers Leo Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi and the Russian sinologist Pavel Shkurkin.