Since the mid-1920s, the Russian painter and occultist Nicholas Roerich (Nikolai Konstantinovich Rerikh, 1874–1947) and his wife Elena Ivanovna, née Shaposhnikova (1879–1955), created a spiritual system called “Agni Yoga”, or the “Teaching of Living Ethics” (Zhivaia ėtika), incorporating Theosophical doctrines as its basis. A decade later, there were important Agni Yoga groups in New York, London, Paris and Riga (Latvia), as well as in the exile home of the Roerichs in Naggar near Kulu, India. During the 1980s, Perestroika and Glasnost’ allowed the Roerich movement, which had existed underground in the Soviet Union, to surface. Agni Yoga has since become an influential and exceedingly popular element in the esoteric scene of post-communist Russia. Today, there are several Roerich museums (in New York City, Moscow and Naggar) and various competing Roerich centers.

The opening of archives as well as the recent publication of various diaries and personal papers of the Roerichs and several of their closest collaborators eventually revealed the amazing scope and messianistic ambition of the ‘spiritual geopolitics’ (John McCannon) which was the driving force behind the activities of the couple. Their ultimate objective—usually referred to as the ‘Grand Plan’ (Velikii Plan)—was to establish a pan-Buddhist, transnational ‘New Country’ (Novaia Strana) stretching from Tibet to southern Siberia, including territory that was governed by China, Mongolia, Tibet, and the Soviet Union. This ‘New Country’ was conceived as the manifest, earthly expression of the invisible Kingdom of Shambhala, “the Holy Place, where the earthly world links with the highest states of consciousness”. Roerich’s ambition was nothing less than to prepare the coming of a New Age of peace and beauty, which would be ushered in by the earthly manifestation of Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future. Only a small inner circle of confidents and supporters in

2 Nikolai Rerikh, Serdtse Azii (Southbury, Cn.: Alatas 1929), part 2, Shambala, list 10.
New York was initiated in the full extent of the beliefs and aspirations of the Roerichs.

While Roerich always argued for the supreme importance of Culture and its manifestation in “Beauty” in the evolution of mankind, his initiative “Banner of Peace”, addressed to the leaders of states, and the underlying ideology of Obshchina (“Community“)—with its odd fusion of Buddhist spirituality, a quasi-communist social order and American capitalist money under the guidance of an enlightened Leader—was reminiscent of the French occultist Alexandre Saint-Yves d’Alveydre and his concept of a reform of social life called Synarchy. Saint-Yves wrote in 1886 about a spiritually and technologically far advanced society hidden in the mountains of Asia where Synarchy had been realized long ago.

Recent research has increasingly focused on the political aspects of N.K. Roerich’s expeditions to Central Asia from 1925–1928 and from 1934–1935.3 This new interpretation of Roerich’s background and motives has sparked off an ongoing polemical debate in Russia and has led to bitter divisions within the Roerich movement and its followers. Especially the Moscow-based Mezhdunarodnyi Tsentr Rerikhov under vice-president Liudmila Shaposhnikova has vowed to defend the legacy against any “traitors” from within the movement and “liars” and “slanderers” from outside. First the MTsR staged a witchhunt against the view that Nicholas Roerich might have been an active spy for the Soviet intelligence in Central Asia;4 then the MTsR tried to prove that Vladimir Rosov’s ground-breaking Ph.D. thesis, in which much new material covering


4 Roerich was always under suspicion by the British SIS. This has been taken up by Shishkin, Bitva za Gimalai and his articles in Segodnia (October 29, 1994; November 19, 1994; and December 10, 1994); and Anton Pervushin, Okkul’tnye tainy NKVD i SS (Moscow: Olma-Press, 1999). See for example the refutal by A.V. Stetsenko, “Byl li Nikolai Rerikh sotrudnikom specsluzhby?,” Pravda, June 6, 2003, www.pravda.ru/print/science/planet/human-being/31713-shambala-0 (accessed February 26, 2010).
Roerich’s political activities was published, had supposedly compromising scientific flaws. For this purpose, a whole series of apologetic volumes have been published.

The publication of Elena Roerich’s diaries, which contain the supposedly transcribed messages received between 1920 and 1944 from the “astral plane” and transmitted by spiritual Masters of the so-called “Great White Brotherhood”, to whom the Roerichs devoted themselves and their work, confirm that the Roerichs did not consciously act as imposters who used the common vocabulary and ideals of the Theosophical Movement as a means to conceal very mundane purposes. It cannot be denied that they seriously interpreted and understood themselves and their “mission” as part of some larger spiritual Plan that ultimately should serve the advance of human evolution, especially since “Master Allal Ming” warmed them up by revealing their illustrious previous incarnations, thereby tempting personal vanity and a rather lofty arrogance—character traits which certainly do not occur exclusively in esoteric circles, but find an especially fertile ground among “chosen adepts”—and politicians.
Then again, as one enters the sphere of occultism, one has to be aware that there are, like in politics, many diverging and conflicting views, interests and objectives. One discovers very soon, how easily the spheres of occultism and politics interpenetrate. In the context of the Anglo-Russian contest for hegemony over Central and Inner Asia, the Russian and later Soviet intelligence could indeed rely on the help of agents, who in some cases were at the same time spiritual or even religious dignitaries and whose interests coincided to some extent with those of Russian imperial policy. Thus, the German traveller Wilhelm Filchner claimed in 1924 (in agreement with the British) that the Buriat lama Agvan Dorzhiev (1854–1938)—famous propagator of Tibetan Buddhism, assistant tutor and diplomat in the services of the 13th Dalai Lama Thubden Gyatso (1876–1933)—held close contact with the Tsarist foreign office and intelligence as early as 1885, when Britain and Russia faced each other on the brink of war in Afghanistan, and that he trained other Buriat and Kalmyk lama-agents.9 While this has been disputed by others,10 there is enough evidence to suggest that Dorzhiev was indeed entrusted with political missions not only by Lhasa, but also by the Tsarist Government, even if he wasn’t a “spy” in conventional terms.11 If Dorzhiev was ready to work in the service of the Tsarist government, he did it for the sake of the spiritual and political interests of Tibet, when her spiritual leaders believed it necessary to engage Russia as protective power.12

Gyatso was the first Dalai Lama to wield effective political power over central Tibet. He initiated the construction of the Potala Palace in Lhasa and was known for unifying the country under the leadership of the Gelugpa (aka the “Yellow Hat” sect) school of Tibetan Buddhism, after defeating the rival Kagyupa sect (belonging to the “Red Hat” sects) and a secular ruler, the prince of Tsang. Gyatso also established warm relations with Gushi Khan, a powerful Mongol military leader, and with the Shunzhi Emperor of China, the second emperor of the Qing Dynasty. Since there was a doubt about the legitimacy of the Dalai Lama’s sixth incarnation, Roderich could claim that he was the continuation of the true lineage disrupted in the 17th century. Andreev, *Soviet Russia and Tibet*, 295.

According to Theosophical tradition, the “Masters” were beings of ineffable spiritual development and wisdom; the most famous ones were Koot Hoomi and Morya, supposedly residents of Shigatse in Tibet. At the same time, already Elena Petrovna Blavatsky (hereafter referred to as HPB) claimed that they were incarnated, mortal men in flesh and blood. In this, the Roerichs, who joined the Theosophical Society in London in 1920, made no exception. They claimed to have met the Master Morya for the first time on March 24, 1920, in London’s Hyde Park, the same spot where HPB also met her Asian teacher. Since this initial encounter, the Roerichs claimed to have received regular messages from “Morya”; indeed, on the same day, Elena Ivanovna began to note down the content of the spiritual messages transmitted to her.\(^\text{13}\) They came to believe that their *Guide* (they used the English word), who preferred to call himself Allal Ming or “A-Lal-Ming“\(^\text{14}\), was “the spiritual teacher of Tibet”\(^\text{15}\) and the “spiritual leader of the Pamir [region]”\(^\text{16}\).

As in the case of HPB and other leaders of the Theosophical Society, the researcher is confronted with methodological choices: The first is to dismiss such “communications” as pure bluster and to range them altogether in the realm of fantasy or as an expression of some mental illness like “a special form of epileptic mania”.\(^\text{17}\) Nevertheless, the source material does suggest that throughout the 1920s and 1930s the main inspiration for the Grand Plan remained the steady flow of the alleged “astral communications” transmitted by Elena Roerich, who acted as a medium. Even if there is reason to question the origin of these communications, one has to admit, as John McCannon has remarked, that “it is incredible just how much of his plan Roerich was able to accomplish”,\(^\text{18}\) including the securing of fundings and diplomatic permissions for two expeditions into a highly sensitive area—the core region of the Great Game, as well as the building of a vast network of followers and financers ranging from Paris to New York and Harbin.

\(^\text{13}\) V.L. Krymov, in whose London flat the first séances took place, later wrote that Elena Ivanovna originally introduced her husband to spiritism to brighten up his deeply melancholic mood. Vladimir Krymov, *Liudi v pautine* (Berlin: Petropolis, [1929]), 209.

\(^\text{14}\) *Dnevnik*, t. 23: 13.08.1926–12.04.1927, March 13, 1927.


\(^\text{16}\) *Dnevnik*, t. 2: 01.06.1921–05.09.1921, August 10, 1921.

\(^\text{17}\) Such is the opinion of Andreev: *Gimalaiskoе bratstvo*, 393–395.

\(^\text{18}\) McCannon, “By the Shores of White Waters,” 179.
On the other hand, if one assumes that “communication” actually took place—which the Roerichs perceived as their reality and as the motivating source of their actions—, did the medium (i.e. Elena Roerich) then distort the “messages” through personal defaults or ambition? Or did the “communicator” have a concealed identity and a quite different agenda from what was transmitted to the Roerichs? These are the key questions on which the further investigation in this paper is based. A similar approach has been attempted by scholars such as K. Paul Johnson and Joscelyn Godwin who in their respective research tried to shed a light on the mystery of the true “real life” identity of the Theosophical Masters and their “communications” with Elena Blavatsky.19

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The rising influence of Eastern spirituality among Europeans and Americans was closely related to burning political questions such as the condemnation of imperialism, social and economic reform in the colonies and in contested areas like Central and East Asia, national and religious autonomy. For instance, both HPB and Annie Besant, like many Theosophists, were politically rather on the left and very strongly engaged in emancipatory causes.20 Besides, it has been recognized by a growing number of scholars that the phenomenon of occultism must be rescued from its status as an “irrational indulgence” as well as from rather partial concepts of “rationality” and “consciousness”, and that on the contrary an involvement with the occult was an important driving force of the intellectual avant-garde.21 The attraction exerted by Buddhist, Hindu or


20 The theosophical doctrines about “root races” are too often in a rather superficial way interpreted as a proof for racist, right-wing leanings by many researchers. Godwin suggested however that HPB’s “Theosophy owed as much to the skeptical Enlightenment of the 18th century as it did to the concept of spiritual enlightenment with which it is more readily associated” (Godwin, The Theosophical Enlightenment, xi). John Zavos described how various religious reform movements including the Theosophical Society sought to mobilize Hindus by presenting particular ideas of what it meant to be a Hindu. It was in these movements that the ideology of Hindu nationalism began to be articulated. John Zavos: The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

21 See for instance the affirming studies of Alex Owen, The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern (Chicago, Il.: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Godwin, The Theosophical Enlightenment; Antoine Faivre: Accès de l’ésotérisme occidental, 2 vols. (re-
Muslim spirituality cannot be exhaustively explained in the context of 19th century racial theories and the notion of racist “Aryan superiority”.22

In the case of Russia, the importance of the social factor, the idea that Asia was destined to be a potential ally in the fight against the oppression of the fossilized European imperialist powers, grew ever stronger in the course of the 19th century. In the culture and religion of the Eastern Slavs there existed already in the pre-Christian period a strong Iranian (and this also includes a Zoroastrian and later Manichaean) subtext, demonstrated by linguistic influences,23 which continually surfaced especially in numerous chiliastic folk beliefs, legends and sectarian cosmogonies.24 However, a similar influence can be discerned in several schools of Mahayana Buddhism, Shi’ite and Ismaili Islam.25 One can add that it was a common topic among occult and esoteric groups in East and West that the 19th century had come to an end by closing


the Dark Age or Kali Yuga, that a New Age of spiritual Enlightenment and social reform would dawn, although some details and especially the interpretation of the spiritual consequences varied drastically. In the same period, religious millenarism had reached a peak, most of all in regions of the world where political conflict, ethnic or social oppression and injustice created the necessary climate for revolt.

When, after the European rediscovery of the Zend-Avesta in the later part of the 18th century, 26 the Zoroastrian legends about the eternal struggle of the agricultural peoples of Iran against the nomadic peoples of Turan 27 spread across Europe, they were embraced by the Russian intelligentsia as a fitting description of the social situation in the Tsarist Empire. They could be interpreted in terms of a historic dualism between the agricultural soil and the steppe, especially following the conquest of the Central Asian territories in the mid-19th century. But whereas Dostoevsky still spoke in terms of a White Man’s Burden, the mission of the Russian khrizianin – krest’ianin (“Christian-peasant”—in Russian the words sound almost identical) to carry agriculture into the nomadic regions of Asia, 28 outlooks began to shift in the 1860s, when among the radical Left, the first hopes appeared for a renovation of Russia on the basis of her association with the Asian East. For such thinkers in their nascent Eurasianist mood, “Europe–Iran” turned into a synonym of stagnation and the old world. “Asia–Turan”, on the other hand, became the symbol for the chaotic ferment that was necessary to overthrow the rigid tyranny, the krivda (injustice and lie) of the Tsar and to create a new, just world built upon pravda (justice and truth). Even Aleksandr Herzen (1812–1870), after his disappointment in the revolutionary Europe of 1848 and his resultant ideological

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approach to Russia’s Slavophiles, pointed out that the focus of the world revolution would lie not in Europe but in the Turanian East, whose peoples, wrote Herzen, had received from Western civilization nothing but unhappiness, and who therefore would rise against the entire Teutonic-Latin world. Eventually Herzen came to bless in his paper Kolokol in 1860 the influence of the potentially revolutionary Turanian ethnic elements on Russia, even stating (from his London exile) that the Mongol yoke had protected Russia against Roman Catholicism and had saved the village community (mir) from destruction.29

Similar views could be found among narodniki such as Sergei Iuzhakov (1849–1910) who in 1885 spoke of the impending collision of Russia and Britain in a struggle for Asia in terms of a struggle of peasant Russia against shop-keepers’ England. The colonial exploitation by the British would result in nothing less than the death of Asia.30 Another vostochnik (“Easterner”) and champion for the Asian cause, prince Ėsper Ukhtomskii (1861–1921),31 be-

29 Kolokol, April 1, 1860, quoted by Emanuel Sarkisyanz, Rußland und der Messianismus des Orients (Tübingen: Mohr, 1955), 207–208. See also Nicola Fumagalli: Cultura politica e cultura esoterica nella sinistra russa (1880–1917) (Milano: Barbarossa, 1996).

30 Quoted by Sarkisyanz, Rußland und der Messianismus des Orients, 208–209.

31 See David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, Toward the Rising Sun: Russian Ideologies of Empire and the Path to War with Japan (DeKalb, Il.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001), 42–60; Laruelle, Mythe aryen et rêve impérial, 156–168; Johnson, The Masters Revealed, 125–137. One of the most important cradles of the concept of modern Pan-Turanism was the Kingdom of Hungary, where it was popularized by literates like Sándor Székely de Aranyosrákos und Mihály Vörösmarty. One should not overlook at roughly at the same time, the idea of a Turanian empire was propagated amongst the Ottoman Turks by Ármin Vámébény (Hermann Wamberger, 1832–1913), a Hungarian Professor, philologist and traveller who worked as an advisor to the Ottoman Sultan between 1857–1863, who was also doing intelligence work for Lord Palmerston of the British Foreign office. Vámébény’s thesis was based on the observation that as much of Central Asia used Turkic languages as their main vernacular (except Persian speaking Tajikistan), this then necessitated the formation of “Turan,” which he saw as a political entity stretching from the Altai Mountains in Eastern Asia to the Bosphorus. It has been speculated that Vámébény’s mission was to create an anti-Slavic racialist movement among the Turks that would divert the Russians from the “Great Game” which they were involved in against Britain in Persia and Central Asia. Cf. M. Kemal Oke, “Prof. Arminius Vambéry and Anglo-Ottoman Relations 1889-1907” Bulletin of the Turkish Studies Association 9/2 (1985), 15–28; H.B. Paksoy, “Basmachi: Turkestan National Liberation Movement 1916-1930s,” Modern Encyclopedia of Religions in Russia and the Soviet Union, vol. 4 (Gulf Breeze, Fl: Academic International Press, 1991), 5–20; Geoffrey Miller, British Policy towards the Ottoman Empire and the Origins of the Dardanelles Campaign (Hull: University of Hull Press, 1997); Serge Zenkovsky, Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1960); Michael de Fernandy, “Die Mythologie der Ungarn,” Wörterbuch der Mythologie, ed. H.W. Haussig, vol. I/2 (Stuttgart: Klett, 1973), 209–260, here 231–232.
lieved at the time of the Boxer Rebellion (1900) that “in the community of Russia and Asia is contained the future solution of the Oriental question”. He also thought that “the bonds that unite our part of Europe with Iran and Turan, and through them with India and the Celestial Empire, are so ancient and lasting that, as yet, we ourselves, as a nation and a state, do not fully comprehend their full meaning and the duties they entail on us, both in our home and foreign policy.”32 Ukhtomskii was acquainted with Theosophy and a practicing Buddhist from the age of 15. His links with Buriats and Tibetans were surrounded with secrecy. While he was in no way disloyal to Tsar Nicholas II, to whom he introduced Agvan Dorzhiev in 1898, he saw the Tsar as a potential liberator of the Asian peoples because of the way Russia was treated and rejected by the Western powers.

And there will come a day, when the Orient shall arise from its slumber, awakened and irritated by the stormy elements of the oppressing white race. Like our mythical Ilya Muromets, the Orient shall then feel a mighty power in itself and shall demand to say its word. […] And Europe shall tremble. But neither threats nor violence nor accidental victories shall be able to accomplish anything […]. In the eternal conflict between Europe and Asia, Russia shall decide in favor of Asia. Another judgment is not possible where the judge is the brother of the complainant.33

Like other Buddhists who were inspired by the teachings of Tibetan lamas and were familiar with the legends associated with the Kālachakra Tantra (“Wheel of Time Tantra”) ritual, Ukhtomskii referred to the messianic advent of the so-called “Last King of Northern Shambhala.” This “Shambhala of the North” was considered to be a mythical land, thought to be situated somewhere far to the north of Tibet,34 a “Land of Quietness.” On his travels through Central Asia in 1845–1846, the French Catholic Abbé Huc (Évariste Régis Huc, 1813–1860) came across an occult brotherhood under the command of the

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33 Ėsper Ukhtomskii, *K sobytiiam v Kitae: Ob otnosheniiakh Rossii k Vostoku* (St. Petersburg: Vostok, 1900), 44–45 and 48 and 79.
Panchen Lama called the Kelan. Their members believed that their leader would be reborn in the future in a country north of Tibet between the Tien-Shan and the Altai range, and that this country was connected to the prophecies of Shambhala. After the future Chinese conquest of Tibet, so it was told, the New Country in the North would be the cradle of the renewal of Buddhism, the dead would be resurrected, and the Panchen Lama as the Universal Ruler would then crush the forces of evil and spread Buddhism over the entire earth.35 Many elements of this tale would later resurface in the spiritual instructions of the Buriat Lama Agvan Dorzhiev and of “Allal Ming” and the Roerichs.

Another tale from Tibet foretold that the King would be reborn as the Tashi (Panchen)-Lama at a time when Lamaism has declined and become impotent. In this future incarnation, the ruler of Northern Shambhala was expected to lead the Lamaistic peoples into the last and decisive combat against the enemies of righteousness. In a special prayer the faithful asked to be reborn as fighters of Shambhala’s armies against the opponents of truth, to prepare the advent of the realm of Maitreya, the Future Buddha, whose coming Lamaism was also expected from the far north.36 Then, a new Golden Age would dawn: “Grain shall then flourish on the fields without the necessity of ploughing.”37

The political implications of this hope that the White Tsar from the Aryan North38 as the potential liberator of Buddhist Asia could satisfy “yearnings for


36 As early as 1848, the first Russian educated Buriat Dordji Banzarov formulated—under the immediate impression of the revolutions in France, Germany, and Austria—a Mongol if not Lamaist view of the revolutionary crisis into the following words: “The inhabitants of the Occident now have a period of turmoil. They have expelled their lords and khans and have become hostile to one another. It seems such also were the times in which Kesar was born into this world. Judging by the character of the present epoch, will not Kesar appear again? Then we will have the possibility to be among his thirty-three companions.” D. Banzarov’s letter to Bobrovnikov, dated April 12, 1848. D. Banzarov, Chernaia Vera ili shamanstvo u mongolov i drugia stat’i (St. Petersburg: Imp. Akad. Nauk, 1891), 111. Although distinct from the Shambhala idea in literary origin, the expectations about the rebirth of Kesar (Gesar), the famous hero of Tibetan and Mongolian epics, do seem to converge with those about the Last King of Shambhala in the messianic and millennial expectations common to both of them. Thus, the hero king Kesar is expected to be reborn in Northern Shambhala. See Emanuel Sarkisyanz, “Communism and Lamaist Utopianism in Central Asia,” The Review of Politics, 20/4 (1958), 623–33, here 626–627.


truth and justice on Earth” were promoted at the court in St. Petersburg by Asia oriented intellectuals (vostochniki) like Ukhtomskii or the Buriat practitioner of Tibetan medicine Petr (Zhamsaran) Badmaev (1851?–1920) who suggested to his godfather Alexander III the annexation of Mongolia, China and Tibet. He later was suspected of having been a secret envoy of the Teshu Maru brotherhood. But they did not really depend on a specific type of government in Russia; the “White Tsar” as a mythical leader could also have a proletarian background. For this reason, there was no contradiction, if Buriat Lama Agvan Dorzhiev first put his hopes in the Russian Tsar, but after 1917 would court the Bolshevik leadership by stressing the compatibility of Buddhism and Communism. The same strategy was taken up by the Roerichs to whom the Himalayan Masters explained the evolutionary necessity of Communism.

It was the French occultist Joseph-Alexandre Saint-Yves d’Alveydre (1842–1909) who in the 1870s and 1880s joined the tales circulating in the occultist underground of Europe about a Master Lodge in the East, a superior underground society and social messianism by advocating a reform of social life that he called Synarchy. He was able to promote it thanks to his excellent social connections among the ruling dynasties of Western Europe, Scandinavia and

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41 The idea of a Pan-Buddhist state even inspired Baron von Ungern-Sternberg’s secret offers to the Dalai Lama in 1921–1922. Leonid Iuzefovich, Samoderzhets pustyni: Fenomen sud’by barona R.F. Ungern-Shternberga (Moscow: Éllis Lak, 1993), 193; Andreev, Soviet Russia and Tibet, 153. Ungern-Sternberg was declared to be a Mahakala incarnation by the 13th Dalai Lama; Mahakala (Sanskrit maha “great” and kāla “time”) is a Dharmapala (“protector of dharma”).
Russia (Alexander III). In 1877 he revealed the synarchical system for the first time in his book *Clefs de l'Orient* and he developed it during the following years in a series of “Mission”-pamphlets, *Mission actuelle des souverains*, *Mission actuelle des ouvriers* (1882) and *Mission des juifs* (1884). Saint-Yves explained how at the present stage of human evolution it had become necessary to adopt a threefold differentiation of human society along the three main spheres of social activity: Thus he suggested that there should be a European Council of National Communities as a central institution for finance, banking and trade representatives; a European Council of National Estates taking care of legal and political questions; and finally a European Council of National Churches for the representatives of religions, higher education and the arts. In 1885 (the year of the Anglo-Russian crisis), when Saint-Yves met a certain oriental initiate by the name of Hardjji Scharipf (or Haji Sharif), he began to refer to an Asian origin of Synarchy. Sharif claimed to be the “Guru Pandit of the Great Agarthian School”, from the hidden “Holy Land of Agartha” below the surface of the earth in the mountains of Asia, the residence of the “Master of the Universe”. On June 8, 1885, Haji Sharif started to teach Saint-Yves the mysterious language and alphabet of Vattan. The result of this encounter was Saint-Yves’ book *Mission de l’Inde*, written not before 1886 but published only

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42 In 1877, in England he married Marie de Riznitch, Comtesse de Keller (1827–1895), a Polish noble woman with mediumistic capacities from Odessa and a good friend of the Danish queen Louise. The couple was always well received at the Copenhagen court. A daughter of Louise was married to the Prince of Wales and later King Edward VII, another daughter to Tsar Alexander III. These high-placed connections should prove very efficient for Saint-Yves to promote the concepts of Synarchy. They also contributed to the forging of the Franco-Russian *entente* in 1894 which gave Russia “the power to unleash a major European war whenever this might suit Russian purposes.” George F. Kennan, *The Fateful Alliance: France, Russia, and the Coming of the First World War* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 252. Kennan contributed another thorough study: *The Decline of Bismarck’s European Order: Franco-Russians Relations, 1875–1890* (2nd ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980.


in 1910, in which he used Agartha as an model illustration for a potential synarchical order.

The synarchic ideas of Saint-Yves were carried on especially by founding members of the Ordre Martiniste (established in 1888) like Papus (Gérard d’Encausse), François-Charles Barlet aka Albert Faucheux (1838–1921) and Pierre-Augustin Chaboseau (1868–1946). The Martinists and their associates became ardent advocates of a Franco-Russian rapprochement, not only because of their deep dislike of Bismarckian Germany, but also because according to their views, Russia was a key country in the present cycle of social revolution, the avant-garde of a new world order and in any case ripe for synarchy.

Once more it was Aleksandr Dugin with his close contacts to the French Nouvelle Droite and to the followers of occult traditionalism as taught by Guénon or the Martinists, who began to spread in 1993 the rumour that among the military intelligence GRU (Glavnoe Razvedyvatel'noe Upravlenie) existed a secret Order under the name of “Agartha.” Cf. Dugin, Konspirologia.


Barlet, also a member of the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor and “cornerstone of all the [occult] groups” (Emmanuel Lalande) showed a particularly strong interest in sociological questions. “The revolutions which have so deeply modified Europe over the last century and those which seem to threaten her even more give a special importance to the art of governing people.” F.-Ch. Barlet, Sociologies et synarchie. La société de l’avénir (Paris: L’Écho de l’Au-delà, 1900), 5. “It was understood, at first, that Martinism’s sole purpose was to prepare its members for entry into an Order that could confer an authentic initiation […] this was none other than the H.B. of L., of which Barlet had become the official representative for France.” René Guénon, “F.-Ch. Barlet et les sociétés initiatives,” Le Voile d’Isis 30/64 (April 1925), 217–221, here 220. See as well Jean-Pierre Laurant, L’Esotérisme chrétien en France au XIXe siècle (Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 1992), 135.

Chaboseau was conservateur adjoint at the library of the Musée Guimet in Paris where he promoted Buddhist studies; with Chaboseau’s support, Agvan Dorzhiev could celebrate on 27 June 1898 a ritual in the Museum. Later, during World War I, Chaboseau became special secretary to Aristide Briand and was sent on diplomatic missions to the Balkans, because “most of the Balkan princes […] were in 1914 Martinists” (Victor-Émile Michelet, Les Compagnons de l’hérophanie. Souvenir du mouvement hermétiste à la fin du XIXe siècle. [Paris 1937, Reprint Nice: Dorbon-Ainé, 1977], 102).

Papus said in an esoteric lecture in 1908: “I shall remind you that in 1848, we have entered the period of English domination. This will end at the moment when the cannon shot has been given – so they say in the Western esoteric circles – which means that Papistry will be destroyed by England, and she herself will be defeated by Germany allied to Russia and perhaps even to France. Then there will be the Prussian domination, but later, Russia will rule over the
Some insiders even thought that Papus not only helped to forge the Franco-Russian *entente*, but also contributed to heighten the expectations for a coming social revolution in Russia.\(^5\)

According to some researchers, Roerich became a member of the Ordre Martiniste already in his days in St. Petersburg at the eve of World War I.\(^5\) Some of his social contacts make this seem likely. He certainly shared the conviction held by many occult orders and societies that Russia (a reborn Russia-Zvenigorod) was destined to have a great future, that it would become a Saviour of the nations. Roerich first met Agvan Dorzhiev and heard his instructions about Shambhala in 1909, when he was a member of the construction world. In this last period, France will enter another very brilliant cycle as harbinger of civilization of other nations, thanks to her alliance with the other countries of Latin tongue.” Encausse, *Sciences occultes*, 200.

\(^5\) The occultist Gary de Lacroze, a former classmate of Papus at the Collège Rollin, remarked how quickly Martinism spread among the Russian aristocracy and the *intelligentsia* and how it showed the same effects as the earlier Martinism at the eve of the French Revolution. He thought therefore that among the circles of Russian Martinists “the doctrine and the plan of the Russian Revolution will be defined.” During his last meeting with Papus shortly before the latter’s death in 1916, Papus said to Lacroze: Martinism “develops and enters the level of political realizations. I entrusted the Lodges with a social program that knows a lot of success: the obligatory civil service.” Lacroze added: “This is the germ of Sovietism.” Encausse, *Sciences occultes*, 96–97.

committee of the new Buddhist Kālachakra Tantra sanctuary in St. Petersburg.53

Likewise, Roerich’s affinities to Martinism and Synarchy were visible in his link with Harvey Spencer Lewis’s order Antiquus Mysticusque Ordo Rosae Crucis (AMORC). He was introduced to the Lewises possibly by an American AMORC member from Chicago spending some time in Shanghai in the early 1920s and who organized AMORC’s participation in the Roerich Peace Pact. AMORC was affiliated with both the Ordre Martiniste et Synarchique54 and the Ordre Martiniste Traditionnel.55 When Roerich set off for his Central Asian expedition, Lewis was keen on making him a legate of AMORC for Tibet, which apparently Roerich never was, in spite of his rather close relationship with Spencer Lewis.56 Nevertheless, AMORC claims until the present day that

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54 One of the oldest surviving regular Martinist Orders which has had a continual existence since its founding in 1918 by Victor Blanchard (Sar Yesir).

55 Conceived to be a rival order to Blanchard’s OMS, the Traditional Martinist Order was established in 1931, with Victor-Émile Michelet as Grand Master and Chaboseau as deputy Grand Master. Though he had received his martinist initiations in the OMS, AMORC Imperator Ralph Maxwell Lewis was asked by the OMT in 1939 to import martinism to the U.S.A. and he was given the necessary charters and other documents.

56 There is a membership certificate inducting Nicholas Roerich into AMORC’s OMCE (Order Militia Crucifera Evangelica, originally created by AMORC and the British Martinist Order) dated November 18, 1929. It is signed by H. Spencer Lewis and counter-signed by Ralph Lewis, but it was left unsigned by Roerich. Gary Stewart—the former Imperator and President of the Board of AMORC from 1987 to 1990, founder of the Confraternity of the Rose Cross (CR+C) in 1996, Knight Commander of the OMCE and the Sovereign Grand Master of the British Martinist Order—stated: “Roerich was never a member of AMORC. However, he was closely associated with both H. Spencer Lewis and Ralph Lewis over a span of about 25 years in that there was considerable correspondence between them. The earliest correspondence I can find from Roerich to HSL is dated May 10, 1922 and refers to the sending of an article entitled ‘Rigor Mortis’ meant for publication in the AMORC magazine of that time. Over the years he sent a number of articles, some of which, quite sadly, were highly edited by AMORC to make it appear he was a member as well as to change some of the content. About half of the articles submitted by Roerich were published. Roerich also sent a number of items to the AMORC museum most of which were of a Tibetan nature. One was a coral ring. In turn, AMORC was, if not the first, one of the first, organizations in the United States to fly Roerich’s Banner of Peace.” Gary Stewart, posting on the Google Groups Rosicrucian list, August 25, 2006, groups.google.com/group/rosicrucian/msg/47f68b5ef4727246?hl=de& (accessed February 26, 2010).
Roerich communicated certain occult techniques from Tibet, which were since integrated in the AMORC teachings.\textsuperscript{57} Lewis proudly mentioned the correspondence he received from Roerich’s second expedition.\textsuperscript{58}

The Altai mountains—and, more widely, Siberia—were at the very core of the Great Plan, an indispensable component of the “New Country”, because Roerich believed the Altai would become a double for Shambhala—as the fabled land of Belovod’e, or the Land of White Waters, celebrated in numerous Russian folk legends, especially among sectorians such as the \textit{Beguny}.\textsuperscript{59} Roerich was also intrigued by all the stories about the tunnels and caverns that existed below the earth. Therefore, one of the Altai legends that most excited Roerich was the tale of a vast tangle of tunnels purported to honeycomb the underground realms deep beneath the mountains. Drawing upon the tales of the underground Agartha (or Agarthi), Roerich envisioned an intricate network of tunnels and chambers linking the Altai with the Himalayas. Even the Dalai Lama was drawn into Roerich’s speculations, for, as he thought, the tunnels in the Altai led all the way to Lhasa and the Potala Palace.\textsuperscript{60}

Another occultist in early Soviet Russia who tried to synthesize Saint-Yves’s social utopia with natural science, Bolshevism, the fascination for Tibet and Buddhist spirituality, and the search for Shambhala was Aleksandr Barchenko.


\textsuperscript{58} “I am happy to say that on Monday, March 20th, the day of our New Year anniversary, I received a personal registered letter from our great Brother who is the international representative of the Great White Brotherhood. I refer to Nicholas Roerich. His letter came from the monastery in the Himalayas where he spends a part of each year in personal contact with the highest representatives of the Great White Brotherhood. From this sacred place came his message to us for the New Year, and with it a special article of inspiration and helpfulness to be published in the next issue of our Rosicrucian Digest. In his personal letter he states that he would warn all of us to be watchful at this very critical period of transition from the old cycle to the new, and from the old race of thinking men and women to the newer race of evolving beings, and to watch out for the last and most desperate forces of evil to try to destroy or prevent the activities of goodness and truth.” \textit{The Rosicrucian Forum}, vol. 3, no. 5 (April 1933), 130.


\textsuperscript{60} McCannon, “By the Shores of White Waters,” 172–176.
Markus Osterrieder

(1881–1938). After his arrest in 1937 by the GPU, Barchenko “confessed” during the interrogations how he had been approached in 1923 by two members of what he called the “Great Brotherhood of Asia”, supposedly an occult umbrella organization for the whole of Inner Asia, uniting diverse Mongolian and Tibetan brotherhoods, Muslim and Dervish orders and even Jewish Hasidic and Christian sectarian groups. The first of the two men was the Lama Naga Naven, “the representative of the centre Shambhala” who lived at that time in the house of the Tibetan mission in Leningrad and who explained to Barchenko that he came to Moscow for negotiations with the Bolshevik leaders in order to “advance a rapprochement between West Tibet and the USSR”. The lamas of Western Tibet under the leadership of the Panchen Lama disagreed with the policy of the Dalai Lama who after 1904 got on more friendly terms with the British. The second was Khayan Khirva, member of the TsK of the Mongolian People’s Party. Both were pressing the Soviet government for close political and cultural relationships between the USSR and West-Tibet via South Mongolia.

The wooing of the Soviet leadership by representatives of Tibetan Buddhism, in the rival services of both the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama, had reached a peak in the mid-1920s. Dorzhiev, still loyal to the Dalai Lama, called

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61 See Oleg Shishkin’s chapter in this volume. Andreev, Soviet Russia and Tibet, 108–109; Andreev, Okkul’tist Strany Sovetov.
62 Protocol of Barchenko interrogation, 10 June 1937; Shishkin, Bitva za Gimalai, 368–369; Andreev, Okkul’tist Strany Sovetov, 166–167. That such a “working community” was actually possible, in spite of the deep aversion within the Kālacakra Tantra tradition against Muslims, is for example confirmed by the existence of the Sufi Tariqah Yasawiya in the Ferghana Valley and Kafiristan. Its members were always looked upon in a suspicious way by other more orthodox Sufi communities because of their close ties with Tibet and China. According to John G. Bennett, the Yasawis taught Gurdjieff a lot about sacral music and dance. John G. Bennett, Gurdjieff: Making a New World (London: Turnstone Books, 1973), chapter 4; see also De Dānann, Les secrets de la Tara Blanche, 174–177; Thierry Zarcone, Secrets et sociétés secrètes en Islam: Turquie, Iran et Asie centrale, XIXe–XXe siècles. Franc-Maçonnerie, Carboneria et confréries soufies (Milano: Archè, 2002); Musulmans et Soufis du Tibet, ed. Thierry Zarcone (Milano: Archè, 2005).
63 Statement by A.A. Kondiain, June 1937, Arkhiv UFSB SPb. and Lenoblast’, D P-26492, l.18; quoted by Andreev, Okkul’tist Strany Sovetov, 168.
64 Protocol of Barchenko interrogation, 10 June 1937, Arkhiv FSB, delo A.V. Barchenko; Shishkin, Bitva za Gimalai, 368–369; Andreev, Okkul’tist Strany Sovetov, 166–167.
for the abolition of the khubilgan or tulku worship cult and the prohibition of divination by both Buriat and alien lamas. This caused a dramatic split of the clergy in Buriatia and Kalmykia. On their side, the Roerichs would, on their first expedition in 1928, blame the 13th Dalai Lama for the ultimate degradation of Buddhism and the schism into separate Western and Eastern traditions, and would correspondingly praise the 9th Panchen Lama Thubten Choekyi Nyima (1883–1937) as the true and unique Ruler of Tibet. The Panchen Lama, following his escape to Inner Mongolia in 1924 after a dispute with the Dalai Lama, sensed that he might face threat after his own monastery’s monks were being prohibited from holding any office in the Central Tibetan government and his officials were locked up in Lhasa. He sought Chinese protection, spoke in favour of the Chinese revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925) and advocated the union of Tibet with China in the context of a larger Five-Nationalities-Confederation.

Still, even Dorzhiev clearly favored Soviet influence over the British, and he implied in his autobiography that the Buddhist teachings were generally in harmony with the recently introduced system of Communism in Russia. Under the benign patronage of the Bolshevik regime, Russia would become a land worthy of the noble title “Supreme Place”: one, in which the Buddhist religion thrives. Some of his followers went even further and declared that Buddhism had prefigured the ideals of Bolshevism, that Shakyamuni Buddha had been some sort of proto-Bolshevik and that his spirit lived on in Lenin.

The Buddhists were not the only religious group who sought to reconcile spiritual messianism and new political order. Upon the establishment of Soviet power over Russia rumors also followed about the coming of Antichrist, the Second Advent of Christ and the End of the World, Even the Bolsheviks

65 Andreev, Soviet Russia and Tibet, 159–160.  
66 Idem, 315. See Dnevnik, t. 22, 21.05.1925–12.08.1926, April 13, 1926: “The ray showed how the Tashi Lama becomes the chief of the buddhists without the Dalai Lama.”  
68 Snelling, Buddhism in Russia, 205–206; Andreev, Soviet Russia and Tibet, 160–161.  
69 Snelling, Buddhism in Russia, 205.  
themselves proclaimed the old revolutionary phrase: *My Staryi mir razrushim do osnovan’iia, a zatem my nash, my Novyi mir postroim!* (“We shall destroy the Old World to the foundations, then we shall build our New World!”).

By now it is time to ask once more how to evaluate the possible meanings of the “communications” transmitted by Elena Roerich since 1920? Is there a possible connection to the recurrent claim in Russian, Polish and French occultist circles that there existed a hidden “great Asian brotherhood” with a spiritual-political agenda of its own?\(^{71}\) Who or what was behind the so-called “Tibetan Master” “Djwahl Khul”, who was known to be one of the Theosophist’s “Ascended Masters” and who at the same time, since the 1920s, allegedly spoke “through the astral light” to another medium, the founder of the Lucis Trust and the Arcane School of Alice Bailey?\(^{72}\)

Roerich was not only lured by the “Masters” with obvious and rather lavish flattery, for example, making him believe that his paintings contained a deeper meaning for the future and contained a spiritual power,\(^{73}\) or that his Karma was to glorify Russia (“*Karma vasha – Rossiiu proslavliat’*”).\(^{74}\) It was also stated that the rebirth of Russia meant the rebirth of the whole world,\(^{75}\) since she was “the mother of the small nations” and would “defeat the nations attacking

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\(^{71}\) The French engineer and occultist Jean Calmels (d. 1961), former Martinist *Supérieur Inconnu*, who got initiated into esoteric lamaism by the Buriat physician Włodzimierz N. Badmaieff (Vladimir N. Badmaev 1884–1961, a nephew of Petr Badmaev) in Warsaw between the wars, thought that the region between Ferghana, Kashmir and Nepal served, similar to the People’s Republic of Tannu Tuva with its capital Kyzyl, as a corridor of interaction between Muslim and Lamaist spirituality, even if there were violent confrontations in the outer world, which had no great importance for the deeper occult exchange. Letter from Jean Calmels to Jean Reyor (Marcel Clavelle), June 25, 1943, *De Dánann, Les secrets de la Tara Blanche*, 116–117. See also Louis de Maistre, *Dans les Coulisses de l’Agartha. L’Extraordinaire Mission de Ferdinand Anton Ossendowski en Mongolie* (Milan, Archè, 2010).


\(^{73}\) *Dnevnik*, t. 1, 24.03.1920–31.05.1921.

\(^{74}\) *Dnevnik*, t. 1, 24.03.1920–31.05.1921.

\(^{75}\) E. Rerikh: *Letters* (December 17, 1935), 95.
her”.76 In early 1921, the Master still uttered the opinion that the Bolsheviks would be overthrown within the next two and a half years, that there would be a coalition government in a constitutional monarchy and that the Caucasus, Ukraine, Finland and even Poland would be reunited with within the next seven years.77 All these predictions turned out to be more or less wrong, but it didn’t seem to shake the Master’s authority when he started to encourage the Roerichs after 1922 to embrace Communism and Lenin as the necessary preparation for the impending rising of Shambhala: “Lenin is with Us”78 and the Roerichs should “work for Communism”, so that the hidden name of the highest Planet might be revealed. “Communism is necessary for the evolution, therefore glory is to Russia for her first step”.79 However, before he could fully serve the cause of the Masters, so it was said, Lenin had to undergo in his post-mortem existence some sort of transformation in a Kama-Loka sphere: “Lenin will be transformed for cooperation. There is so much blood on him! Like on Saul. On Christ is more blood. Lenin did not look for blood and was delighted about every newcomer. – [Question:] Where is he now? – [Answer:] He is now reposing in a purging sphere. – [Q.:] When will he be transformed? – [A.:] I think, by 1931.”80 It was the duty of the Roerichs “to help Russia”, because Lenin was misunderstood.81 For only to them was given the Silver Key, the secret word “M[maitreya] is Communism […] Maitreya is Community”.82 As a consequence, in the 1927 version83 of the Agni Yoga volume Obshchina, Lenin was presented as a messenger of the Masters and a servant of the Evolution.84

76 Dnevnik, tedrad’A – Knigi i ustavi, 04–05.1921.
77 Dnevnik, tedrad’A – Knigi i ustavi, 04–05.1921.
78 Dnevnik, t. 22: 21.05.1925–12.08.1926, May 29, 1925.
79 Dnevnik, t. 22: 21.05.1925–12.08.1926, June 28, 1925.
80 Dnevnik, t. 22: 21.05.1925–12.08.1926, June 28, 1925.
81 Dnevnik, t. 22: 21.05.1925–12.08.1926, December 12, 1925.
82 Dnevnik, t. 22: 21.05.1925–12.08.1926, January 17, 1926. Fittingly, the Central Committee used during the same period rhetorical elements from the epistles of St. Paul by declaring: “Lenin is alive in the soul of each individual Party member.” Also: “Every member of our Party is a particle of Lenin. Our entire Communist community is a collective embodiment of Lenin.” Benno Ennker, Die Anfänge des Leninkults in der Sowjetunion (Cologne: Böhlaus, 1997), 90.
83 In the 1936 edition published in Riga, which is the one commonly in print today, all references to Lenin are deleted or missing altogether.
84 “I already said that our representatives [of the “Masters”] visited Marx in London and Lenin in Switzerland. Evidently the word Shambhala was uttered.” Obshchina, part III, II-26. See the apologetic essays of the Roerich followers Iurii Kliuchnikov, Put’ k obshchine: Agni Ioga o Lenine, revoliutsii, sud’bakh Rossi i Mirrovoi Obshchine (Novosibirsk, 1991); Valentin Sidorov, Rerikh i Lenin (2nd ed. Voronezh, 1995).
He had become a Mahatama; a great soul. The East would venerate Lenin “for the clarity of the construction and the dislike of convention and for the faith in the children as symbols of evolving mankind”.

In early 1924, when the Roerichs had settled in Darjeeling, Nikolai Konstantinovich was recognized by some Tibetan lamas from the Moru monastery as the incarnation of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, and he also learnt about the Panchen Lama’s secret flight from Tibet. Then, apparently, another meeting with a flesh and blood version (or at least an “avatar” [vessel-manifestation]) of Master M. aka Allal Ming took place. This initiated the preparation of the first expedition to Inner Asia and Siberia. In late 1924, Roerich was at the Soviet embassy in Berlin where he told the polpred (plenipotentiary) Nikolai Krestinskii about the anti-Soviet activities of the British in the Himalayan borderlands. He left such an impression that Krestinskii reported to People’s Commissar of Foreign Affairs Georgii Chicherin (incidentally Roerich’s university classmate) in Moscow, Roerich had “absolutely pro-Soviet leanings, which looked somewhat Buddho-Communistic”.

In early 1925 Roerich travelled to Paris to meet the Bolshevik “Minister of Finance”, the newly appointed political representative Leonid Krasin. Originally an engineer, Krasin was in the early days before the War intimately involved with the campaign of bank robberies and other illicit means used to finance the revolutionaries, while at the same time (at least from 1896 to 1902) acting as a Secret Police informant. He also had connections through his Masonic affiliation to the Grand Orient de France. One purpose of Roerich’s visit was to obtain from the Soviets the mining and agricultural concessions in the Altai area as a first condition for the founding of the utopian “New Country”. But Krasin was not only a trade spokesman of the Soviets, he also was,
together with Lunacharskii, in charge of the commission that had planned and built the Lenin mausoleum. It was Krasin who made the proposal to turn the mausoleum into a people’s tribune, a place from which Lenin was to speak to future generations through the mouths of his successors. Already in 1921, Krasin, a great admirer of Nikolai Fedorov’s speculations about a future science that can reveal the means to overcome death, was convinced that through the future advances of Science “one will be able with the help of the elements of Life of a human being to reconstruct the physical human being itself”.

Under the guidance of the Master, the Roerichs were thus ready to add to the nascent Lenin cult a crucial mystical and chiliastic aspect ‘borrowed’ from Buddhist spirituality, which should help, like the spiritual recommendations by lamas like Agvan Dorzhiev, to win the Buddhist world for the Soviet cause (or was it the other way around?). Thus, when the expedition reached Urumchi in April 1926, the Soviet Consul General A.E. Bystrov reported from his meeting with Roerich to Moscow that there were “letters from the Mahatmas for Comrades Chicherin and Stalin. The task of the Mahatmas supposedly is to unite Buddhism and Communism and to create a great Eastern Union of Republics.” They wanted to join the Tashi (Panchen) Lama, he added, in Mongolia “to set out in a spiritual procession for the liberation of Tibet from the British yoke.” When the Roerichs eventually arrived in Moscow on 9 June 1926, they brought a little casket with earth from Buddha’s birthplace for Lenin’s Tomb as well as several paintings depicting the coming Buddha Maitreya and a Mahatma, whose face resembled Lenin’s. On April 21, 1926, Allal Ming had communicated that he shared the Roerichs’ joy about Lenin, who represented their bridge and a source of light: “You still could help in building the Lenin memo-

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94 Ennker, Die Anfänge des Leninkults, 234; Michael Hagemeister, Nikolaj Fedorov. Studien zu Leben, Werk und Wirkung (Munich: Otto Sagner, 1989), 285; Olga Velikanova, Making of an Idol: On Uses of Lenin (Göttingen: Muster-Schmidt, 1996). According to Konstantin Mel’nikov, the architect who designed Lenin’s sarcophagus, “the general idea” of permanently preserving and displaying Lenin’s body originated with L.B. Krasin. (Tumarkin, Lenin Lives, 181.) Krasin wrote in Izvestiia one week after the funerals that the world significance of Lenin’s grave would surpass Mecca and Jerusalem. He suggested that as an inscription on the mausoleum there should be simply LENIN. It was Krasin’s idea as well to use the mausoleum as a speaker’s tribunal. (Tumarkin, Lenin Lives, 191, 193.)
96 Andreev, Soviet Russia and Tibet, 297.
rial. To find the red stone, a square in the foundation and, of course, the signs of the Soviets and the happy Tibetan signs. I recommend the inscription: ‘Lenin—great Teacher’ in seven languages.”

On 18 March 1926, Allal Ming had dictated the letters that were presented to the “Moscow Communists” in June. Therein the Masters asserted that “measures should be urgently taken to introduce Communism worldwide as a step towards the necessary evolution.” Maitreya was nothing else than the symbol of Communism, the negation of God was seen as a natural phenomenon in Buddhism. Eventually “Europe will be shattered by the union of Buddhism and Communism.”

Yet it seems unlikely that the Roerichs acted consciously as Soviet agents. It was rather the other way around: as “agents” of “Allal Ming” and his “occult politics”, they tried to make use of the Soviet leadership for the higher cause of the “coming of Maitreya”. But after the withdrawal of Soviet engagement in Inner Asian affairs around 1930, Allal Ming and the Roerichs seemed less convinced of the efficiency of the Bolsheviks and began to turn towards the United States to gain support for the realization of the “Grand Plan” in the course of a second expedition, officially with the purpose of setting up an agricultural cooperative in Inner Mongolia, a cooperative bank and cultural establishments. American financial support had been assured through the Roerich Museum in New York and rich patrons like Charles Crane and Louis Horch ever since 1921. From 1933, they had an enthusiastic supporter in the Secretary for Agriculture, Henry A. Wallace (1888–1965), who was himself deeply immersed in all kinds of spiritual and occult matters: séances, symbols, secret

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97 Dnevnik, t. 22: 21.05.1925–12.08.1926, April 21, 1926.
98 Rosov, Velikii plan, 180.
100 “Allal Ming’s” true identity as an individual or a like-minded group cannot be resolved in this paper; and about Barchenko’s “Great Brotherhood of Asia”, the last word has not yet been spoken.
101 For details see Rosov, Novaia strana.
102 Robert C. Williams, Russian Art and American Money, 1900–1940 (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1980).
societies, rituals, astrology, Native American and Oriental religions. Wallace had attended meetings of the Theosophical Society since 1919, joined the Liberal Catholic Church associated with Theosophy, and became a Scottish Rite and a Blue Lodge Mason until he received the 32º degree in 1928. By 1929, his search had led him to Roerich who became in the early 1930s his revered “Guru” until the abrupt and complete public break during autumn 1935. But up to this moment, Roerich’s suggestive power was considerable. When Wallace suggested in 1934 that the symbol of the Great Pyramid from the Great Seal of the United States would be appropriate for the dollar bill, he was probably convinced by the arguments of none other than Nicholas Roerich.


104 Williams, *Russian Art and American Money*, 111. This is also the point of view of the Franklin D. Roosevelt American Heritage Center Museum: “Nicholas Roerich was also influential in FDR’s administration, and was the pivotal force behind placing the Great Seal of the United States on the dollar bill.” www.fdrheritage.org/fdr_museum_preview.htm (accessed February 26, 2010). Wallace later used to point out the Masonic background of his idea: “In 1934 when I was Sec. of Agriculture I was waiting in the outer office of Secretary [of State Cordell] Hull and as I waited I amused myself by picking up a State Department publication which was on a stand there entitled, 'The History of the Seal of the United States.' Turning to page 53 I noted the colored reproduction of the reverse side of the Seal. The Latin phrase *Novus Ordo Seclorum* impressed me as meaning the New Deal of the Ages. Therefore I took the publication to President Roosevelt and suggested a coin be put out with the obverse and reverse sides of the Seal. Roosevelt as he looked at the colored reproduction of the Seal was first struck with the representation of the 'All Seeing Eye,' a Masonic representation of The Great Architect of the Universe. Next he was impressed with the idea that the foundation for the new order of the ages had been laid in 1776 but that it would be completed only under the eye of the Great Architect. Roosevelt like myself was a 32nd degree Mason. He suggested that the Seal be put on the dollar bill rather than a coin and took the matter up with the Secretary of the Treasury. When the first draft came back from the Treasury the obverse side was on the left of the bill as is heraldic practice. Roosevelt insisted that the order be reversed so that the phrase 'of the United States' would be under the obverse side of the Seal... Roosevelt was a great stickler for details and loved playing with them, no matter whether it involved the architecture of a house, a post office, or a dollar bill.” (Wallace to Dal Lee [editor of *Astrology Guide* and *Your Personal Astrology*], 6 February 1951, Henry A. Wallace Papers, University of Iowa, Correspondence). “I was struck by the fact that the reverse side of the Great Seal had never been used. I called it to Roosevelt's attention. He brought it up in Cabinet meeting and asked James Farley [Postmaster General and a Roman Catholic] if he thought the Catholics would have any objection to the 'All Seeing Eye' which he as a Mason looked on as a Masonic symbol of Deity. Farley said 'no, there would be no objection.'” (Wallace to George M. Humphrey, Secretary of Treasury, December 10, 1955 (Henry A. Wallace Papers, University of Iowa, Correspondence). See as well M.L. Lien,
With a little help from Wallace, the Roerichs were eventually able to approach the President himself and to win Franklin Delano Roosevelt for their Banner of Peace initiative, which obligated nations to respect museums, cathedrals, universities and libraries, as they did hospitals; to become a part of the United Nations organizational charter. This was consistent with FDR’s policy of hemispheric coordination and cooperation in the Americas, as well as with FDR and Secretary of State Cordell Hull’s “good neighbour” foreign policy.105 The Roerich Peace Pact was signed by Wallace, representing the USA, and by all the members of the Pan-American Union as a treaty in the White House, in the presence of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, on April 15, 1935. Of course Roerich never mentioned that “the initiated ones” expected the coming of Maitreya Buddha and the dawning of Shambhala for the year 1936 or later, and that this would be—according to the Kālachakra-Tantra tradition as well to the instructions given by Allal Ming—accompanied by great turmoil and war.

FDR was no stranger to mysticism; he always had a strong interest in the occult. Moreover, his receptivity was limitless and his curiosity enormous.106 According to the Wallace papers, the real mystic was perhaps the President rather than Wallace.107 A mason since 1911, Roosevelt became a member of the high grade Scottish Rite in 1929 (where he received the 32° degree) and a member of the Imperial Council of the Shrine (Ancient Arabic Order of the

105 An autograph letter in FDR's own handwriting, written to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, says: “Dear Cordell:/ As you know I am very [underlined] keen about the Roerich Peace Pact and I hope we can get it going via ‘the Americas’ – Will you and Henry Wallace talk this over and have something for me when I get back?/ FDR.” Facsimile on the website of the Franklin D. Roosevelt American Heritage Center Museum, www.fdrheritage.org/fdr_museum_preview.htm (accessed February 26, 2010). The Roerich Pact and Banner of Peace movement grew rapidly during the early 1930s, with centers in a number of countries. There were three international conferences, in Bruges, Belgium, in Montevideo, Uruguay, and in Washington, D.C. Needless to say, this recalls very much of the present 14th Dalai Lama’s “Kālacakra Tantra for World Peace” initiative. The public celebrations of the Kālacakra Tantra initiation rituals in the West by the Dalai Lama are said to contribute spiritually to the approaching “world peace” through the advent of Shambhala. See the extremely critical analysis of Tibetan spiritual politics in Victor Trimondi and Victoria Trimondi, Der Schatten des Dalai Lama: Sexualität, Magie und Politik im tibetischen Buddhismus (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1999).

106 Frank Freidel, Franklin D. Roosevelt: Launching the New Deal (Boston: Little, Brown 1973), 75.

Nobles of the Mystic Shrine for North America). Eventually FDR was appointed as Honorary Grand Master of the New York Order of DeMolay on April 13, 1934 at the White House.  

FDR was equally deeply fascinated by the geography and history, the cultures and religions, of Inner Asia, from Tibet to the Siberian border—“the chess board of international politics”. Because his maternal grandfather was linked with China, he always attributed a far greater importance to China than did many other U.S. politicians. In 1942, inspired by James Hilton’s 1933 novel *Lost Horizon* about a utopian lamasery high in the Himalayas in Tibet whose inhabitants also enjoy longevity, Roosevelt named his new retreat in the Catoctin Mountain Park, Camp Hi-Catoctin (today’s Camp David), *Shangri-La*.

This attitude is reflected in the series of eight letters addressed to the president by Elena Roerich and written between late 1934 and early 1936. While none of this correspondence, which is preserved in the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library in Hyde Park N.Y., stems from the pen of Roosevelt, the letters evolve into an indirect dialogue and suggest that FDR must have positively responded (E. Roerich refers several times to his “transmitted messages”). The diaries during this period reveal how Elena Ivanovna was constantly admonished by the Master to focus her thoughts on FDR. Although he was leaning towards her, the Master said, “Roosevelt has not yet understood the essence of the deal, but we shall still give him some time”. But according to Henry Wallace, the strongest bond between FDR and Roerich was the President’s mother Sara Delano Roosevelt. This is confirmed by the diaries, where the Master repeatedly suggests approaching the President’s mother in order to gain an influence over FDR.

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110 During a period of twelve years in China, Warren Delano II made a fortune first in the tea trade and, after 1860, in the highly profitable opium trade. It was rare for anyone even to mention China to FDR in a gathering without his launching into a long discourse about his ancestors’ involvement in the China trade. James MacGregor Burns and Susan Dunn, *The Three Roosevelts: Patrician Leaders Who Transformed America* (New York: Grove Press 2002), 355.

111 *Dnevnik*, t. 40: 15.08.1934–03.02.1935, December 27, 1934.

112 *Dnevnik*, t. 39: 01.05.1934–14.08.1934, May 26, 1934.


After the exchange of letters had begun, the “Master” instructed Elena Ivanovna to “speak about the meaning of the potential of Asia” and that “the New Russia could be the best friend of America”. In the meantime, Roerich should keep during his expedition “the famous secrecy” in Japan and Mongolia, because “they love secrecy” there.\(^{115}\) In her letters, Elena Roerich addressed FDR as “not only the Ruler but the true great Leader” who had the singular choice to accept “the Highest Help and the Fiery Messages” “at the threshold of reconstruction” of the entire world, when “the fate of many countries is being weighed on the Cosmic Scales”.\(^{116}\) Since the President had “so beautifully accepted the Message […] free from prejudice”, Elena Ivanovna started “to unfold before You gradually the entire Plan of the New Construction, in which You and Your Country are destined to play such a great part”.\(^{117}\) FDR was warned of the preparations for war “from the land in the East” (by which she meant, according to the diaries, Japan\(^{118}\)) and “from the land beyond the ocean, on the pretext of protection of China”\(^{119}\) (England). FDR was addressed as an integral part of “the Construction of Light” where “nobody can replace him”.\(^{120}\) The “Master” transmitted to the President that “a Great State will be created in the East. This beginning will bring that equilibrium, which is so urgently needed for the construction of the great Future. America was since long linked with Asia. […] Thus one must accept that the peoples occupying the larger part of Asia are destined to respond to the friendship of America. […] The alliance of the nations of Asia is decided, the union of tribes and peoples will take place gradually, and there will be a kind of Federation of countries. Mongolia, China and the Kalmuks will constitute a counterbalance to Japan and in this alliance of peoples, Your Good Will is needed, Mr. President.” FDR was advised to keep the US well-armed against all future provocations, while the Master communicated to Elena that Japan was set to unleash a war against America out of her lust for conquest.\(^{121}\)

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\(^{115}\) *Dnevnik*, t. 38: 30.10.1933–30.04.1934, January 28, 1934.


\(^{117}\) Elena Roerich to FDR, November 15, 1934, Roosevelt Papers OF 723.

\(^{118}\) *Dnevnik*, t. 40: 15.08.1934–03.02.1935, November 10, 1934: “One attempt will be effected through a provocation by Japan; the other attempt through an instigation of England on the pretext of protection of China.”

\(^{119}\) Elena Roerich to FDR, November 15, 1934, Roosevelt Papers OF 723.

\(^{120}\) Elena Roerich to FDR, December 27, 1934, Roosevelt Papers POF 723.

\(^{121}\) *Dnevnik*, t. 40: 15.08.1934–03.02.1935, November 10, 1934.
Ironically, it was because of the growing suspicion of Roerich’s apparent pro-Japanese activities and contacts to the Japanese War Ministry and Foreign Office that FDR and Wallace both cut off all personal relations after 1935. However, this doesn’t mean that Roosevelt despised Roerich altogether after that date. When Elizabeth Avinoff-Shoumatoff (1888–1980), painter of Russian origin, started her watercolor sketches for her famous unfinished portrait of Roosevelt in July 1943, executed in FDR’s final hours, she and her brother Andrei were invited to lunch at FDR’s estate in Hyde Park. According to her description, the two men soon discovered a common interest in the occult. And Andrei was struck by the bust of Nicholas Roerich, which he saw prominently perched on Roosevelt’s shelf.

Indeed, Roerich seemed to keep all options open. When Nikolai Konstantinovich came from Tokyo to Manchuria in June 1934, it seemed as if Roerich was professing his approval of the Japanese military advances on the Asian mainland, and he had constantly expressed his admiration for Japanese art and culture. Moreover, Heinrich Müller, in charge of Gestapo section (Amt) IV in the Nazi Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA), seems to have claimed during alleged interrogations in 1948 (which however may very well never have taken place and were forged at a later date) that Roerich was known to the Gestapo under the code word “Lama” and that he had contacted the Nazi regime in 1934 to ascertain whether they were interested in supporting his undertakings in Inner Asia. Allal Ming insisted throughout the 1930s that the main objec-

122 Elizabeth emigrated to the United States in 1917 with her husband Lev A. Shoumatoff [Schumacher], then a representative of Aleksandr Kerenskii’s provisional government, who later played host to Gurdjieff in the US. Her extraordinary talent for portraiture brought commissions from some of the most illustrious families in America, Great Britain and Europe. President Roosevelt was sitting for her in Warm Springs when he suffered a fatal cerebral hemorrhage on April 12, 1945.

123 See www.fdrheritage.org/fdr_museum_preview.htm (accessed February 26, 2010).

124 White and Maze, Henry A. Wallace, 88–89.

tive remained the establishment of the Kingdom of Shambhala under Russian leadership, the creation of the New Country: “The Kingdom of Shambhala is the hegemony of Russia. This formula is the corner stone. [...] There was never so much talk about Russia – in such a unique way the Path of Shambhala is in creation. One should not speak about it, as Satan doesn’t sleep, but you can perceive how the Path of Russian [Rossiiskoi] Asia consolidates. Already now every map is witness to the might of Russia. But add in your thoughts Turkey and Persia, and you will get the new borders of Shambhala.”

By 1938, Dorzhiev and Barchenko, like many other “political occultists” of their generation, had tragically perished during the Stalinist purges. Roerich’s second expedition to Inner Mongolia, Manchuria and China, financed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture with the purported aim to study plants, ethnology and to collect rare seeds, had failed. But still, in 1991, N.K. Roerich’s son Sviatoslav Nikolaevich told Vladimir Rosov that the “Altai is a very important centre, a centre of a big future” and that Zvenigorod remained “a great reality and a great dream”.

Since the 1970s, the work of the Roerichs found a steadily increasing recognition in the Soviet Union, culminating in the meeting between Sviatoslav Roerich and the couple Mikhail and Raisa Gorbachev in the Kremlin on May 14, 1997. This paved the way for the establishment of the MTsR on the exquisite premises of the Lopukhin estate in downtown Moscow. The rich repertoire of facts, lies and rumors about occult politics and secret brotherhoods was rediscovered in the early 1990s among the ever-growing followers of the neo-Eurasians movement. Pre-eminent in this movement is the above-mentioned Aleksandr Dugin with his rather close links to both the European right-wingers and “esoteric traditionalists” (adepts of Saint-Yves, Papus, Evola, Guénon et al.), who began to spread the rumour about the alleged existence of Mr. Hitler. The “supreme chief of the Buddhists in China,” reform monk T’ai-Hsu (1890–1947) proposed in a 1937 letter to Hitler that Buddhism was the ideal religion for the German people united under the “Führer.” See Trimondi and Trimondi, Der Schatten des Dalai Lama, 318–321.

Mr. Hitler.” The “supreme chief of the Buddhists in China,” reform monk T’ai-Hsu (1890–1947) proposed in a 1937 letter to Hitler that Buddhism was the ideal religion for the German people united under the “Führer.” See Trimondi and Trimondi, Der Schatten des Dalai Lama, 318–321.

127 Rosov, Novaia strana, 280.
128 Both, but especially Raisa, favoured the resumption of activities of the Roerich foundation on the territory of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev commented on the May meeting: “This meeting is our oldest wish. When you consider the roots of Soviet-Indian relations, the first germs of friendship between the two countries are linked to the Roerich family.” Pravda, May 15, 1987.
secret brotherhood Agartha in the ranks of the GRU. Franco-Romanian writer Jean Parvulesco (Pârvulescu) even added that Vladimir Putin had to be seen as an envoy of this order.\footnote{Jean Parvulesco, “Vladimir Poutine et l’empire eurasiatique de la fin,” Synergies Européennes, Secrétariat Européen, Bruxelles, Juni 29, 2000, evrazia.info/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=271 (accessed February 26, 2010). See as well Jean Parvulesco, Putin i Evraziiskaia imperiia St. Petersburg: Amfora, 2006.}

In the meantime, the Roerich Society could count on some political support and influence, for example by former prime minister Evgenii Primakov, a trained orientalist and from 1977 to 1985 Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences, who attended the Roerich Jubilee Conference on October 9, 1999 in Moscow.\footnote{“Primakov at the Jubilee Roerich Conference,” Moscow, October 9, 1999, web.archive.org/web/20080621110539/http://sangha.net/Photos/Conf-091099.html (accessed February 26, 2010).} The disaster of the flawed and shady economic policy conceived by the so-called ‘Harvard Boys’ and the Chubais clan during the early 1990s under the presidency of Boris Yeltsin\footnote{Janine R. Wedel, “U.S. Aid To Russia: Where It All Went Wrong. Testimony before the Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives,” September 17, 1998, http://web.archive.org/web/20051125131205/http://www.ukar.org/wedel01.html (accessed February 26, 2010); eadem, “The Harvard Boys Do Russia,” The Nation, June 1, 1998; eadem, Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Marshall I. Goldman, The Piratization of Russia: Russian Reform Goes Awry. (London: Routledge 2003).} helped to create a social climate in which further “Westernization” found an increasingly strong opposition and provoked calls for a “patriotic period of reform” as the only safeguard against the forces of fundamentalism.\footnote{This was announced by Mikhail Leont’ev in Segodnia, November 24, 1994.} Aleksandr Dugin promoted “Eurasianism” as a universal opposition to Western-inspired globalisation, avant-garde of the anti-globalist movement and the foundations of a future pan-Asian alliance.\footnote{Aleksandr Dugin, Osnovy geopolitiki. Geopoliticheskoе budushchee Rossii (Moscow: Arktogeia-Tsentr, 1999), 190, 214–249.}

With regard to foreign policy, the signing of the Treaty on Deepening Military Trust in Border Regions in Shanghai on April 26, 1996 by the heads of states of Russia, Kazakhstan, the People’s Republic of China, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan was a big step in this direction. The Treaty has led to the creation of the Shanghai Five grouping. In 2001, the five member nations first admitted Uzbekistan (thereby transforming it into the Shanghai Six). All six heads of state signed on June 15, 2001 the Declaration of Shanghai Cooperation Organization, aiming to realize a higher level of cooperation. In July 2001, Russia and
the PRC, the organization’s two leading nations, signed the *Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation*. Among other nations of the region, Mongolia became the first country to receive observer status at the 2004 Tashkent Summit, followed by Pakistan, India and Iran at the 2005 SCO summit in Astana, Kazakhstan. Mongolia, Pakistan, and Iran have since applied for full membership to the organization. The SCO has also encouraged India to join the organization, saying that they would properly consider a membership application should it decide to join the group. As of June 2011, following the 10th summit meeting of the SCO in Astana, India has indeed announced that she would make strong efforts in obtaining a full membership status, sharing regional security concerns with the SCO and also work closely with the SCO in Afghanistan. All this fits in the geopolitical Grand East (*Bol’shoi Vostok*) strategy that was pushed during the second presidency of Vladimir Putin (2004–2008), as a full-blown “return of Russia to the East” (*vozvrashchenie Rossii na Vostok*). Such an outspoken ‘orientation’ of foreign policy would certainly have pleased a prince Ukhtomskii.

In this context, it doesn’t seem altogether accidental when the full extent of the dealings of the Roerichs emerges today in Russian bookshops and newspapers, like some glaring spotlight pointing once again the path to *Rossiskaia Aziiia* or a Shambhala version of *Evraziia*. Indeed, the Kremlin has learnt how to make use for diplomatic purposes of the considerable prestige the names of the Roerichs enjoy in various parts of Asia. When the newly elected President of the Russian Federation granted a 50-minutes interview to the editors of *India Today* and *The Russia Journal* in October 2000, he referred to Nicholas Roerich as the prime example of “the spiritual closeness that binds all people” —foremost Russia and India. And while on December 4, 2002 in New Delhi,
Putin was discussing future collaboration between the intelligence agencies and Special Forces of the two countries, his wife Liudmila was opening an exhibition called “The Himalaya Saga” with paintings of Nikolai Konstantinovich.\textsuperscript{137}

As a countermove, the Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee offered in May 2001 $200,000 to the International Roerich Memorial Trust (IRMT) for the preservation of Roerich’s home near Nagar in the Kullu Valley (Kashmir) by announcing he would act as “Chief Patron of the trust” in honour of the “great saint”.\textsuperscript{138} In early November 2001, Vajpayee was on a diplomatic visit in St. Petersburg and gave a speech, in which he stressed the importance of the city for the mutual relations between the two countries. He underlined the continuity that could be traced from the pioneering discoveries of Afanasii Nikitin (who was the first Russian to “discover” India in the 15th century) to the plans of Peter the Great for securing a maritime access on the shores of the Indian Ocean, and finally to the birth of Nicholas Roerich in St. Petersburg. Vajpayee added that Nikitin’s travels opened the path perceived nowadays by Russia, India and Iran “as a strategic axis for Eurasia”: “Our three countries signed an agreement in September to develop this corridor.”\textsuperscript{139}

Finally, on the webpage of the embassy of the Russian federation in New Delhi, one could access an interview given in 2002 by ambassador Aleksandr Kadakin, a well-known orientalist and indologist, who was friendly with the family of Sviatoslav Nikolaevich Roerich and the former Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi. When he was asked by the journalist about the future of India and whether the recent events in Afghanistan could be interpreted in terms of Huntington’s \textit{Clash of Civilizations}, Kadakin, who by the way serves also as Deputy Director of the International Roerich Memorial Trust (IRMT) and

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\item \textsuperscript{137} Strana.ru, 4 December 2002, travel.ru/news/2002/12/05/20933.html (accessed February 26, 2010).
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Markus Osterrieder
curator of the Roerich manor in Nagar (India) answered enigmatically, as if he was quoting Allal Ming: “BM: China is predicted to have [sic!] a future of a superpower. Does the future also belong to India? What is your attitude towards the latest developments in Afghanistan, India’s neighbour? What is it – a clash of religions or civilisations? – Kadakin: No doubt the three Asian giants – Russia, China, India – have a great future. People justly say: ‘Light will dawn in the East’.”

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