

# THE HIGH COUNTRY THEOSOPHIST



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RUSSIAN THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY

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As promised in last month's HCT, the following article by Dmitri Popov, Chairman of the Russian Theosophical Society, tells of that Society and its history, from the time of its foundation during Tsarist times, through the period of total suppression during the Soviet period, to its present rebirth:

The restoration of one of the oldest of all Russian spiritual and educational organizations - The Russian Theosophical Society - took place in Moscow on January 8, 1991.

This event was a true festival of the spirit for all those who remained loyal to the ideals of Theosophy and to its high Teachers, and who secretly preserved this loyalty in their hearts through decades of prohibition, persecution, and misery.

Indeed, even five years ago we could not have dreamt that this renewal was possible. And now almost two years have passed, during which we have labored for the regeneration of the broad educational and charitable work that was conducted by the Society until 1917.

I would like to tell my colleagues and friends abroad about our life, to share with them our joy of success, and to discuss our plans and problems, in the hope of establishing bonds of



friendship and cooperation, in the true spirit of brotherhood that was taught to us by our Founders.

First, a bit of history.

Just as in Europe and America, Theosophy in Russia has deep historical roots that can be traced to the activities of certain religious, mystical, and esoteric organizations, and also to some of the great philosophies of previous centuries.

The history of Theosophical thought in Russia is a compelling topic, and I, as a researcher, am most interested in it.

The Russian Theosophical Society, as the Russian branch of the Society founded in the United States by Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott, began its official existence in 1908, after almost ten years of effort on the part of many students and followers in groups everywhere in the country. The first and only head of the Society, until it was forcibly closed in 1918, was Anna Kamensky.

It was not easy for a Theosophical organization to obtain legal registration during the time of the Russian Empire, with its official state orthodoxy and its strict internal policies.

One could not even think of registering the Society as a branch of an international organization with headquarters abroad - this was strictly prohibited by law.

Legalization was possible only by acceding to demands of the authorities to change and reword some of the main sections of the by-laws. Only then was the Society accepted and legally registered.

But even after this, many attempts by the Society to send delegates to international Theosophical conferences were blocked. Even so, despite the many obstacles raised by imperial laws and the bureaucracy, the Russian Theosophical Society found understanding and support from Adyar.

The International Headquarters recognized the Russian Theosophical Society as a national section. Credit for this is due to Annie Besant, whose attention and care were always a great support for us. Her letters and instructions were published regularly on the first pages of our magazine, *The Theosophical Messenger*.

During its ten years of activity, the Society was able to broaden its work. Branches, sections, and lodges of the Society were founded in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, Warsaw, Kaluga, Smolensk, and in other cities of the Empire.

Serious work was accomplished by such orders as the Order of Spiritual Knights, in which a chief method of training was by spiritual practice through art.

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## REPORT: T.S.A. ELECTION '93

We have received a letter from Adm. (Ret) Carl Stillman, addressed "To the Membership of The Theosophical Society in America" under the title "A Call to Action."

As the primary issue in the letter, Adm. Stillman cites the "unopposed status" of the present candidate for National President [John Algeo] and urges members "to contact the Society's officers and Director from their district and demand that Bing's name be placed on the ballot..."

In the dispute between supporters of Bing Escudero and the T.S.A. Administration, the key issue appears to be whether Bing has been "properly nominated" in accordance with the Society's by-laws, as Stillman claims and the Administration denies.

From the evidence that is available to HCT, it appears that; (a) the petition nominating Bing as a candidate for president did have the required signatures of five nominating members plus those of fifty additional members, all in good standing, and was received by headquarters before Jan. 15, '93.

As to whether; (b) the additional requirements imposed on candidates as a result of by-law changes passed following the 1990 election apply in the present dispute, or whether Bing has satisfied them, is the question now being debated.

In a reply to Carl Stillman dated Jan. 14 '93 (attachment A to the above letter), Dorothy Abbenhouse stated tersely that "your letters (dated Jan. 11 and 12, 1993) did not contain a valid nominating petition." No reason or further clarification was offered.

Under "COMMENT" added to "attachment A"; Stillman states that the five and fifty nominating signatures requirement was met. With regard to the additional qualifications imposed on presidential candidates resulting from the referendum approved by the membership after the 1990 election; Stillman referred to a letter to President Abbenhouse from Delbert Pelton, an attorney and former member of the T.S.A. judiciary committee, as well as present judiciary committee member and attorney, Brant Jackson, both of whom (Stillman says) held that the by-law amendments passed in the 1990 referendum did not apply to Bing's presidential candidacy *if he were already a candidate for the office.*

In his COMMENT, Stillman adds; "(Bing) Escudero did become a candidate for the 1993 election immediately after his defeat on May 11, 1990, with the by-law change not becoming effective until a few months later."

[Just how Bing was entered as a presidential candidate at that time in 1990 is not apparent from the documentation now available to the HCT. ed]

The second issue addressed in Adm. Stillman's letter is the matter of the 32 proposed changes to the Society's by-laws, submitted by him on Mar. 27, 1992.

In attachment D, President Abbenhouse in a letter to Adm. Stillman dated Oct. 29, 1992, states; "The By-Laws Committee is in the midst of reviewing the entire by-laws of the American Section, with a view to proposing any changes which seem appropriate, including many of those which you have submitted. This is a lengthy undertaking and will require many months of review by the Board, presentation to the members for comments and final submission for voting. There is no way in which we feel the need to short-circuit this thoughtful process for any one consideration. We have discussed this with you many times and find nothing requiring the type of action you suggest. ..."

In his COMMENT, Stillman charges; "President Abbenhouse's rejection of the 32 proposed amendments to the Society's By-Laws, as submitted for Referendum vote via the 'initiative' process by the required 25 members, is in clear violation of Sect. 1 (b) of By-Law XIII. ... 30 of the 32 proposed changes had been offered to the Administration for comment in my Jan 31, 1992 letter ... and no acknowledgement as to their receipt until President Abbenhouse's Oct. 29, 1992 letter."

It was in the light of the evident intent of

the Board to ignore Adm. Stillman's petition for the 32 by-law changes, in addition to its refusal to enter Bing as a candidate in the 1993 presidential election, that led him to seek a court injunction as a remedy for these matters. In order to obtain such an injunction, legally, he had first to file a lawsuit making a specific complaint.

The lawsuit, filed by Adm. Stillman on Feb. 8, '93, demands that Bing Escudero's name appear on the ballot (as candidate for President) and also that the 32 proposed changes to the T.S.A. by-laws, submitted by Stillman to the Board of Directors on March 27, 1992 be presented to the membership in a referendum.

In his decision of Feb. 19, '93, the Judge of U.S. District Court, Atlanta Division ruled that "Plaintiff has not set forth sufficient facts to enable the Court to determine whether the Court has subject matter jurisdiction over the controversy, or whether the Court has personal jurisdiction over the defendant (President Abbenhouse)."

Although the injunction was not granted, neither was Stillman's lawsuit dismissed as requested by President Abbenhouse's attorney. The lawsuit remains on the court's active calendar at this time.

Editor's note: It is owing to the total lack of communication by the T.S.A. Administration to its own membership regarding these

matters and their relevant details that The High Country Theosophist has felt it right and proper to become involved.

It is in the interests of *Truth* and in the service of the larger purposes for which the Theosophical Society was established in 1875 that we do so. We believe that these issues are relevant to the movement as a whole and that they have historical significance.

In the interests of fairness and adherence to the high standards of Theosophical ethics we promise to print all viewpoints submitted in this matter, reserving the right only to avoid the printing of unsupported hearsay and personal attacks.

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## RUSSIAN THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY

[CONT. FROM PAGE 2]

Confessional drawings, in the form of the knight's shield, for example, were diaries of the soul expressed in deep and heartfelt images.

These images, born as expressions of the deepest feelings, in their turn influenced their creators in the sacred search for self-knowledge and self-renewal.

At a conference in Alolzene last year, one could see a diary containing such drawings that belonged to Leonid Slobodinsky, whose

nephew, Andrey Gnezdilov, is chairman of the St. Petersburg branch of our present Society.

Members of the groups and lodges of that time studied the basic Theosophical texts: *The Secret Doctrine*, *Light on the Path*, and *At the Feet of the Master*, all of which had been translated into Russian.

Much work was done to publish the major Theosophical texts, books by H.P.B., Besant, Krishnamurti, Scar, Pascal, and others.

Books by the active Russian Theosophists, Kamensky, Pisareva, Ouspensky, Stranden, and others were published.

The work of the Society was facilitated by their own publishing houses in St. Petersburg and Kaluga.

By 1918 about fifty titles had been published, and about eighty more were ready for printing. In 1918 the first bookshop specializing in Theosophy was opened.

The Society's magazine, *The Theosophical Messenger*, became well-known among the Russian intelligentsia.

Soon there were two national and three local magazines, one of them for children. One of the Society's main efforts was to establish Theosophical public libraries.

In addition to these works and the inner work, much active lecturing took place, with the purpose of disseminating the basic Theosophical ideas among the populace.

The fine arts as a means of expressing spiritual creativity was given much attention. Literary events, concerts, and exhibits were organized, and classes were conducted. Folklore and local arts and crafts were promoted, both as repositories of the secrets of The Ancient Wisdom and as a means of mastering them.

One of the brightest and most active members of the Society was a famous violinist, Anna Unkovsky, who studied theories of esoteric connections between color, sound, and numbers, and discovered ways of their practical application to music.

Her achievements were demonstrated at many concerts, and she taught her ideas to the young.

Many members of the Society applied their energies and knowledge to the needs of education, and produced detailed studies of theory and practice in this field.

Schools and boarding schools were founded, some working with children from the first days of their lives.

One such school, a kind of educational colony, was established near Moscow under

the directorship of Lydia Armandt, whose diaries filled with important historical information, are in the possession of her grandson, a member of the Lourie lodge.

One of Russia's leading chemists, who passed away last year, taught in the Armandt school.

In general, the ideas promoted by the Russian Theosophical Society had a strong influence on the development of Russian culture in the early years of this century.

Many renowned cultural figures, such as Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, Nicholas Roerich, Alexander Scriabin, Maximilian Voloshin, Pitirim Sorokin, and Piotr Ouspensky were all Theosophists.

In 1918, after the revolution, the Society, together with all other religious, philosophic, and spiritual organizations, was closed by the state authorities.

The headquarters of the Society and the local branches were destroyed and their possessions confiscated.

Nevertheless, as remembered now by survivors from those early days, the first years after the revolution were somehow "golden years" for the Society.

The strict regime of the Empire, which had regulated everything in the nation's life,

had passed; the new totalitarian authority had not yet gained enough strength, and was occupied with matters far more urgent than regulating the spiritual life and thinking of its citizens. Those were years of relative freedom, intoxicating and full of hope.

It was true that the Society had lost its quarters, libraries, publishing rights, and printing houses, and general rights to conduct any public activities.

Yet the inner life of the Society, its groups and its lodges, was intensified, and escaped the attention of the authorities.

Thus, in spite of official prohibition, the Society did not even consider the need to dissolve itself. But then the first wave of arrests engulfed them. Some were soon freed if they were determined not to represent any real danger to the state, and this seemed to feed their hopes.

However, after their victory in the Civil War, the newly strengthened government began to pay closer attention to establishing its ideological and spiritual dictatorship. A mass deportation and emigration of the independent-thinking intelligentsia began, a clear sign to the resisters that a time of terror was approaching.

Many of the leaders of the various Theosophical groups began to leave the country; among them A. Kamensky and E. Pisareva, who became influential among

Theosophists of the Russian emigre community.

The emigration caused a breach in the Society, with little or no contact between those who left and those who remained.

The main center of the Society abroad was established in Geneva, where much positive work was performed at least into the sixties. We can find no trace of them after that.

I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to those who may have any information or materials relating to this center and its work - or that of any other centers - to help us in our research.

In Russia, the Theosophical Society remained illegal. Sophia Gerrie became head of the Moscow Society, replacing A. Kamensky. In the late twenties a new wave of arrests began, and the losses to the Society were grave.

All those members who had been arrested were accused again of participation in prohibited activities.

Large numbers were exiled to Siberia for many years, and few survived. A time of great cruelty ensued with laws and regulations of a severity beyond understanding for people who have not experienced them.

One careless word spoken in a private

conversation, one incautious act, could lead to great suffering, even loss of life.

The members of the Society could exist only in strictly secret circles of those few who had known one another for a long time and could trust one another absolutely.

They gathered around the brightest and most courageous, such as Sophia Gerrie, who until her death remained the chairwoman of a barely-living, almost mortally-wounded, organization. Other leaders were A. Chekhova, K. Antarova, and Y. Lourie.

The more suffocating the darkness surrounding them became, the more the flame of dedication and spiritual toil was nourished in the hearts of this small band of heroes.

It would be blasphemous to suggest that the suffering in prisons and labor camps was an important school of life for those who were condemned to it. Yet, none of these people complained, none of them abandoned or forgot their own principles.

On the contrary, it was in those places that they came to understand the grandeur and power of their ideals. It is true, of course, that those who remained "free" were not leading a better life. All that affected the prisoners affected them in equal measure.

The terrible period from the thirties through the fifties brought the most severe trials

and tests. Those who perished were true heroes of honor and spirit.

Completely cut off from the world, facing a darkness that continued to celebrate its victory, those who persisted in their dedication to their highest aspirations could not have been without support from those whom they served.

Letters and instructions were transmitted during those times from the Highest Source through Concordia Antanova, Olga Obnorsky, and others. This material is now part of the treasured core of our Society's archive.

The section, Voice of the Silence, which is a part of our restored Messenger of Theosophy magazine, will make public portions of this heritage of our Society.

During these years of suppression, the Society's activities, underground and secret, were continued by the small remaining number of members. The work of translation of the writings of H.P.B., Olcott, Jinaradasa, Krishnamurti, Wood, and Van der Loo continued. The books that miraculously survived all the attempts at destruction and confiscation and those that were smuggled into our country from abroad, were laboriously copied by hand and passed around from member to member.

New generations, children and grandchildren of the first Theosophists, arrived to continue the work. New seekers came to the



groups that met in crowded apartments.

The severity of the outer life only intensified the spiritual experiences, whose inner flame found expression in the arts and other creative work. This was a truly unique wave of elevated spiritual creativity blessed by the revelation of Divine Wisdom.

The poetry of Yevgenia Dementieva and Yekaterina Timofeeva, the novel “Two Lives” by Concordia Antarova, music and paintings by Victor Chernovolenko and Boris Smirnov-Rusetsky, formed portions of the so-called “Golden Treasure” of Russian Theosophy. This flame shines even today in the creative work of their descendants.

The “Khrushchev thaw” of the late fifties and sixties had no real effect on the Theosophists, except perhaps in the fact that the anti-religious war became even more intense, since the country was supposed to be moving at last out of socialism into a period of communism, “free from all idealistic superstitions and survivals of the past.”

Brezhnev’s time was relatively more peaceful for us — a true “period of stagnation,” as it is called now.

The state authorities were secure in their control of ideology, and the terror of the past decades became a tortured memory.

But there were still no new freedoms on

the horizon. “Religious propaganda” remained a crime, and was severely punished.

Indeed, any kind of spiritual activity, such as the distribution of literature or even a meeting in a private apartment, was classified under this “crime.”

It is strange to remember now how, many years ago, we would come to our meetings not together but one at a time, and would leave in the same way; how we could not permit ourselves even one careless word when speaking on our own phones; how we could not reveal any of our ideas to even close friends or relatives.

Another category of crime, the most dangerous of all, was the distribution of typed or xeroxed copies of any previously-published literature, spiritual or otherwise, as a violation of the state monopoly controlling all publishing and distribution of printed matter.

Here we took the most serious risks and conducted operations that were like those of underground resistance movements in occupied countries.

Many of us endured various ordeals, such as questioning, arrests and detentions, and our libraries were often confiscated.

None of us could be sure that the next day would be survived. Yet, during this time imprisonment was not common. It was a

difficult period, during which we could not permit ourselves to even dream about the freedoms we now have.

Yet, there were certain advantages that do not exist today. Our circle of co-workers was small and focused. The Theosophical work required a willingness to give up much in life, to always face the threat of losing one's peace and quiet life, and for this reason only those who were willing to face these threats, for whom Theosophy was their "daily bread," would join us.

In contrast, during these recent years of greater freedom, we have had to deal with an onslaught of idle curiosity, personal ambition, eagerness to gain instant mastery and occult powers, pseudo-spirituality, and even madness - all of which obscured those few who desired a pure and true quest for Light.

That is why, together with a liberation from ideological totalitarianism, we have found ourselves so concerned about the purity of our ranks and the fate of our movement in Russia.

Beginning in 1990, there was an attempt by many to establish numerous pseudo-Theosophical societies. These were populated by people with strange goals and odd esoteric ideas, people who for no apparent reason were attracted to the word "Theosophy."

Therefore, when we began the process

of restoration of the Russian Theosophical Society, we saw as one of our first tasks the need to include all those of the old members who still remained, to adopt the original by-laws of the Society (adapted only to conform to current law), and to preserve the true traditions.

Now, having achieved its official status, our Society once again has the opportunity to conduct educational work in the open.

Much time and energy were devoted to threading through all the bureaucratic procedures, to finding suitable space, to obtaining licenses for publishing, and to founding the magazine.

A terrible shortage of funds forced us to apply for a bank loan, counting on future income from publishing activities to repay it.

Part of the money obtained from the bank permitted us to accept the offer of space by one of the best Moscow cultural organizations, the Palace of Culture.

Through their kind hospitality and the generosity of their staff, we were able to open a library, which is available six days a week, until very late hours.

It now contains almost one thousand titles, and adds steadily all the Theosophical books that are now being published in our country. We are deeply grateful to all our friends abroad who have sent us literature.

This is extremely important for us.

We want to express particular gratitude to the Director of the Nicholas Roerich Museum in New York, Mr. Daniel Entin, who, together with his colleagues, provided much of the core of our library.

Mr. Entin has been traveling regularly to Russia for many years; we are bound by our long lasting friendship and cooperation, and are happy to have him as an honorary member of the Central Council of our Society.

Unfortunately, many of the rare Theosophical books are in private libraries, and not available to the public. Producing photocopies of these books is for us much too expensive. One day, we hope to be able to purchase a photocopy machine, and the problem will be resolved.

We are now able to regularly conduct popular events, lectures, seminars and workshops.

Branches of the Society are now being re-established in the same cities as before — St. Petersburg, Kaluga, and Smolensk — and in other cities. There are now eight officially registered lodges. In addition, many groups without official affiliation with us have formed in various parts of the country.

In October we sponsored a conference to which were invited representatives of all

affiliated and independent groups.

We would be happy to welcome Theosophists from abroad, so that they might see for themselves the progress made in the reorganizing of the Russian Theosophical Society.

We recently mounted a traveling photo exhibit devoted to the life and work of H.P.B.; it was shown in many cities.

An exhibition dedicated to the work of the Roerichs has been prepared, and we are now working on an exhibition of the history of the Russian Theosophical Society.

An exhibition of the art of Victor Chernovolenko, who was a prominent Theosophist, was a great success, and there will soon be an exhibit of the artistic diaries of Leonid Slobodinsky.

All our events are recorded on video, so that those who cannot attend them will later have access to them.

A group of our members specializes in producing short films on Theosophical themes. A film director, Karina Dylanyan, has recently completed a full-length biographical film about H.P. Blavatsky, the first ever in Russian.

The Central Russian Television recently broadcast a one hour film on H.P.B., the International Theosophical Society, and our

Russian Theosophical Society. The response was so positive that it has been shown three times.

We have begun research in the archives of libraries throughout Russia to unearth all published materials about the activities of Russian Theosophists.

As of now, about twenty letters by H.P.B. have been found, together with several totally forgotten articles by her that had been published in Russia.

We are organizing a workshop and research center to conduct studies in Theosophical subjects.

We were able to prepare for publication such fundamental sources as *The Secret Doctrine*, *The Voice of the Silence*, *Light on the Path*, and, for the first time in Russian, such works as *The Mahatma Letters*, *Isis Unveiled*, the third volume of *The Secret Doctrine* and *The Theosophical Glossary*, all of which were translated in the seventies.

It is interesting to note that the interest in *The Secret Doctrine* has been so great that the first two volumes were published in Russia in four editions totalling 250,000 copies, and the demand is still enormous.

*The Voice of the Silence* was published in a total of 500,000 copies, in at least ten different editions.

Unfortunately, our own first attempt to publish the two volumes of *The Secret Doctrine* failed because of our extremely starved financial situation. We had to search for the least expensive printing house, and found one in Moldova, which at the time was still in the Soviet Union.

Our success was assured, but because the coup attempt of August, 1991, was quickly followed by the disintegration of the Soviet Union, our order in Moldova, now an independent country, was not honored. We were therefore unable to repay the full amount of our bank loan, and were about to default.

Precisely at that time, Daniel Entin and Rae Barkley, of the Nicholas Roerich Museum in New York, visited us in Moscow, and literally saved the Russian Theosophical Society by donating the needed amount.

Because of this, our Society survived the crisis, and even found itself with sufficient paper to publish an edition of *The Nightmare Tales* by H.P.B. An independent company, Quasar, which had helped us before, once again was able to help us to publish this book.

We believe that a major task that we face is to restore the original magazine of our Society, *The Theosophical Messenger*. We have worked on this for an entire year.

It would make no sense to describe here all the obstacles we had to overcome. But they

were overcome, and our magazine is the better for it.

In it we publish prime source material, such as excerpts from *Light on the Path*, Upanishads, Books of Hermes, Taoist texts, and classic Theosophical works by H.P.B., Annie Besant, Mabel Collins, H.(sic) Subba Row, etc.

We also publish contemporary researches in Theosophy, scientific works that bring together the trends of modern science and Theosophy, articles in comparative religion, Theosophical prose and poetry, materials on spiritual movements in the arts, materials on the history of our movement, and chronicles of the life and work of our Society today.

Our magazine has an appendix in English which would be of some interest to our friends abroad. We would be happy to publish materials from Theosophical publications in other countries.

Presently, our Society strives toward a broader and more organized system of distribution of the Theosophical literature.

For example, in the largest Moscow bookshop, long a stronghold of Soviet dogma, we now have our own department, in which we sell all those books that we manage to obtain.

The goal of establishing our own

publishing house is our main concern today. We have no problems with preparing the books for publication, and continue our successful work of translating the necessary literature into Russian.

Yet, because of the economic difficulties in our country, everything becomes more and more problematic. The Russian economy is approaching a state of catastrophe, and inflation is an unstoppable avalanche. Prices for materials and services increase rapidly and steadily, and we are unable to do anything without the needed funds. Bank interests are now so high that loans have become impossible to obtain.

We cannot count on support from successful organizations or businesses because they, too, find themselves in strained circumstances.

Yet, in spite of all this, we hope for improvement, because, if we continue to do unselfish work for a noble purpose, we will not be left without help. This is how it always has been.

We have already registered our own publishing company, Sphere, as a business owned by our Society, and by some maneuvering will be able to publish two or three books by having them printed elsewhere. This will not bring any substantial return, but it will at least make available a few more books that are so sorely needed.

The only solution that can rescue the Society will be the establishing of a secure, small publishing house with a combination of some computer and typographic equipment.

But so far this is all just a dream, because the most basic equipment would now require more than a million rubles, far beyond our resources.

Yet, if we can manage to achieve even this, it would be of use to the entire Theosophical movement, because we would then be able to publish in any language, at far lower cost than in Western countries.

An other goal, one of our main and not so easily attainable goals, is organizing a summer boarding school that would become a major educational and museum center of our Society. Presently, we are negotiating for some property in the Crimea, near the Black Sea, on which there is already a building. If we succeed, that will be a great step forward.

Crimea is a very interesting place, from a Theosophical point of view, with centers of ancient religions, thousands of years old, and Theosophical sites of the last century. If we succeed in this, it will be an interesting location for visits from our foreign friends, who may take an interest in our work.

Speaking of this, we would like to mention one way in which we need help from

those Theosophists abroad who are more experienced than we. This has to do with the problem of establishing permanent, ongoing lectures and courses in Theosophy.

We are ready to receive here those lecturers who would agree to help us in planning and organizing such courses. In the same way, we are in need of methodological materials - instructional, educational materials - related to study by mail, since we receive many letters from all over the country from those who want to study the fundamentals of Theosophy.

But the most important thing that we can count on is that from now on our sincere friendship will continue to weave those heartfelt threads of Light that connect us with Theosophists everywhere.

Our Motherland, Russia, has been waiting for this opportunity for such a long and difficult time. And, for myself, I want to express, in the name of our Society, our most sincere and heartfelt sympathy and best wishes to our friends worldwide, to all those who share our ideas everywhere.

Dmitry Popov  
Chairman of the Russian  
Theosophical Society  
Vostochnaya Street, 4, room 22  
Moscow 10928, Russia  
(Translated by Aida Tulsakaya).

**Added note by Daniel Entin**

Director, Nicholas Roerich Museum,

319 West 107th, New York NY  
10025 USA

Member of the Board of Directors  
of the Russian Theosophical Society

in Moscow.

This is a tale filled with the pain and grief of suppression. Theosophists have suffered in Russia just as so many millions of others have suffered. It should bring great relief and joy to Theosophists everywhere in the world to see the rebirth of the Russian Society.

One might think, from the tale here told, that the members of the Society are bitter and attached to their past sufferings.

On the contrary, this story is told only for historical perspective; these dedicated people are working for the future and are struggling to rebuild what had been crushed. The great need for Russians now is to have the Theosophical material made available to them.

The printing presses must work overtime to produce the hundreds of thousands of copies of each book that is needed. For this reason, the Russian Theosophical Society is striving to establish its own press.

I hope that all of us in the more stable and longstanding Theosophical communities will find ways to help them to achieve this.

Donations are needed to purchase

computers, printers, and a printing press. The goal this year is to provide the necessary computer equipment, which will cost approximately ten thousand dollars. Please help with whatever you can.

Because it is impossible to send money directly to anyone in Russia, all donations should be sent to Nicholas Roerich Museum at the above address. These donations will therefore be tax-deductible for the donor, and will be taken by hand to the Society in Moscow. The pleas by Mr. Popov may be politely expressed, but they are urgent.

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**an editorial apology**

The basic assumption for my editorial criticism of the administration at T.S.A. headquarters in Wheaton [HCT Mar. '93] has rightly been challenged in a letter from Austin Bee, current and retiring Northwest District Director. I had accepted as fact, without verifying to my own satisfaction, Bing Escudero's assertion that he had no way of knowing of the deadlines for "candidates' statements" until reading of them in the Jan. '92 AT, too late.

As Austin pointed out, this information was published in the Nov./Dec. '92 issue of the AT under the title "Society to Elect Leaders ...," in which By-Law VI, Sect. 9 states that petitions must "reach the National Secretary not later than January 15th." The

deadline for publication of candidates' statements was also given as January 15 under the title heading. The information was therefore available to members with the arrival of the Nov. '92 issue. If Bing had seen the January issue, one might reasonably assume he had also received the AT for November. A question here remains; did he?

My retraction of an argument based on an unverified and false assumption is a responsibility I clearly recognize and accept.

Equally and perhaps more serious was to question the motives of the headquarters staff, based on that false assumption. Clearly, my retraction and apology in this case are due to Austin Bee, Dorothy Abbenhouse and the Wheaton staff and they are hereby sincerely given.

I also apologize to all readers of the High Country Theosophist for allowing unverified and misleading allegations to be published. I shall continue to pursue the objective of providing a forum for the free interchange of ideas in the pursuit of Truth. I am grateful to Austin Bee for calling this to my attention. Dick Slusser, ed.

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#### THE WACO STANDOFF

The March 15, '93 issue Of Newsweek features an article on "Secrets of the

Cult," reporting on the ongoing standoff between U.S. Federal agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and the Branch Davidian Cult, an offshoot of the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

With the theosophical world-view acquired by study of the Ancient Wisdom, available to us in the form of The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett and The Secret Doctrine, we see that life is a schoolhouse, provided for those who have chosen to incarnate on globe D of the Earth Chain at this time. And it provides each of us with the opportunities and choices to "sign-up" for the classes we need for our soul's growth. Without the understanding that we return again and again to learn life's lessons until we attain the wisdom to "graduate" from this level in our soul's education, there would be no basis for optimism. History thus repeats itself, for there are always souls waiting in line to "sign up for classes" providing the same lessons that some of their brothers have just finished.

Two generations ago in Canada, the same lesson was provided by Brother Twelve<sup>1</sup>, and those of us who are wise



enough to avoid this pitfall (probably having learned it in a previous appearance), can read about it in John Oliphant's book.

The lessons to be learned in this experience are summed up in the words of the Ancient Delphic Oracle; "Man know thyself - to thine own Self be true and thou canst be false to no man."

We must take the responsibility for our own growth and welfare upon ourSelves. No leader, no Saviour, can do it for us.

From the time in the middle of the Lemurian Third Root Race when mind was awakened; we attained to the knowledge of good and evil -- and the ability to choose, the responsibility for our soul's growth has since been ours.

It was at this point that our evolution, formerly driven by "natural impulse," became hereafter determined "by self-induced and self-devised efforts (checked by our karma)." [*S.D. I* - p.17]

One characteristic all of these "cults" have in common is a charismatic "leader" and the enforced requirement of

cult followers to place their absolute trust and loyalty in that "leader," not to mention worldly goods! This necessarily involve surrender of one's own judgement and intelligence.

Just the opposite are the requirements for Chelaship as spelled out in the Mahatma Letters;

"The fact is, that to the last and supreme initiation, every chela - (and even some adepts) - is left to his own device and counsel. We have to fight our own battles, and the familiar adage - "the adept becomes, he is not made is true to the letter<sup>3</sup>." [*M.L. 54* - P. 309]

End Note

1. See HCT July '92 and CANADIAN THEOSOPHIST Nov. '91 for reviews. Published 1991 by Mc Clelland & Stewart, 481 University Ave, Toronto, Ont. M5G 2E9.

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### **pilgrimage to india**

[CONTINUED FROM MAR. HCT]  
Letter 6 - November 17  
Hotel Cosmopolitan, Jammu

Dearly beloved Marty,

Well I arrived here via the Jhelum Express on the Northern Railway, all safe and sound with no mishaps of any consequence.

The train left New Delhi at 9:25 p.m. last

night and so, leaving the YMCA at 7 p.m., I had to ride in the dark and used the leg light. There is a real mystique about night time in a tropical Asiatic city. The darkness is warm and fragrant and along the streets here and there are small cooking fires like jack-o-lanterns or a campground. I have greatly improved in route finding in New Delhi and found my way to the New Delhi RR station without difficulty.

Once there, the usual games began. It seemed reasonable to go to the information counter, where I was directed to window 16, where in turn I was directed to a line at window 8 - which didn't move at all for 40 minutes. At this point another of the MASTER'S secret service agents disguised as a friendly young Indian came to my rescue and led me up and down 3 flights of stairs with my loaded bike to the baggage clerk who said that "the cycle must have a metal plate on it with my name etc." The problem was that the man that makes the metal plates wasn't there. It turned out that a piece of cardboard, hand lettered with a stick, using watery ink would be ok.

So I turned the bike over for the serial number, added that to the sign, snapped the bags together, bungeed the sleeping bag to the front panniers and staggered back up the three flights and down to track two. At this point I discovered that I still had the YMCA room key. Back up the stairs and down the stairs with the bags to find a mini-cab man and pay him ten rupees to return the key. One more trip up and down the stairs.

My ticket was for first class, 2 tier sleeper car but when the train arrived, the only cars I could identify were 3 tier. I dragged my bags 150 yards from one end of the train to the other but couldn't find my car. Finally I decided that the most important thing was to get on the train, so I fought my way aboard one of the second class 3 tier cars. I got a seat in the midst of a group of Indian women travelling with their men.

During the night I slept some, being jammed into the bottom bunk head-to-foot with an Indian. When morning dawned, we were passing through the state of Punjab having rural farms interspersed with small villages and occasional RR stations. Whenever we stopped at a station, the food vendors would come aboard the train crying "Chai (tea), Puris (fried bread) and Nashtaa (breakfast)." Since I was taking my food precautions to heart (perhaps too seriously), I decided to fast. Fortunately I had with me snack cheeses and an apple from the plane plus the almond butter from home which were a great help.

By 10 a.m. the countryside had changed, becoming somewhat arid and looking like terrain in the western US - perhaps Colorado, New Mexico or California. The ground was dry, with irrigated fields, and water courses were rocky dry washes. Out of the right side

windows to the north and west, could be seen foothills of about 1000 feet looking somewhat like the California foothills above Pasadena.

When we finally pulled into the end of the line station at Jammu-Tawi, I got off and went to the head end baggage car for my bike, but there was no bike on the car. I was relieved when the RR official told me there was another baggage car at the rear of the train.

About 50 yards away I saw an Indian employee riding it around. I finally got the panniers unsnapped, loaded the racks and left the terminal for Jammu. I had quite a tour of the city, asking directions to the Srinigar bus terminal, and gathering the usual crowd whenever I stopped.

At the bus complex were 50 buses or so with many destinations, crowds of people and hotel hustlers. Fortunately I had gotten hotel recommendations from the YMCA in New Delhi and had the names of three inexpensive hotels. The hustlers accost you saying, "Hotel, very cheap, 150 rupees". When you say, "No, too expensive!", they bargain down to 120.

After much inquiry, I found the Cosmopolitan Hotel with a nice spacious room for 35 rupees (about \$3). The hotel rooms are all upstairs on the first floor (in India, the ground floor is not counted) and it was necessary to carry the bike up a narrow staircase and around a landing. The "first floor" rooms are arranged around an open air

atrium in the center. My room faces the street and the bathroom, off the atrium, is an evil smelling disaster area, but I can cope.

I had a very adequate vegetarian curry dinner for 37.50 rupees at the restaurant adjoining the hotel, with fresh pineapple juice and Chapatis (like tortillas). This time I'll be smarter and save some rice and chapatis for the 8 hour bus trip to Srinigar tomorrow.

The buses have a large rack on the roof and I'll lock and bungee the bike up there. The super heavy lock and cable are peace of mind and worth the extra weight.

The bus for Srinigar leaves at 7:30 a.m., so I left a call for 5:45. No restaurant is open that early but I'm told I can have breakfast served in my room no earlier than 6:30 - which should be in time enough.

Mailing this letter will have to wait until I'm settled in Srinigar.

I love you Marty and hope you miss me.

Namaste,

## Calendar

Fri. Apr. 10

Charlene's home

Al Skrobisch leads ongoing study of *Light on the Path*, Volume III of *Talks on the Path of Occultism*.

Meeting begins with meditation at 7:00 p.m. Call Charlene 757-7298 or Judy 477-4788 for location.

Fri. Apr. 24

Charlene's Home

Same as for Apr. 10, above.

The chela is at perfect liberty, and often quite justified from the standpoint of appearances -- to suspect his Guru of being 'a fraud' as the elegant word stands. More than that: the greater, the sincerer his indignation -- whether expressed in words or boiling in his heart -- the more fit he is, the better qualified to become an adept. He is free to use, and will not be held responsible for using the most abusive words regarding his guru's actions and orders, provided he comes out victorious from the fiery ordeal; provided he resists every temptation; rejects every allurements, and proves that nothing, not even the promise of that which he holds dearer than life, of that most precious boon, his future adeptship -- is able to make him deviate from the path of truth and honesty, or force him to become a deceiver. K.H. [M.L. 30 - p. 228]

THE HIGH COUNTRY THEOSOPHIST is an *independent* journal and has the following editorial objectives:

(1) To serve the greater Theosophical Movement as a forum for the free interchange of ideas and commentary in the pursuit of *Truth* and to facilitate various projects in furtherance of Theosophical principles.

(2) To present articles and essays consistent with *source* theosophy, otherwise known as the *Ancient Wisdom*; as given by The Masters and H.P. Blavatsky, and other theosophical writers consistent with this tradition.

(3) To examine contemporary ethical, religious, metaphysical, scientific and philosophical issues from the viewpoint of the *source* theosophical teachings.

(4) To impartially examine significant events and issues in the history of the theosophical movement which have affected and shaped its present-day realities.

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