

THE HIGH COUNTRY THEOSOPHIST



Vol. 18 No. 1

Boulder, Colorado

January/February, 2003

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We count ourselves fortunate to have the connection with the events unfolding in Russia through our communications with Ukrainian Esotericist Yuri Gorbunov and the indispensable translation services of David Keane. It is in Russia, we are told, that the birthplace of the future religion of humanity will emerge.

We lead off with the Preface to Yuri's "An Esotericist's Journey in America, followed by "History of the East-West Network" being a tribute to David, Keane

PREFACE by Yuri Gorbunov

The countries of the East — India, Tibet, China — attract esotericists throughout the world, like a magnet. They journey to Asia to experience the energetic land of the messengers for the Ancient, universal, cosmic Wisdom. Mostly, such journeys pay tribute to the tradition established by H.P. Blavatsky, the Great Mother of modern theosophy about 140 years ago. To esotericists, it seems that journeys to "holy places" of Asia strengthen their new faith, a mixture of Christianity and insight from Eastern teachings.

As it has turned out, a third part of my life I have had to reside in the East. I studied and worked, living first in the Far East and then in Egypt. Coming from Eastern philosophy and fine arts, to esoteric philosophy, was a single step. And so, at the beginning of the 1990's, I decided to open an esoteric school in the Crimea (Ukraine). I called it the *School of Mysteries* and independently developed a curriculum for it. It included: the history of World



religions, the “Living Ethics”, occultism, and parapsychology. The curriculum was not complete, and it was doubtful whether here in Ukraine or in Russia, I would find an answer to the practical questions presenting themselves.

The heart of the Medieval esoteric culture was developed within Europe. Ancient Eastern Esotericism is the basis of all things - before the birth of and after the fall of any civilization. The roots of the eternal, universal, cosmic Wisdom have been lost within the profound and starry history of Humanity, perhaps not only upon Earth, but also throughout the Universe.

The first unveiling of the ancient and medieval esoteric cultures began with H.P. Blavatsky. She laid out the foundation for culture, science, and the philosophy of the New Age, that age for the birth of a new civilization upon Earth. She was Russian by nationality. Those who continued her work included a German, Rudolf Steiner; an English-woman, Alice Bailey; and a Russian couple, the Roerichs, together with their supporters.

In contrast to the standard tradition of a journey to the East, I decided to embark upon a journey to the West. Why to the West? Because I had become convinced, that it was precisely in the West, where was being born, that modern esoteric culture, the essential and foundational basis for any civilization.

In America, the materialistic

lifestyle falling into the hands of enterprising and materialistically thinking people, has paradoxically turned that country into the homeland for many associations and schools, occupying themselves with the dissemination of Eastern philosophy, esoteric knowledge and culture throughout the world. Freedom and democracy, favorable economic conditions, and a multinational environment with migrants from Europe, Africa and Asia, assisted in creating a fair environment for scientific and esoteric investigations.

In my book, I describe my journey in America. The aims of this journey were: getting acquainted with American theosophists, esotericists, occultists and masons, and receiving unbiased accounts of their activities.

Not only the inhabitants of Russia know little about this work but also those living in many countries of Europe, Asia, and Latin America. It is through studying the tendencies and peculiarities of the development of a new esoteric culture of humanity that we learn why the territory of Russia became the birthplace of Theosophy.

My good, selfless and experienced adviser throughout this journey, David Keane from Australia, became my friend and translator of this book. Without his constant labour and support, I would never have written it.

He translated and edited my Russian and awkward English presentations chapter after chapter. He advised me on complicated questions relating to the history of esotericism

and the Theosophical Society. It was destiny that brought us together.

He not only translated chapter after chapter, but edited one presentation, written by me in English, after another. He expressed his opinion about the manuscript and helped me with advice. Moreover, he helped me work through complicated questions relating to the history of esotericism and the Theosophical Society, that destiny has brought me into contact with.

I include four lectures about the spiritual revival of Modern Russia, presented in 1998-1999 to American and Canadian esotericists/theosophists.

The article *H.P. Blavatsky and Russia* was previously presented and published in conference papers of the Edmonton Theosophical Society (Alberta, Canada), July 3-5, 1998.

I added new facts gleaned from the Edmonton and Toronto libraries to *The Works and Influence of H.P. Blavatsky*.

The presentation *Discipleship in Russia* was originally published in "*The High Country Theosophist*" (Vol. 14, No.10; October, 1999).

The great mystics and seers predict that the birthplace of the new world religion (a new universal scientific and spiritual philosophy) will be in Modern Russia. The same ideas are echoed in books by Alice Bailey, the Roerichs, and R. Steiner.

Translator's Preface

Since early childhood, I have always had a fascination with Russian culture, dance and music. There was something mysterious and alluring in the spirit of the Russian people, that would forever bear testimony to the living spirit, even during the harshest and most repressive years of communism.

When I was forced by renal failure to stop work and go onto a disability pension, I had an abundance of spare time and so it was natural for me to learn the Russian language. This decision opened up a brand new and fascinating world for me. I learned to read Russian through a taped course, and quickly graduated to reading Russian novels, though I never developed the fluency of spoken Russian language.

This was at the time of Russian perestroika and glasnost, when Russians themselves were granted the freedom to read foreign literature of their choice.

I have long been a firm believer in the extraordinary power of simple heart-felt values such as goodwill, love, unity, group service and group endeavour. In Russia these beautiful ideas had been corrupted through repression of freedom of speech and of religion. Russians themselves were thirsty for new ways of thinking about things in a simple and pure manner, without the overlay of enforced propaganda.

It was of great concern to me that in 1993, no goodwill network had been established in Russia, and the Arcane School

or similar educational courses were not then available for seekers. I therefore began writing, in English and/or Russian, to people and groups in the former Soviet Union, asking if they were interested in joining a goodwill network.

In a goodwill network, the simple spiritual values of the heart would be shared with many seekers who would not previously have had the opportunity to get information we in the West take for granted. From such beginnings, I became involved in a goodwill newsletter, East West Newsletter, which was disseminated free in both English and Russian versions.

It was in this way that I came in contact with Yuri Gorbunov from the Crimea. He shared my dreams of providing esoteric and goodwill teachings to the many in Russia who had lacked access to such teachings previously.

It was in this way that I translated a few of Yuri's Russian letters and articles into English, and shared them with our networking friends in the West. It was a natural extension of this that I offered to translate his articles for his visit to America into English. Yuri was intending to compile these articles into a book, and I eagerly joined with him in the task of translating all chapters for this book, *An Esotericist's Journey in America*, into English.

I wanted to grasp the soul essence of what Yuri was saying, for Yuri was a man of great inspiration and vision. I would then, with the frequent help of a dictionary,

express this into English. My initial translation was slow, and I would never have earned a living from such slow work. It was however a labour of love, for I was ever entranced by Yuri's thoughts and experiences and ways of seeking the good in all situations and people.

Yuri initially intended this book to be disseminated in the Russian language. It embraces valuable thoughts and information not yet available to the Russian student. It challenges the student to think in terms of unity and harmony and goodwill. Much critical thought in Russia on esotericism tends to be from a limited point of view and at times is separative and negatively critical. And so, the lessons of harmony and goodwill are greatly needed lessons in Russia

These chapters of the completed version were published in English by the independent theosophical journal, *High Country Theosophist*. Comments from that magazine indicate they were eagerly read.

As I now read the book in its entirety, I am impressed how such a book is needed not only as a Russian-language version in Russia, but equally as an English-language version in the West. Not only does this book open up doors of understanding to the awakening of true spirituality in Russia and the former Soviet nations, but also its looks at Western theosophy, spiritualism and the goodwill movement in the manner of a fascinating travelogue.

To my experience, there simply does not exist another book that so embraces the scope of Western esotericism and occultism, while forever pondering its relationship to the evolving Russian spiritual experience.

History of the East West Network

Any esoteric work after H.P. Blavatsky should combine self-perfection with practical service to people, to humanity. The form of service can be different, but sincere. David's service was directed by a clear humanitarian idea of unity of Western and Eastern nations and cultures. The most interesting point here is how an ordinary person had come to the idea of establishing the East West Network Association. I asked him to describe his approach to the work he is doing in more details. He wrote an essay especially for this book.

“The Affirmation of Goodwill embraces those key thoughts that have so powerfully inspired me throughout my life, and set the purpose behind my various service activities. Particularly influential has been its middle stanza: “The only way to guarantee a future of peace and progress for the whole human race is for enough men and women of goodwill to accept responsibility for the establishing of right relations, and to work actively with the principles of unity and goodwill.”

Over the past fifty years the goodwill movement has been exceedingly successful in disseminating a vision for solution in all the fields of human endeavour. And yet as we approached the turn of the century, it had become evident to the clear-thinking observer, that only a minority of people were fully implementing that theory and anchoring the vision. With each passing year humanity is moving closer and closer to the precipice of undreamed of tragedy for our planet.

The call of my heart was to join that group of men and women of goodwill working actively with the principles of unity and goodwill. On the physical level, one such server can do little, but if one serves with focussed intention and love, then perhaps the inner quality of life can attract others to do likewise.

In 1992-3, Russia was just emerging out of generations of communist rule and literary censorship. There was such a great need in that land to provide education in true values and spiritual principles. But when I wrote to World Goodwill in London, asking whether they knew of any goodwill servers in Russia, they did not know of anyone involved in such a network. They said the Arcane School would be many years still before it could be established in Russia, and there was at that time no goodwill network in Russia. They suggested that perhaps I could forward my donations to goodwill servers in Africa. But my heart was to help the goodwill work in Russia, so I kept writing to people, seeking anyone in Russia wishing to pioneer in this desperately needed work.

The northern spring of 1993 was the time when the Bosnian War broke out in its full tragedy. That spring the Serbs invaded many Bosnian cities, and the atrocities in Srebrenitsa so appalled me that I identified unconditionally with the people of Srebrenitsa. In the madness of war, hatred seemed then to abound and a solution seemed exceedingly remote. And so in deep prayer I petitioned Our Lady of Medjugorja that I be permitted to contribute in however small a way

to eventual peace in that land. I promised to become an instrument for peace and to serve in any way She would guide my heart. And during meditation, I discerned that the spiritual need was for the message of unity, goodwill and right relations to be shouted from the rooftops until people started to respond. And so while in my inner life I continued to identify with the afflicted of that terrible Bosnian War, in my outer life I sought to anchor the energies of unity and goodwill in a practical way through small but loving actions.

I had by that time made contact with a few goodwill servers inside Russia. Later in 1993, one of these, Sergei Belkovsky, wrote of the need for a goodwill newsletter to link the people of Russia with the people of the West. This plea touched my heart so deeply for I knew he was right. But who was there to start such a newsletter?

Certainly not myself! I had no spare money (my spare money was at that time donated to groups in Russia), and I had not done any major esoteric courses and had no esoteric service experience. And my health was exceedingly poor. My blood pressure was so high that despite maximum medication, writing a single letter of a page or two, would stress me out for the rest of the day.

But I had promised to Our Lady to respond to any need She placed upon my heart. I could not do much, but I could at least invite others to join in a group endeavour at developing such a newsletter. Then I realised that if I am to be sincere when I invite others, I must also commit

myself to be a co-founder of such a project. And so with much difficulty and with many long rests between writing letters, I wrote to many goodwill and esoteric contacts around the world.

The positive and supportive response to that letter was so strong that daily I felt that inner helpers were guiding me. Many wrote back praising the idea and eagerly awaiting the first edition of my newsletter. *My newsletter!*

The newsletter was meant to be a joint venture, and beside my devastated health, I had no money to start. But I felt God's hand guiding events, and I knew I had to respond to the message of my heart. So I gave an inner commitment to do what I could to initiate such a newsletter, and trust in God to provide the finance. The very next day after making this inner commitment, I received a letter in the post advising of an unexpected pension increase of about Aust\$100 a fortnight. Just the amount I needed over the next few years to finance the costs of East West Newsletter!

I was far too frail in health to accept all responsibilities, so from the very start I invited participation in group endeavours. The first newsletter was small and simply shared my ideas for a goodwill network between Russia and Western nations. In subsequent newsletters I would invite contributions from servers in Russia, East Europe and the West. The newsletter would be free, financed by donations and my own contributions. I insisted that the first newsletter would not be launched until we found someone to translate the newsletter into Russian and distribute it in Russia. Eventually Karine Dilanian agreed to do this translation, and she would then

distribute it to 200 readers in her Russian astrology network. The EW Network Association (of which I became the major financial contributor) sponsored costs for both the English and Russian printing and distribution.

In order to develop an organisational base for group work and financial accountability, in 1994 we registered the Australian East West Network Association, with a small steering committee of three.

The newsletter proved very popular, and for the next five years it was to be published once a year and distributed free. And what was more, my general health started to improve. The tasks that before were so painful, were becoming a source for joy and my blood pressure was improving.

After a year, we received requests from Africa, India and China to distribute the newsletter globally. I hesitated, because we did not have any spare money. The additional cost for a global distribution, would mean that if no extra money came, the newsletter would have to close. It seemed spiritually the right decision to be inclusive and trust that there is a greater purpose. And so the third edition published in 1996 became global.

At that time we lost several of our key workers, and we had to close down the EW Network Association because I could not find two others to stay in our steering committee. No more donations came in, and so I started to go into debt, needing to draw from my Bankcard. That year I developed a flu that was so severe and persisted twelve months, and I thought that I might die within a year.

East West Network was on the brink of collapsing. It had lifted up the ideal of participation in-group goodwill endeavours, and had thus inspired many, but I had been left with an overload of responsibilities, too heavy for me to carry. Yet I knew the spiritual importance of this work. And in meditation, I recalled my promise to Our Lady to do whatever little I could. My flu had worsened seriously, and I could do very little. But I persevered, attending with my small remaining strength to one day's duties at a time, trusting that God had a Plan.

I then spent much time convalescing and reflecting, and in a moment of meditation, my attention was directed to some passages from *Rays and Initiations* by Alice Bailey: "Those responsible for the creative work upon the outer field must begin with the esoteric work... This creative work, with . . . its ability when rightly functioning to unite exoteric and esoteric workers in one spiritual undertaking, originates in reality in Shamballa itself." (p 275)

That was my dream, to assist in the great work of bringing theory into practice and linking subjective and objective work in "one spiritual undertaking". So we had to start with the subjective. The East West Newsletter was on the verge of collapse, but there were a few true servers within the network who were true and committed servers.

So it was that together with Sergei Belkovsky of Russia, and Albert Mananga of the Democratic Republic of Congo, we formed a triangle to build those esoteric foundations. We invoked group integration

behind the purpose; “To develop the emergence of a group agenda for financing a global education in the spiritual essential teachings, and the implementation of Divine Purpose through a peace program of practical action.”

This indeed was the higher purpose behind EW Newsletter. But the newsletter, despite its popularity, had collapsed through lack of practical support, and we three so desperately wanted to revive this work and lift it onto a higher level. It was a truly humbling experience to move from a network in which many hundreds eagerly read the newsletter, to a group of just three. But if this creative work to unite esoteric and exoteric workers in one spiritual undertaking did truly originate in Shamballa, then the only way to develop true group activity around the EW Newsletter purposes, would be integrate as a group (however small) around these purposes.

Wonderfully, soon after this inner commitment, my flu started to subside and my general health returned. East West Newsletter was about to collapse, but we would rebuild the work anew from higher purpose. I had enough money to continue the newsletter just another year. After that my Bankcard limit was used up. And so the final issue of East West Newsletter went out in 1998. In that year, various other goodwill networks and newsletters appeared in Russia, and so East West Newsletter had served its original purpose of providing a stepping stone to building the goodwill movement in Russia.

My regular income I redirected to

help a few service groups in Russia and Africa. I was exhausted from trying to sponsor group projects by myself. If a group project was to become successful we would need to discern what the people of goodwill themselves were invoking, and would be eager to sponsor. And so a small group of us chose a modest project of providing healing technology free to service groups in Africa, India and Russia to enable them to give free healing treatment to people with infectious diseases. We had discovered two devices, a zapper and a colloidal silver maker, which were cheap and effective with infectious diseases.

I had no money to make these devices, (I had gifted all of my spare savings and regular income to other service groups), but just at the right time a wonderful lady in Australia offered Aust\$150 a month to East West Network. This money was used to make and gift 30 healing kits to service groups in poorer countries. About five of these groups, mostly in Africa, brought the healing treatment to the general community and during the year 2000 we had much success in treating malaria in Africa. The treatment was simple and provided for free. This was a real blessing, as malaria can kill or severely disable, and most Africans are so poor that they find it difficult to afford a doctor's consultation, let alone any medication.

During the year 2001, our group in Kinshasa headed by Albert Mananga developed an AIDS treatment centre. We raised enough money to give limited treatment and blood testing for three advanced AIDS patients. The short-term results of this treatment were very positive, but we lacked the funds for a proper trial.

Blavatsky in Russia

The only way forward was to put our results and vision onto Internet. And so in October 2001, our healing site was established, providing details of all our healing work and a vision for what can be done by men and women of goodwill to respond to the global AIDS pandemic. Through the website, we invited men and women of goodwill to link together to form a “Compassion Response Network.”

A small but dedicated group of servers were attracted by the challenge of the Compassion Response Network. Together we are again proceeding to establish an association and charitable organisation. Our group objective we have defined as; “To facilitate the emergence of a goodwill network in which the hands of men and women of goodwill are strengthened so that they become enabled to directly provide a meaningful compassionate response to the most urgent needs of humanity.”

Way back in 1992, the dream of my heart was that an organisation would arise in which subjective and objective work would integrate in the one spiritual undertaking, so that theory for helping humanity becomes transformed into practice. Now at last, nearly ten years later, these dreams are beginning to materialise. Though the pathway by which they happened has been so wonderful that it was beyond my comprehension in the early days of East West Network”.

Blavatsky’s influence on Russia Prior to 1891

During her life, H.P. Blavatsky was known in Russia mainly as an author of wonderful stories and books about India, and of articles describing the situation in the Western countries. They were written in Russian and published in magazines as well as books.

In 1878, she became an American citizen, but all her life she was a “citizen of the world.” However, she did not lose her ties with Russia and she surrounded herself with her Russian relatives and friends wherever she lived. She also kept on publishing articles in Russian magazines and newspapers all her life.

It is a pity that Blavatsky wrote so few books about her endless travels as she could be called a great Russian traveler throughout the world. It would be hard to find another such traveler in Russia, or even in the world who would have so thoroughly roamed throughout the East, and would have written so many mysterious books of these travels, entering eternally into the history of human thought, as Blavatsky did.

Her works on Oriental traditions and philosophy were pictorial, vivid and emotional. Her writer’s talent made them more attractive to readers than those of professors of Oriental studies from Russian Universities. If one attentively looks through footnotes in her main books, one would come to the conclusion that she read almost all the books written by well known Russian orientalists.

She brilliantly introduced the Indian culture to the Russian intellectual circles, including Leo Tolstoy (quite old by then) and young Nikolai Roerich. Both were seriously interested in Oriental philosophy as were many other Russian people.

H. P. Blavatsky never published a single theosophical book in the Russian language. Consequently, her Theosophical works were virtually unknown in her native Russia. The educated class in Russia at that time preferred to speak in French or in German. Very few Russians were fluent in English. Therefore, her articles and books on theosophy and occultism were written in French or English. Her main Theosophical works were translated to Russian posthumously in 1930.

In the *Russian Review* of August 1890, Vladimir Solovyev (1853-1900), an outstanding Russian philosopher and poet, published his review of Blavatsky's *Key to Theosophy*. In his review he recognized the real importance of HPB's presentation of theosophy as he had studied Boehme and Swedenborg's theosophical works. Probably, he was disappointed in finding Indian philosophical and religious roots in her doctrine of theosophy as he called it "Neo-Buddhism."

Blavatsky mailed a letter to the magazine, in which she criticized the Solovyev review. She wrote that his review was "a wholesale distortion of her book from the first paragraph to the last" (p. 335), that he had not troubled himself to read the book carefully, that he was guided "by prejudice against the author or against the system itself

that he had failed to understand."

She wrote:

"In Russia there are very few who have heard of the Theosophical Society, or are acquainted with its ideas, and not having read any theosophical books — which can rarely be found in Russian bookstores. And yet, having heard about us for the first time, the very well-known Mr. Solovyev presents our group of little known theosophists as "Neo-Buddhists," "atheists," and at the same time as ignoramuses, if not just ordinary fools, playing in theosophy." (p. 336).

Thus, in her lifetime Blavatsky was well known in Russia as the author of travel stories and to a lesser extent as the "creator" of the Theosophical doctrine.

Theosophical Societies in Russia Prior to 1918

Vera Zhelihovsky, Blavatsky's sister, published a long biographical sketch about Blavatsky *Radda-Bay*⁴ in the *Russian Review* in 1891, just after her sister's death. It was the first biography of the Mother of modern Theosophy ever published in Russia in the 19th century.

Next year Vsevolod Solovyev (1849-1903), the author of historical novels, published eight chapters from his book *Modern Priestess of Isis*⁵ in the *Russian Messenger* and in a book form in St-Petersburg in 1893.

Victor Burenin, controversialist and cynic wrote in the *New Time*: "The literary talent of

the late Mme Blavatsky did not rank with common talents, which is proven by her articles under her pseudonym Radda-Bai in the *Russian Herald* under the editorship of M.N. Katkov (1818-1887); these articles to my mind, were a hundred-fold more interesting and talented than all the quasi-historical novels of Vs. Solovyev and all his fantastic and non-fantastic writings.”⁶

Much later, in 1918 Peter Ouspensky (1878-1949), the author of books about G. Gerdjieff (1873-1949), Russian original occultist, wrote:

“H.P. Blavatsky was an outstanding personality, one that only a great artist could depict in fullness and complexity. As to the theosophical movement, its positive aspects are certainly very important. It has united and brought to light many studies, which have previously been separate and fragmentary. It provides people with a way out of the blind alley of materialism. It introduces many new words and concepts that open our minds to eternal questions, the mysteries of death, the riddles of being, and keep us aware of them, never allowing us to forget. It challenges people not to be satisfied with the temporal. These are bold insights that cannot be denied.”⁷

Theosophists were indignant at Vs. Solovyev’s book. But only in 1943-1944 Beatrice Hastings (1879-1943), an English journalist published a series of articles called *Solovyev’s Fraud* in the *Canadian Theosophist*. She had analyzed numerous documents comparing them with the chapters of the Solovyev lampoon. In her research she came to the following conclusion:

“In the case of Madam Blavatsky, accused by Solovyev, the documents proving Solovyev a liar are so debased that he was willing to accuse himself falsely of feigning sympathy for nearly two years, in order to trap and destroy morally a friend. The documents were in existence and were preserved... At first sight, things read true, being connected with real persons, places and circumstances; one may feel that there are gaps, but only close examination by the light of some related evidence will reveal the gaps and, also, the flimsy stuff used to hide them”.⁸

It would be incorrect to exaggerate the negative influence of Solovyev’s falsified story on the Russian readers. Vera Zhelihovskiy (1836-1896) stated that this story stirred much interest in Blavatsky’s theosophical works. She received many inquiries about where one can obtain her sister’s books.⁹

Some groups of Russian theosophists appeared in the 1890’s. The first group was created in Odessa by N. Fadeeva, Blavatsky’s aunt, in 1893-1895. A rich merchant provided connections between the Odessa and Adyar groups of theosophists. That was the first step towards the eventual creation of an all-Russian association of theosophists, which was founded significantly later. A. Kamenskaya and E. Pisareva, Blavatsky’s relatives, translated some of her works on theosophy into Russian. A. Kamenskaya was elected its first Chairman. In 1902 she went to London to meet Annie Besant and since that time she dreamt about establishing a theosophical society in Russia.

Russia's Association of Theosophists was created in 1908 in Moscow. Members of the Association lived in different cities, including St. Petersburg, Kiev, Warsaw, Kaluga and Snolensk. For a long *time*, until July of 1918, the association was publishing a magazine called *Herald of Theosophy*.¹⁰

In his article *Russian Theosophical History* Dmitry Popov, the Chairman of the contemporary Russian TS, wrote that it was forbidden to register a branch of an international organization in Old Russia, but despite that it was recognized by Adyar Theosophical Society headquarters due to Annie Besant's personal support. Her letters and instructions were published in the Russian theosophical magazines. In addition to the two national magazines there were three local theosophical magazines, one of them for children.

The Society possessed a publishing house. It printed 50 titles and translated 80 more prior to 1918. The Society disseminated basic theosophical ideas, gave many lectures to audiences interested in spiritual self-perfection, and conducted literary performances, concerts, fine arts exhibitions, and classes for beginners. Among active members of the society were such names as violinist A. Unkovsky, artist L. Slobodinsky, outstanding poet M. Voloshin and others, known to every educated Russian.

After the Bolsheviks' coup d'état all religious and esoteric societies were prohibited and many theosophists were obliged to flee from the country to Europe and Asia. A. Kamensky went to Geneva and

headed theosophists among Russian emigrants. Sophia Gerrie replaced her in the illegal organization, if the remnants of the Russian TS can so be called. The majority of former members were obliged to leave the Society, so as not to be arrested by the Security Services.¹¹

A few well-known Russian poets and writers were influenced by R. Steiner, a German thinker and the Chairman of the German Theosophical Society between 1902-1912. Russian anthroposophists helped also to propagate ideas of theosophy within Russia.

It is widely believed in the West that the Russian Orthodox Church was trying to hinder the process of spreading theosophy.¹² That was one institution but it was not the only opponent to theosophy. The Russian government was also hostile to the free thought of Voltaire and to freemasonry, which were established in Russia in the 18th century. A period of enthusiasm for German idealism was short in Russia. The Russian philosophical tradition was developed from 1840. The Slavophiles contributed much to establishing Russian independent philosophical thought. It was simultaneously religious and physiological, ontological and cosmological. It joined speculative metaphysics, in-depth psychological ethics, aesthetics, mysticism, and science with a profound appreciation of the world's movement towards expansion. Russian philosophers sought a theory of the world as a whole, including its transformation.

Among Russian religious philosophers the name of Nikolai Berdyaev (1876-1948) is well known. He reasoned the existence of occult forces in man and the existence of mysterious forces in the Universe, based upon the premise, that if the occult teachings could be traced

throughout the history of mankind, then “... they have to have some meaning in them”.¹³

Berdyayev studied theosophy by books of German and Biblical mystics. Jacob Boehme was one of his favorite writers. Berdyayev admitted that he could find neither man nor God in the occult teachings. He explained their popularity by “... a cosmic attraction of the epoch, the desire to become immersed within mysterious cosmic forces, within the soul of the world” and also by the inability of the church to fulfill all the inquiries of a modern soul”.¹⁴

Berdyayev really appreciated the situation, that had emerged in Russia at the beginning of the century. He wrote: “In Russia, revolution has been preparing for a whole century, and various kinds of revolutionary movements have been the result ... The old historical flesh of Russia, that had been called sacred, has decomposed, and there has come a need for new flesh to appear. In this situation, the process of re-evaluation of traditional spiritual values has been proceeding. The historical orthodoxy represented to me that which was insufficiently universal, that was closeted and almost sectarian... The new age of Christianity has expressed itself principally through the critic and presentiment.”¹⁵

There emerged an active search for spiritual teachers. One group of intellectuals became attracted by the Russian Orthodox Church. Another large group was attracted towards theosophy and anthroposophy. Both of these teachings were disseminated throughout Russia as sisters of the one occult and mystic Mother. In 1913 the Anthroposophical

Society was founded in St-Petersburg. It included many intellectuals connected with the symbolist publishing house *Musaget*. There were many remarkable names among them: Vyacheslav Ivanov¹⁶, Andrei Belyi¹⁷, Maximilian Voloshin¹⁸, Daniel Merezhkovskii¹⁹. There were also many outstanding poets among them. This was a period of widespread and deep impact of Blavatsky and Steiner’s ideas within Russia. Many objectively written books and articles about theosophy and anthroposophy and about Blavatsky and Steiner were published at that time.

Valuable information about a few of the representatives of the first generation of Russian theosophists can be found in the article of A. Gnezdilov. He mentioned, for instance, about A. Usov (1872-1941), who wrote fine stories about animals for children. In 1914-1915 Usov founded a small theosophical ashram in the Caucasus near Sochi. In the nearest village he planned the building of a sun temple in the shape of a star. Many of his friends visited his ashram.²⁰

Maximilian Voloshin (1877-1932), an outstanding Russian poet and anthroposophist, built a house in the Crimea. It became an ashram for many theosophists and anthroposophists. One of them was Evgenia Gerzik, a fine researcher of Edgar Poe’s works, who was a good friend of N. Berdyev and N. Lossky, both famous philosophers. Her husband, D. Zhukovsky with his uncle took part in building a theosophical ashram on the Crimean land. The park was founded near the ruins of an ancient temple. Kora Antarova wrote a book *Two Lives* about theosophy and

theosophists. The book is very popular among the Russian reading audience.

However, there was also a section of books not very objectively describing Blavatsky's ideas and her personality. All in all, there was not a single outstanding Russian philosopher who would become a member of the Russian Association of Theosophists. The majority of Russian scholars and philosophers evaluated its activities with much criticism. Not a single one of them entered into the depths of the world understanding of Blavatsky, to include an understanding with her of Russia's fate and tragic destiny. The esoteric tragedy of Russia was investigated and described only by the thinker-sufferer Daniel Andreev (1906-1959), son of the well-known poet, in his book *Rose of the World. Metaphilosophy of History*.²¹

Two well-known Russians used theosophy as a style of their creative work. First was Vasily Kandinsky (1866-1944), a great artist. He studied *The Key to Theosophy* and read the books of A. Besant and C.W. Leadbeater.²² Second was A. Scriabin (1872-1915), an outstanding musician and composer. He wrote to a friend: "I will not discuss with you the truth of theosophy, but I know that Mme Blavatsky's ideas helped me in my work, and gave me power to accomplish my task".²³

Masonic lodges started to appear and function in Russia since the beginning of the 18th century. At the same time, many Masonic and cabbalistic books were published. Masons in all probability were also interested in works on theosophy, but

the archival materials and literature on the subject are unknown to the author of this article. General studies on Cabbala and Tarot such as *Encyclopedia of the Occult*, written by Professor Gregory Ossipovich Mebes, a leading authority in Russia prior to 1917²⁴ were published at the beginning of the 20th century. Engineer V. Shmakov was a leading authority on Tarot in Russia. Several new esoteric doctrines appeared under Blavatsky's influence – by G. Gurdjieff, P. Ouspensky, and Pavel Florensky²⁵. The scientific cosmic philosophy of Konstantin Tsiolkovskii²⁶, V. Vernadskii, and A. Chizhevskii appeared in Russia during the Soviet time.

Underground Theosophy and Agni Yoga (1918- 1991)

The tsarist government tried to somewhat limit the associations' activity. In contrast, the Soviet government flatly forbade theosophy and the Association of Russian Theosophists. A few members were forced to emigrate abroad after 1938. Those of the theosophists who stayed in Russia, died later in labor camps and prisons. Whatever measures were used, the regime was not able to counter the attraction to theosophy that the people had.

The continuity of theosophical outlook from the tsarist time to that of post-Communist Russia was established through the Roerichs. They emigrated to Europe, America and later to India. There, in India, Helena Roerich wrote the many volumes of *Agni-Yoga*. Russian emigrants continued to study theosophy in

Shanghai (China), in which a lot of Russian emigrants lived at that time, as well as in European capitals. A. Kamenskaya fled to Europe and lived in Geneva. The Russian Association of Theosophists was dispersed in 1938.

A few Russian theosophists joined local theosophical societies in countries of Europe, America, and Asia. Some of them played a great role in spreading the theosophical teaching. One such activist was Boris de Zirkoff, Blavatsky's nephew. He was 19 years old when he arrived in the USA. He learned theosophy for several years and later he was entrusted with the work of preparing, translating and editing his aunt's articles for publication.

Only the first four volumes of the *Complete Works of H.P. Blavatsky* were published before the Second World War by the Inter-organizational group of theosophists. This group was headed by A. Trevor Barker. He was selected as Editor owing to his reputation as the Editor of the *Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett* and *The Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*. The remaining 15 volumes of the *Collected Works of H.P. Blavatsky* were compiled and edited by Boris de Zirkoff after the War.

He collected all the articles and manuscripts, which he found in different newspapers and magazines as well as the archives. Knowledge of seven foreign languages, including Russian, helped him to read and print manuscripts in Blavatsky's handwriting. In 1981 The Theosophical

Society (of Adyar) rewarded him the Gold medal in the name of Subba Row, as the outstanding theosophist for publishing the *Collected Works of H.P. Blavatsky*.

This academic publication was gifted to the Russian Theosophical Society, restored in 1991. It translated and published a lot of articles but not all, selected by the editors of the Russian Publishing House *Sphera* in Moscow.

After World War II theosophical ideas came to Russia from abroad along with the teaching of the Living Ethics. Svetoslav and Yuri Roerich, poet/writer V. Sidorov and orientalist L. Shaposhnikova did much to spread theosophical ideals of Brotherhood in the USSR, writing about the Roerichs' works. They were the first to begin writing widely about the theosophical outlook of the Roerichs without calling their concepts theosophical.

It is possible now to bravely write about the suppression of theosophical groups in Russia after 1918 and some secret underground activities. Thus, there have after 1991 appeared three such articles, published in theosophical magazines on the history of the Russian theosophical movement. In reality there were a few very small groups of theosophists in Moscow and Leningrad, in which family collections of theosophical classics were preserved. They distributed typed or xeroxed copies of some books and had occasional meetings. They were all afraid of being discovered and arrested by the KGB. Popov's statement describing how

they felt themselves “like those of underground resistance movements in occupied countries” cannot be read without humor. He also wrote that “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.”

In 1987 Mixail Gorbachev invited Svyatoslav Roerich to lunch at the Kremlin and promised him to sponsor a Roerich Center in Moscow. Since this meeting Roerich societies have proliferated throughout the Soviet Union. Raisa Gorbachev was involved in starting a fund in the name of Roerich.

In 1990 Mrs Radha Burnier, President of the Adyar Theosophical Society, was invited to the Soviet Union by a nonpolitical, nongovernmental association *Peace Through Culture*, and the Union of Soviet Writers. She visited Moscow and Leningrad in June. An imposing exhibition dedicated to the Mother of modern Theosophy was opened at the Writers’ Union building. There were displayed photos and books of Blavatsky; extracts from her writings, statements by Mahatma Gandhi, J. Nehru, N. Roerich. It was shown on the Soviet TV. On June 19 there was a meeting to honor Blavatsky in the Hall of the Union of Soviet Writers. 500 seats in the hall were insufficient to hold those who came. A large portrait of Blavatsky was surrounded by flowers. These were the days when Mme Blavatsky returned to her Motherland with triumph.

Theosophy in Russia Today

The year 1991 was proclaimed by UNESCO as the year of H.P. Blavatsky. Russian theosophists announced in January that they reestablished the Russian Theosophical Society. D. Popov was elected the Chairman. Two forums dedicated to the 100-year anniversary of the Mother of Modern Theosophy took place in the Soviet Union — in Sochi, (Russia) and Dnepropetrovsk (Ukraine).

Radha Burnier, the President of International Headquarters of Adyar Theosophical Society was invited to take part in the conferences. D. Popov had a meeting with Radha Burnier in Dnepropetrovsk. They discussed the problem of recognition by Adyar of the reestablished Russian Theosophical Society. She refused to recognize it. In her 1991 Presidential Address she explained why she did so:

“A Russian TS was formed and registered in Moscow without prior information being sent to us. It consists of persons who have not become members of our TS, and of groups that have not been registered as lodges. Their rules also have not been submitted to our International Headquarters, but we were told that they are based on the Rules of the TS in Russia before it was closed down in 1918. This self-styled TS in Russia is, for the reason stated, not an official part of our Society, at least for the present. It is therefore necessary to prepare those who apply for the membership in the TS, in order to ensure that the future work of the TS in this part of the world will be conducted with some understanding of what the Society and Theosophy are.”

The theme of the history of the

theosophical movement in Russia became popular and by 1993 there were published two articles on this subject in *American Theosophist* (May-June and July-August, 1993), and an academic study titled *No Religion Higher than Truth, A History of the Theosophical Movement in Russia* by Maria Carlson (Princeton University Press, 1993).

D. Popov wrote that while restoring the TS, “We saw that one of our first tasks was the need to include all those of the old members who still remained, and to adopt the original by-laws of the Society”. They concerned themselves “with the purity of our ranks and fate of our movement in Russia” Almost all works on theosophy that had been published in pre-Revolutionary Russia and the ones known to have Russian translation had been reprinted in Russia in the 1990’s. Currently, a lot of works on theosophy are still in the process of translation into Russian. Many of Blavatsky’s works had already been printed by different publishing houses, including *Sphera*, established by the Russian TS and headed by D. Popov. The books written by the Mother of Modern Theosophy were coming back to her Motherland.

In the 1990s a lot of works of the Western philosophers and esotericists have been broadly translated and printed in Russia. The names and works by Alice Bailey and the Tibetan, by Karlos Kostonedá, Vivekananda, Krishnamurty, Sri Aurobindo and others are well known among Russian esotericists, philosophers, theosophists and occultists. The classic works by the Russian occultists of the beginning of the 20th century have been reprinted. A process of synthesis of Russian

religious philosophy, Russian classic occultism with modern teachings of Western and Oriental esotericists and thinkers has commenced and is actively proceeding.

Many esoteric associations, organizations, and groups have been established in Russia since 1991. Some of them are linked with foreign and international associations. Others are independent. The Agni Yoga movement is better organized and better supplied with literature. It is attracting thousands of people into the movement. The Roerich and Agni Yoga associations publish newspapers, newsletters and magazines.

In contrast to them the Russian theosophical groups failed to publish regular issues of their magazine. I saw only two of them: No. 1 of 1992 and No. 2 of 1994. The failure in publishing it could be explained only by the lack of original authors. The situation in the Russian theosophical movement mirrors the one existing in the world theosophical movement. The reestablished Russian Theosophical Society is headed by D. Popov in Moscow. There is also a group, affiliated to the Adyar Theosophical Society, headed by Nina Veligon in Magnitogorsk, an industrial city, located on the geographical frontier between Europe and Asia.

The ties between the Roerich and theosophical movements are loose. The Roerichs left all their pictures and books, and associated copyrights to the Russian Roerich Society. It was a rich material heritage, on the basis of which the society started publishing a lot of books on the Living Ethics. As far as we know the Russian Theosophical Society

received nothing from Blavatsky's property of Adyar neither in her lifetime, nor now. The material foundation of the society was made by hands and brains of young members of the society headed by D. Popov.

All the Roerich books had been previously published in Russian and it was not necessary to spend energy and money on their translation. As for Blavatsky's theosophical books and articles they all were written in English and it was necessary to spend a lot of time and money to translate them to Russian first and then to print them in Russia. Thanks to American donors for their support to the theosophical publishing house *Sphera*. Translation work took the entire decade.

The Roerich associations are hostile to all other teachings including those of A Bailey, which were translated to Russian during the last decade. Bailey teachings are becoming popular among Russian esoteric students who consider them a new theosophical key the Archaic Wisdom.

The main opponent to the esoteric movement in the past and in the present time is the Church, in Russia — the Orthodox Church. Its leaders excommunicated Nikolai Roerich from the church in 1994 like their predecessors excommunicated Leo Tolstoy, a great Russian novelist, from the church in 1901. History always repeats itself in tragic and curious events.

The communist regime failed to change the reactionary and conservative conciseness of the "spiritual fathers of the

Russian nation" as they have called themselves during the course of the 20th century. They did not learn the lesson: the Russian nation has forgotten the excommunicators' names of Tolstoy forever and the same will happen with contemporary excommunicators of the Roerichs and Blavatsky.

Conclusion:

Blavatsky understood that Russia spiritually, religiously, and as a territory is situated closer to the Oriental World, than the West. That is why she wrote her works in English for the Western nations, which would study them in the 19-20th centuries.

Blavatsky knew, that powerful opposition by religious leaders would be directed against the theosophical ideals of tolerance and equality of all religions. She expected intrigues, attacks against her on the part of clergymen, including orthodox ones as well as of representatives of academic science.

She had no doubt that the Russian religious-philosophical elite would not support the theosophical teaching and would counteract the dissemination of theosophical ideas and the development of the theosophical movement in Russia during the 20th century. In 1991 few people in Russia had heard of Blavatsky.

Today all people who are interested in occult and esoteric studies, all healers, try to study theosophical classics. They know that Blavatsky's influence on Russian culture was deep and direct in the beginning of the 20th century and active and indirect in its last decade. Her ideas are traveling over her Motherland conquering the minds of

intelligentsia and the youth.

The influence of Blavatsky is growing through her classical works printed in hundreds of thousands of copies, and through works of the Roerichs, Rudolf Steiner and Alice Bailey, in Russia and throughout the world. For example, *The Secret Doctrine* was printed in more than 250 000 copies in the course of the last decade.

I would not be surprised if the esoteric classics would be studied in Russian universities soon. In Blavatsky's life time members of theosophical lodges were recruited from aristocratic circles and intelligentsia.

Today the main aim of all the esoteric organizations is to recruit members from the young people. Not only political parties and commercial monopolies are fighting for the influence over the youth, but the churches and mosques, as well as esoteric associations.

Modern youth differs from that of the beginning of last century in the areas of education and cultural interests. Can modern theosophists work together with European, American and Russian youth? Can they adapt their teaching materials, which were written by authors belonging to the first generation of theosophists?

It is clear that young representatives, members of the theosophical lodges of the modern youth in all countries should explain theosophy to young contemporaries in Russia and elsewhere.

The influence of Blavatsky in Russia

will grow through the wide dissemination of her teachings, and the teachings of Helena Roerich and Alice Bailey among Russian intelligentsia and youth.

In the near future we could expect the publication of works on theosophy and the history of the theosophical movement, written by Russian scientists, philosophers, and historians.

Passing on Esoteric Teachings to Russia)

Surprisingly much is spoken of about Russia in the works of the Tibetan and Master Morya. It explains, as is confirmed convincingly by astrological research, that to Russia in the 21st century will come an extraordinarily important mission — the founding of the New World Religion, of the new world culture of the sixth subrace of the fifth Root Race.

The Tibetan foretold that in the 20th century, there would emerge in the world a wide range of esoteric schools. One of them would arise in Russia, later than in Western Europe or in USA. Then this school will become a higher discipleship-esoteric institution, which will work through all of Northern and Eastern Europe.

The problems of discipleship and creating a program of training and education of disciples and members of the group of world servers in contemporary esoteric schools is complicated and interesting. This problem is eternal, and how it is decided in each historical age is dependent upon those tasks, which are placed before the disciples of a Master. The creation of theosophical and esoteric colleges, institutes and universities of distant esoteric training, such as

the Seven Ray Institute, is the latest word in esoteric education and psychology.

And so Russia is presently passing through a preparatory period. During this period the most important task is a study of the experiences in esoteric training that have accumulated in the West. The New Universal Teaching could not be born in Russia while it was separated from the whole world by the “iron curtain” and the Berlin Wall. Nor is it able to be born in the Russia of today: the changes have only begun, and hardly count in hastening events.

Interest in Russia.

This new chapter follows on from the chapter on Fiona Odgren (see HCT Jan/2001), vice-President of the Victoria (British Columbia) T.S., and publisher-editor for the theosophical newsletter-magazine *Pathways*.

I first read about the work conducted at the Victoria T.S. in an article authored by Fiona in the Moscow magazine, *Delphis*. In it she explained that the Victoria group is involved in productive theosophical work. The Society holds its meetings in modest rented premises, which house a well-stocked library of the theosophical classics by H.P. Blavatsky, W.Q. Judge, and G. de Purucker for loan by members and visitors. Everyone, who comes to meetings of theosophists, can make use of it. Besides that, members of the Society have their own household library of esoteric books. Their study is an ongoing one in which they try to plumb the depths of the Ageless Wisdom.

In her article in *Delphis* she wrote about their Russian contacts. I asked her permission to take some paragraphs from her article to describe them:

“We decided to call our new magazine-newsletter *Pathways* to reflect the eclectic and pluralistic approach of Theosophy and wrote in the first issue’s editorial: «We have called it *Pathways* to illustrate the relative universality of the Inner Quest. There are many Ways or Pathways to the mountaintop. Each one of us will have to climb it alone, but in the knowledge that many have gone before and will come after. Thus we hold out our hands to those above and in turn to our comrades below who are in need of assistance».... Copies were mailed out to other theosophists and friends across Canada, the U.S. and several countries abroad...

“In 1990 heralded the beginnings of our link with Russia. During the fall of 1990 our members read with great interest about the visit of Radha Burnier, the international President of the Theosophical Society, to Russia and her lecture to over 500 people on Theosophy in the hall of the Soviet Writers’ Union.

Your great land – on the verge of tremendous changes – was experiencing a resurrection of spiritual movements including Theosophy. These latest reports fired our imagination and we had a desire to reach out to our like-minded Russian brothers and sisters.

On behalf of the group I wrote to the newly formed Moscow and St. Petersburg theosophical lodges expressing our friendship and offering support. Within a short time we

received letters from Dr. Luba Bytchikhina (now Luba Zubkova le-Pair), the then international secretary for the reviving theosophical movement and Mr. Mikhail Shiriatev of the St. Petersburg Theosophical Society. Both described the enormous task of giving a new impetus to theosophy and popularizing the achievements of those stalwart souls who had kept the flame of theosophy alive through the dark decades of totalitarianism.

From that moment on, with the promise of exchange of materials, a productive and enriching relationship was initiated between our group and Russia

....

“Soon we received through Luba an article written in English based on a talk given by A. V. Gnezdilov of the St. Petersburg Theosophical Society in which he described the lives and work of little known theosophists during the dark decades of Communist rule.

To us, it was a great honor to print this article in our modest *Pathways* magazine (Autumn 1991, Vol. 6 no. 3) for this was certainly the first time it had seen the light of day in the western world. In the following year, Luba sent us another intriguing article: *A History of the Theosophical Movement in Russia*, which was based on material she had researched in the archives at Adyar... This too we printed in ‘*Pathways*’ (Autumn’1992 issue, Vol. 7 no 3.) to the great interest of the readers. ...

“Then with the help of my Russian language teacher and her husband (Alex and

Ina Smolov who originally came from Odessa nearly 20 years ago) we assembled a special Russian version of *Pathways*, which we called «*The Path to Enlightenment*». It was a «pot-pourri» of articles from earlier issues and included art-work by a notable Hungarian artist in our midst, Judit Fisi. We printed 50 copies of the magazine and through Luba they were distributed to theosophical centres in the major Russian cities. ...

“The «Russian karmic connection» with our group took a surprising turn in the summer of 1992. Through a Russian friend (Gennady Ploshkin) I heard about a «Peace Through Culture Society» (independent from the one in Russia) operating at the beautiful, Alpine-like ski resort of Whistler, 80 miles north of Vancouver. It had been started by Dr. Paul Weinzwieg, a Canadian born and bred and an ex-university teacher in the fields of social sciences, and his wife, Paulina, an engineer from Odessa who had fled from the Soviet Union in the 1960s.

The society had been involved in projects for a number of years both in Canada and Russia and was inspired by the noble principles and work of the Roerichs, especially the Banner for Peace movement, which Nikolai Roerich inaugurated in the 1930s.

“In the summer of 1992, the Weinzwiegs had arranged for a number of Russian musicians and artists to come and take part in cultural-philosophical programs in British Columbia. Intrigued by their work, I wrote to Paul and was invited to attend a performance in the Russian Orthodox Church in Vancouver.

It was called *Illusions* and took the unusual format of a musical interspersed with a philosophical narration. The music consisted entirely of Russian songs from folk, to operatic and religious, and featured three outstanding Russian singers - a soprano, tenor, and bass. Paul Weinzweig provided the philosophical narration in between the musical items. Like a modern day Socrates he contemplated and commented on the present situation in Russia as a mirror of what is happening in the world at large and with the help of ancient myths conveyed the message that in order to regain our sanity and wholeness we need to rediscover our spiritual roots and divine heritage. During the intermission I struggled through the crowds to the basement area (it seemed the entire Russian population of Vancouver had turned out in full force!) to view the Russian painting and to meet Dr. Weinzweig. That meeting precipitated a significant karmic relationship between our group and the Weinzweigs, which is still unfolding.

“On the basis of my enthusiasm for the *Illusions* program, our theosophical group decided to invite the Weinzweigs and Russian singers to a repeat performance in Victoria. Not having any pre-arranged engagements on Vancouver Island, they were more than happy to agree and then of course the ball was in our court to find a suitable venue and attract an audience.

The local television station showed interest in the forthcoming event and I was invited to speak about it on a local arts’ program. We chose an auditorium in a local community college and the show went ahead

on September 19 of 1992, to a packed house. As with *Intimations* we could not have wished for a better outcome. The audience was spellbound with the high caliber of singing and expression of the Russian soul. ...

“The following day, Paul gave a well-received public talk at our theosophical meeting place entitled *Culture and Spiritual Path*. The two days’ unforgettable events were crowned that evening with a reception and buffet for the Weinzweigs and the Russian performers held at my sister’s house. There, after the repast, the singers suddenly surprised us with an impromptu concert of more soul-stirring music...

“Our gratefulness to Paul cannot be fully expressed in words. During the past two years, he has given us a number of admirable discourses including *Education in the New Age*, *Initiation and Discipleship*, *The Teachings of Agni Yoga*, *Citizens of the Universe*, *Spiritual Politics: Cuba at the Crossroads*, *Healing and the Feminine Principle* and led numerous discussions based on excerpts from the *Mahatma Letters*, *Key to Theosophy*, Andrew Harvey’s *Dialogues with a Mystic*, and video presentations such as *When We Die*, *The Search for Shambhalla*, and *Spiritual Politics*. It should not be neglected to mention too, that with Paul’s leadership and knowledge of *Agni Yoga* and the Roerichs’ *Teaching of Living Ethics*, since June 1996, a group of members from our lodge have been meeting on Tuesday evenings to study Agni Yoga.”

Willy Schmit writes from The Hague The Netherlands:

The last issue of this year of your periodical gives the reader pause, especially the pages concerning “An Esotericist’s Journey in America”!! by Yuri Gorbunov, being a contribution to the overall-theme of this issue:

“A Look at the Theosophical Past and Future.” Reading it, my first thought was: “Here we are back again the Huge, Male, Personal God, the sentimental assumptions and fantasies, the anthromorphised cosmic principles and the incoherent utterances of the Bailey-teachings.

Everybody is entitled to his own wisdom, but it is NO Theosophy. On the contrary, it is in every respect the opposite of the writings of H.P. Blavatsky; and it was precisely she who came to free humanity from churchianity, superstitious dogmas and suffocating materialism. It is known that these teachings are not her own, she being the envoy of her Masters. “But today there are so many Masters with all kinds of names, colours and teachings, that to the student of the occult the difficulty is no longer to find the Masters, it is to escape from them,” as H.N. Stokes wrote in his O.E. Library Critic.

H.P. Blavatsky speaks in her “Voice of the Silence” page 75 about the Hall of Learning, the second Hall, the Hall of Probationary Learning, and we should heed her words of warning about the astral region, “the psychic world of supersensuous perceptions and of deceptive sights the world of mediums. It is the great “Astral Serpent” of Eliphaz Levi. No blossom plucked in those regions has ever yet been brought down on

earth without its serpent coiled round the stem. It is the world of the Great Illusion.

When we are overwhelmed by the many new things we encounter there, the advice is:

“If thou would’st cross the second Hall safely, stop not the fragrance of its stupefying blossoms to inhale. If freed thou would’st be from the karmic chains, seek not for thy Guru in those mayavic regions.”

H.P. Blavatsky dedicated this precious booklet to the “few,” to those who have developed their inner power of discernment, a power at the disposal of every human being, that must be evolved, however.

Theosophy teaches that we are composite beings, as everything in Nature is; we are confronted with the personal aspect, the aspect of kama- lower manas, the brainmind, and with the higher aspects, the Individuality, the calm of the higher mind and buddhi. And so we can make the choice; do we want the universal, clear, elevating, instructing, freeing and real teachngs as Theosophy gives us, or do we choose for the muddling, personal, superficial pseudo-occultism that leads us from the truth?

The Neophyte is told: “Discipline precedes the Mysteries,” that is to say that he has to comply with the prerequisites determined ages ago by those further on the Path than we are, and these prerequisites are precisely the things we encounter in daily life.

The Theosophical Movement has as its

motto: “There is no Religion higher than Truth” and so we must ask ourselves in all earnestness: “Am I a real seeker after Truth?” These are the words of a great Teacher, trained in the Science of Life:

“Behold the Truth before you: a clean life, an open mind, a pure heart, an eager intellect, an unveiled spiritual perception, a brotherliness for one’s co-disciple, a readiness to give and receive advice and instruction, a loyal sense of duty to the Teacher, a willing obedience to the behests of TRUTH, once we have placed our confidence in, and believe that Teacher to be in possession of it; a courageous endurance of personal injustice, a brave declaration of principles, a valiant defence of those who are unjustly attacked, and a constant eye to the idea of human progression and perfection which the secret science (Gupta-Vidya) depicts.

These are the golden stairs *up* the steps of which the learner may climb to the Temple of Divine Wisdom.”

Theosophy gives us a clear definition of occult science, expounded by K.H. in a letter to Hume, p. 140 of the *Mahatma Letters*:

“And to show you how exact a science is occultism let me tell you that the means we avail ourselves of are all laid down for us in a code as

old as humanity to the minutest detail, but everyone of us has to begin from the beginning, not from the end. Our laws are as immutable as those of Nature, and they were known to man an eternity before this strutting game-cock, modern science, was hatched. And more of the occult science in *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 516:

“Like the Universe itself, Science is ever becoming, and can never say ‘I am that I am.’ On the other hand, occult science has its changeless traditions from prehistoric times. It may err in particulars, it can never become guilty of a mistake in questions of Universal laws, simply because that Science, justly referred to by philosophy as the ‘divine,’ was born on higher planes, and was brought on earth by beings who were wiser than man will be, even in the seventh Race of his Seventh Round.”

On page 51 of the Mahatma Letters there is the beautiful, all-encompassing paragraph:

“For countless generations hath the adept builded a fane of imperishable rocks, a giant’s ‘Tower of INFINITE THOUGHT, wherein the Titan dwelt, and will yet if need be, dwell alone, emerging from it but at the end of every cycle, to invite the elect of mankind to co-operate with him and help in his turn enlighten superstitious man. And we will go on in that periodical work of ours; we will not allow ourselves to be baffled in our philanthropic attempt until that day when the foundations of a new continent of thought are so firmly

built that no amount of opposition and ignorant malice guided by the Brethren of the Shadow will be found to prevail.”

Turning to page 28, about the View of the Chohan on the T. S., to be found in the Combined Chronology of Margaret Conger, against some parts of the Chohans’s words Marty has her objections, I would suggest as follows:

I can follow the objections against the initial words “The doctrine we promulgate being the only true one” if they should come from an ordinary human being, speaking from the level of the ordinary brainmind person.

However, they are the words of a Chohan, and so we have to investigate what a Chohan is. In the Mahatma Letters the Masters speak of the Chohan as being their Chief, the Buddha, the Maha Chohan of our Holy Order and on p. 43 is stated:

“When our great Buddha - the patron of all the adepts, the reformer and the codifier of the occult system, reached first Nirvana on earth, he became a Planetary Spirit; i.e. - his spirit could at one and the same time rove the interstellar spaces in full consciousness, and continue at will on Earth in his original and individual body. By the way, that is the highest form of adeptship man can hope for on our planet. But it is rare as the Buddhas themselves...”

In his Fundamentals of the Esoteric

Philosophy G. de Purucker explains what a Buddha of Compassion is:

“A Buddha, in the esoteric teaching, is one whose higher principles can learn nothing more; they have reached Nirvana and remain there; but the spiritually awakened personal man, the Bodhisattva, the person made semi divine remains on earth out of pity and compassion for inferior beings and becomes what is called a Nirmanakaya.”

What is this Hierarchy of Compassion? “The Great Brotherhood of the Masters or Mahatmans is not an arbitrary institution, i.e., not an artificial arrangement, which the Masters themselves have in different ages brought about in the world, this Brotherhood is but one link in an immense Cosmic Chain of Beings which the ancient Greeks called the Golden Chain of Hermes, or the Hermetic Chain, and which in the more mystical and recondite language of the Esoteric Philosophy is called the Hierarchy of Light or of Compassion.

In other words, the Masters are links - or their Great Brotherhood forms a link - in this Golden Chain of Hermes, and therefore from this reflexion we see that their position and work in the world is a natural part of the cosmic structure.” *The Esoteric Tradition*, p. 934, G. de Purucker .

Perhaps I have succeeded in giving you some information about the Maha Chohan, the entity who was in his last incarnation the one spoken of as Gautama the Buddha; the Buddha

of our Fifth Root Race.

As for the future of the T.S.: It is my opinion that those who are in earnest, who stick to the original teachings, will find each other.

Few as they may be, when they work with the right motive they can bring Theosophy over to the time that more people will be attracted to it. In the meantime we work on, because we are not working for results but because the work has to be done.

With all my best wishes for the Season's time and for all the time coming thereafter, from your co-pilgrim on the Path,

Willy Schmit

Our Response:

When printing Yuri Gorbunov's letter, we expected that it probably would not settle well with some Theosophists, but we recognize that others such as the Bailey Followers, Roerich Followers and even Share International

Followers consider themselves to be an extension of the Blatvatsky teachings, and who are we to say that they are not? "Teachings" as they are expressed in words will change; it is the fundamental principles, which cannot be expressed in words, that remain changeless.

The following response will be a reaction to the 'words' expressed in the

letter; they are not a reaction to the person. The soul of the person is far beyond mere words. Remember that until a person attains the level of a master, arhat, or chohan, they are words based upon the samskaras, skandas or knots of the individual speaking as well as those reading it. It is most amusing that the quote used was: "Behold the Truth before you: a clean life, an open mind, a pure heart ... brotherliness for one co-brother ..."

These are nice words but is the comment, "... it is No Theosophy," or "On the contrary, it is in every respect the opposite. ..." exhibiting an openness? a pure heart? or brotheriness to the co-brother Yuri?

We may say: "Yes, but, our Masters have said this." However, they say it with the true purpose of unliftment. Is that what we really mean or are we simply expressing our opinion?

It is true that our 'New Age' is besieged with masters, guru's and psychics. It is true that H.P.B. gave warnings against the study of the astral realm. Yet, it seems that most of the Theosophical teachings deal with the mayavic realm. Concepts of hierarchies, rounds, globes and races are beneath the "One Absolute."

The Absolute cannot be understood by the mind. To quote H.P.B., "The mind is the slayer of the real; slay the slayer," which means we must go beyond the mind and into the heart.

The 'few' are those willing to do objections dealing with the teachings of the Chohan are directed at dealing with "knots" i.e., "emotional obstructions" to those teachings. It was meant to be a lesson in processing.

A Book Report

Saffron Days in L.A.
Bhante Walpola Pigananda
Shambhala. Boston and London. 2001

I came upon this book via a house member of Dick's. It is one of the best books I have read that put Buddhist principles into modern vernacular. Following is a wonderful story about the ocean - a subject very ideal to Theosophists.

Compassion is the key to Buddhism. If we can learn to act with compassion toward all living beings under all circumstances, then we will undoubtedly be happy ourselves. This book by Ven. Walpola Piyanda reveals such compassion directly, in stories that are based on his own experience.

Ven. Piyanda is a senior monk from Sri Lanka who has lived in the United States for more than twenty-three years. Here he has written a book that embodies well the approach of Theravada Buddhism, with lessons that are applicable to all schools of Buddhism. He has managed to relate his own extensive experience of dealing with people living in the United States, whether they are Asian or American, Buddhist or non-Buddhist, and set it all in the context of the Lord Buddha's teachings. In so doing, I believe he has created a book to which all readers can relate.

The writer of those knots has no direct personal experience with this Maha Chohan and must rely on the faith and belief of others who have had this experience. To explain who this Chohan is, is tantamount to a Christian saying, "You must believe in the words of Jesus Christ because he is the Son of God. Besides, it does not help in removing the knot.

Theosophy is a container, teacher of the Ancient Wisdom and to that end it is difficult to see where the 'New Age' and Pseudo Religions' fit in. In 1,000 years or more, then, they too may be ancient. ??

Even Siddha Yoga is considered by some to be a modern day cult of Hinduism in the United States. Although its teachings are based in the ancient *Kashmere Shavism* and the *Vedas*, the teachings are expounded in the vernacular of today. Does this make it "not" Hinduism?

Editors' Reply

It is not our intention to have the HCT espouse these new religions in preference to basic theosophy. We are still committed to honoring the basic Theosophical teachings and trying to understand them.

However, as students of the Ancient wisdom in search of truth, we believe that an important part of the HCT's mission is to examine without prejudice, metaphysical and religious philosophies claiming kinship with theosophy. We therefore are open to, and in fact invite debate on these issues on our pages.

Dick Slusser and Marty Lyman

These stories are about what happens

to us in everyday life. They provide vivid examples of how we can react most compassionately to what happens to us. Ven. Piyanda is well read in the Buddhist scriptures and is regularly able to cite what the Buddha had to say about this or that situation. Each of the stories told here relates to an event and how Ven. Piyanda was involved in it.

Forward by the Dalai Lama

... On this particular summer afternoon, the Los Angeles smog hung like a painter's shroud, and eerie stillness impregnated the entire area. A thought arose: such days are for writing, stillness or walks at the ocean's edge. ...

... Suddenly, there before us, lay the ocean in all its azure beauty. The horizon seemed to beckon us to a farther look. The boundary between the sky and the water disappeared into a sparkling dance of light, and the seagulls seemed to move with the ballet. ... As we approached the sand an odd sight caught my eye. Running toward us like a herd of buffalos, were five young men and women, dressed in rags, with purple hair. We slowed and steadied ourselves to the side of the boardwalk. ... By then I was beginning to see more clearly, and from where I stood, they didn't seem like the welcoming types. ... I must say I found these folks quite interesting, and any fear I might have felt was temporarily diverted by my curiosity. The young man in the middle

had a hairstyle that looked like the quills of porcupine! His hair stood straight up as if he had inserted some body part into an electrical outlet. The sides of his head were shaven as to accent the effect. The brilliant and numerous colors of his shirt would surely be an eye opener for any late riser. As for his friends they seemed to have graduated from the same fashion school. As the shock and marvel at their neochic statement began to fade, I once again became aware that this group didn't appear to be at all that friendly.

"Hey, look there, one of the electrically shocked young persons proclaimed. "Looks like we got us a shaved pumpkin! Why he don't even got no hair!"

These comments seemed to be heading in a negative direction, I began to think. As the group continued to move closer I froze. The porcupine leader stepped in front of me as if to block my way, even though I was as still as a rock. I was hoping to be as soft as a flower, although I had images of one being recently plucked.

The group became more inquisitive and probing. "Hey, I bet we got a real live alien! What planet are you from, buddy?" The finger pointing turned into a light round of pushing. "You got some alien ID?"

I was trying to remain calm, or at least appear so. Inside the images of picked flowers started to look more like crushed ones. My mind reached for a diversion - any diversion. Before I knew what to say, I

started speaking.

“Are you guys punkies?” I asked as politely as I could. “What’s he mean punkies? Punk-ees!?” They started to laugh at this alien’s pronunciation. “You mean punks, don’t you?”

Oh, is that what you call yourselves?” I replied. “Punks. Hmm. Did you know that I’m a new kind of punk?”

This startling question seemed to momentarily give them pause.

“Yes, I’m the new kind of punk,” I continued with caution.

“You guys are the old style, and I’m the new style of punk. Look here. You have all kinds of colored clothing, but I have one color, bright yellow. But honestly, I’m not attached to any colors. And look. You shave the sides of your head, but I’ve shaved my entire head. See? I am the new punk!”

They had completely stopped in their tracks, either in amazement at my sheer gall, or because they were trying to figure out if I was dangerously insane or just plain strange. In any case, it compelled them to focus and start to listen.

“Hey guys, just look at me. No hair. Bright yellow robes. I’m the real punk!”

While they continued to stare, I

reached out my hand in friendship. “Hello, my name is Bhante. Bhante Piyananda.”

“Piy-a-what?” one of them responded.

“Bhante, for spiritual friend. Piya means pleasant and ananda means happy one. So, I am your pleasant and happy spiritual friend!” ...

Stopping for a moment I pointed to the ocean, remarking their are lessons we can learn from the sea.

“What kind of lessons can we learn from the dumb ocean?”

... “When you had your first lesson swimming in the ocean, did you go to the deep sea right away? You started in the shallow water right by the beach, right? And gradually swam out to where you couldn’t touch bottom. There is also a gradual process in learning. Throughout our lives we learn to educate ourselves in stages, with patience. ... Think about not only swimming in the ocean, but climbing to the top of a high mountain. If you go to the base of the mountain and look to the top, you will definitely be afraid to climb it, and you will think you can never get to the summit. But if you climb gradually and steadily, you will eventually reach the top. This applies to any understanding.” ...

“I’m a Buddhist monk, and as I said, people call me Bhante, yet any sort of label is immaterial. Remember the line from Shakespeare, ‘What’s in a name? That

which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.’ We, like the ocean, must overcome the barriers of class, creed, race, religion and other differences and learn to develop universal love for all people, which will help us live harmonious lives. ...”

... “The rivers bring all types of debris into the ocean. The ocean waves discard it on the shore. In the same manner, we must discard our impure thoughts, which are harbored deep inside ourselves. These impure thoughts, which are harbored deep inside ourselves are usually generated by anger, hatred, and jealousy. You should immediately discard these sorts of thoughts whenever they arise in the mind.” ...

... “Hatred can make you hard and abusive. The pattern repeats itself from generation to generation. You can drown in your hatred. Forgiveness will allow you to make room in your heart for positive feelings - like patience and love. Hatred is not overcome by more hatred. Remember hatred restricts, while love releases, hate divides, while love unites. The ocean never keeps the garbage and debris that is thrown into it. We have to become like the ocean and throw our hatred onto the shores of forgiveness.”

“Bhante, you are a very good story teller. I like the way you talk about the ocean.” ...

By this time we were all feeling very comfortable with one another, and I was pleased that the feeling was getting to be very friendly.

I continued: “The ocean depths contain a vast amount of treasure - most of it unknown and unseen. In the same way, you have vast amounts of treasure within you, and it is also unknown and unseen. This treasure within you is your potential.

The human is the highest living being in the world. In Buddhism, we believe that to be born a human is a very fortunate thing. It is only human beings who can discover the treasures within themselves and reach the depths of their oceans of potential.” ...

...” This will be my last lesson about the ocean. All over the world the ocean water is salty, right?” The water here in Santa Monica is just as salty as the water in my homeland of Sri Lanka.

By the same token, what you call God, I call good. I just add an extra “o,” but we both mean the same thing. In actuality, they are only different terms, but it is just as salty. Do you see?

I believe that religious leaders everywhere, whether they teach about ‘God’ or teach about ‘good,’ work to help their people lead better lives. They all teach us good things and to be good people, thus leading godly lives.” ...

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furtherance of Theosophical principles.

(2) To present articles and essays
consistent with source theosophy, otherwise
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source theosophical teachings.

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**THE HIGH COUNTRY THEOSOPHIST,
ISSN 1060-4766 is published bi-monthly
for \$12.00 per year by Richard Slusser,
140 S. 33rd St. Boulder, Co. 80303-3426
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
THE HIGH COUNTRY THEOSOPHIST
140 S. 33rd St., Boulder, Co. 80303-3426
Periodicals Postage Paid at Boulder, Co.**