

## I. Ships and Destinies

At no time since the beginning of the Christian era nearly 2000 years ago, have the unmasking and incriminating words of Christ Jesus spoken towards the end of his life to the Scribes and Pharisees possessed greater relevance than they do in our own day. It seems as though we have arrived at that limit, where the cup of divine forbearance is about to overflow and God Himself speaks to a humanity that has gone much too far: *That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth ... Verily I say unto you: All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets which are sent unto thee. ... Behold, your house is left unto you desolate ...* (Matthew 23; 35-38).

The God of the New Covenant, however, does not reply with vengeance to the *horrors of devastation* that humans beings intend to carry out at the *holy place*, but He offers Himself up in a sacrifice as he undertakes to transform the great evil into a still greater good.

Thus it has been since the Mystery of Golgatha. But now the question arises: 'Can things go on in this way endlessly?' We, at the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, ask ourselves with justified apprehension: 'If so, would not our house really be *left unto us desolate* and would not all of earth's humanity have to prematurely end its journey?!

These are our thoughts and our words, for only to us is it given to experience how slender and fragile are the supports of our civilization and culture, together with the whole human environment. Feelings and sensations of this kind were unknown to our ancestors. That nature bears such a potential within it would have been inconceivable to them. With delight, with enthusiasm even, they fought and deceived one another; they slandered, bore false witness, burned opponents at the stake; unleashed religious wars, made enemies among themselves or with other nations. The victims were only in the ten and hundred thousands, then later in the ten and hundred millions. But now those who preside over the fate of humanity have for the first time grown thoughtful and have asked themselves the question: 'Is it rational to destroy 90 %, or even 99 % of the earth's inhabitants in order that the remaining 10 % or 1 % might live better lives?'

In times when the crisis in the world is particularly grave and there are few hopeful signs, the divine hand of Providence offers special help. Seen from the point of view of time the latest and greatest gift is Anthroposophy. The Christ-messenger Rudolf Steiner came on the eve of this fateful century in order to bring freedom to humanity and thereby infuse culture with a new life-impulse, for at the time of His return the Son of God has no wish to find slaves, but free human beings confessing to Him.

*Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men*, warned the Apostle Paul (1. Cor. 7; 23). Rudolf Steiner came to teach us how we can become truly free men. For: *The time is at hand!* and from now on only the free spirit who has insight into the meaning and purpose of the World All and into his own being will be able to resist and gain victory over the evil in the world today. If the gift of the spirit is to bear fruit, not only a giver is needed but also one who receives with understanding. Just as, in accordance with this principle, the new message of the angels was able to reach out to all people, so Anthroposophy too, which is the same angelic message, but adapted to the greatly transformed man of today, is in need of those who receive, who can comprehend and make it their own, who can enrich it further and pass it on to others. For this reason, Rudolf Steiner did not restrict his teaching to a small circle of students as was the custom in ancient times, but gave it to the wider public, and later founded the Anthroposophical Society, with its full openness to the world. He always valued the individual freedom of the single human being. He strove to make it possible for anyone who acted out of exact knowledge and free self-determination to do so in such a way that the fruits of his work might transcend the limits of individual earthly life, thereby transforming even the cosmic destiny of mankind referred to as 'Karma', a name borrowed from the Eastern esoteric tradition. The work begun by Rudolf Steiner was a renewed Mystery that stood in relation to the developmental tasks of the new era of Christian Mysteries.

Unlike the old Mysteries where the pupil's karma was strongly influenced by the teacher or hierophant (he even assumed a large part of the responsibility), Rudolf Steiner, the great hierophant of the new Mysteries, wanted his students to work on their own karma (as all human beings will have to do in time). He accompanied them actively, taught and helped them when necessary, by correcting their steps. For this reason he did not accept the presidency of the first Anthroposophical Society founded by him. The progress of others was of

greater importance to him than his own success and this reminds us very much of the moral guidelines of the Apostle Paul.

But just as, in his time, hearts were *blinded ... and darkened* (Romans 1;21), this was also true of the members of that Society, who did not fulfil their task. Rudolf Steiner said that he was faced with the choice of either returning to the path of esoteric Christianity of previous centuries with a small circle of faithful followers and waiting for a later point in time when an expansion on a larger scale would be possible. Or going a step further and uniting his own destiny inseparably with the destiny of the Society.

Rudolf Steiner chose the second path. He dissolved the old Society that had become useless and at Christmas 1923 founded a new one and took the presidency upon himself.

This had a twofold consequence. First, as Rudolf Steiner said, *the decision has been made in the spiritual world, that since the Christmas Conference the founts of the spiritual world are opened more widely than before. Thus the foundations are given for an essential deepening of the anthroposophical movement, provided they are understood by the Society* (June 22, 1924, GA 236).<sup>1</sup> This means that at a critical time Rudolf Steiner made a decision in which he allowed himself to be guided only by his moral intuition. Only later was it revealed that this decision was right and accepted from the point of view of the spiritual world, the divine hierarchies. But Rudolf Steiner was obliged to take upon himself the entire karma of the Society – with its noble as well as its unpurified content. He basically assumed and carried all our sins as a true disciple of Christ.

This deed should be a moral ideal for us all and inspire us to transform our lower nature more actively. But many anthroposophists put ‘faithfulness’ to their bad habits before faithfulness to their teacher. Not all, but nevertheless so many that the karmic burden became excessive even for a great Initiate. For his sacrifice, the ransom – to speak in the language of the Gospels – he paid for our sins, he received his ‘Gethsemane’ and the cup of poison. The latter did not kill him immediately, but it broke his strength. The wheel of karma turned down-

<sup>1</sup> Brackets contain the date of the lecture and the corresponding No. from the Collected Works. Emphasis in the quotes from lecture cycles originates with the present author.

ward and submerged the teacher in the waters of Lethe. The deed he had begun of creating a renewed Society remained unfinished.

Reading the letters Rudolf Steiner wrote from his sickbed, we are struck by the fact that he says repeatedly that the illness will win the battle. Why did he say this? Certainly not because he feared death. What then did he fear? Or, what disquieted him so much? The answer comes to light increasingly in the decades that follow, in the history of the Society from 1925 until today.

For those of us living in Eastern Europe the true history of the Society was unknown until the late 'Eighties. Everything we knew reminded us of the canonized life-histories of the saints. The picture of a consequential, purposeful, even ‘victorious movement’ of the Society through this dark century marked by the end of the ‘dark era’, the Kali Yuga, arose from the reminiscences shared with us by anthroposophists who came as tourists.

When we read the poet Andrei Bely’s reminiscences of his life in Dornach we did so with mixed feelings. They were breathtakingly fascinating on the one hand, but on the other a certain irritation mixed with the enthusiasm. ‘Yes’, we said, ‘he is a great poet but as a human being he is extremely one-sided. How he loves to criticize! How prejudiced he is! And where on earth does he have all those made-up stories from?’

We thought and lived in this mood, studied Anthroposophy under enormously difficult circumstances and with this attitude travelled for the first time to Dornach.

In a certain way the friends coming to us from the West idealized us as well. They had read the lectures by Rudolf Steiner in which he called Russians the ‘Christ-Folk’ and they possibly projected this image onto us.

Be that as it may, our relationships at that time were thoroughly ideal, heartfelt and brotherly. When we recall those times today we sometimes think: The Lord God shielded us from premature disappointments and so we were able, even if only in a faint inkling, to anticipate the future by living in the mood of the future Slavic-Germanic cultural epoch.

Yes, something of that kind had indeed arisen. And for all those involved the experience will remain unforgettable. It showed us that in the souls of men, once they are freed of the harmful influences, the poisonous deposits of our

time, a wonderful spiritual enthusiasm can grow. This enabled us, united in the love for spiritual knowledge, to experience true brotherhood. We were allowed to experience the miracle of brotherly unity and this came to us in times of utmost political oppression and spiritual privation.

Sometimes I ask myself (and I venture to speak in my own name without being an 'established' writer): Was it not the 12 to 15 years of happy connections with Western anthroposophists that made the passionate wish germinate and grow in us to improve the situation in the Society and the Movement as we began to recognize and understand the true state of affairs?

People meeting Anthroposophy in the West (and today unfortunately in Russia too) will already encounter, on their first steps on the path to spiritual knowledge, the destructive effect of the most varied kinds of abuse, alienation and petty egoism that permeate anthroposophical life independently of sex, age, nationality and religious persuasion. But thanks to the young age of the anthroposophical movement, all this can still be turned to the better. We have merely to free ourselves from the hypnotic influence of prevailing conditions, dare to face the truth at all times and speak out fearlessly. *In the moral sphere* – Rudolf Steiner says in a lecture – *Anthroposophy will be the educator of humanity for its obligation to truthfulness* (May 30, 1912, GA 155). And in another: *So long as it is accepted practice in the Anthroposophical Society to sympathize with the lie, so long, my dear friends, we will not move forward!* (July 17, 1921, GA 205).

What can be added from today's perspective? One thing only. – We are really not moving forward! And, what is still worse: lies move us! We have *sympathy* because of our love of comfort. It is true today in the outer world as well as in the Anthroposophical Society that one who speaks the truth heaps serious and, at times, **dangerous** problems onto himself. To stand up for the truth can mean to be hated instead of loved, possibly to lose one's work, one's home etc. And so anyone who still has the courage to insist on truth is advised even by the best in our ranks: 'Don't play Don Quixote!'

It is a fact indeed that, *to be a spiritual scientist ... is more a matter of courage than intellectuality today ... because it also has to be placed in opposition to something moral, namely the moral Fall* (Jan. 21, 1923, GA 220). Yet this task can be experienced as an ideal and also as something elevated and beautiful and then it becomes quite natural that we *get to know Anthroposophy only in order*

*to live Anthroposophy* (GA 34, p. 449). The following words by Rudolf Steiner then sound altogether obvious: *The Anthroposophical Society should exist to counter lurking dangers, through the cultivation of a noble life of feeling ... It is inconsistent with human dignity to lame insight because one is afraid of weakness of character* (GA 37, p. 54).

Where are the anthroposophical circles today, in which these words by Rudolf Steiner could be repeated without their being taken abstractly or the speaker sounding ridiculous? Be that as it may, truth, goodness, and nobility of soul can exist **only in their unity** and thereby create culture; when separated, they wither, bringing about the death of culture.

A human being to whom culture means more than barbarism has no choice. This is why we should overcome all fear of the power of the adversary, of the spirit of the lie and of hatred, in however subtle a guise it may face us. This spirit, once lodged in our soul, will indulgently forgive our weaknesses, errors and tendencies to opportunism. It will, for example, whisper in our ear the following 'persuasive' argument: if someone criticizes the situation in the Society it will cast a blot on the Society in the eyes of the outer world. Therefore – for the sake of 'protecting the honour' of the Society – you must tolerate, conceal, keep silent and, if need be, lie.

But this is like a sick person trying to hide a boil under a thick layer of powder instead of opening and healing it; for the time will come when no amount of powder will be able to hide the blemish.

The greatest movements in the world have already failed owing to their inability to exercise self-criticism and uncover internal shortcomings. The Catholic Church, failing at the time to condemn the Inquisition and dissociate itself from it, still carries the poisonous sting to this day. In Russia and the countries of the former Eastern bloc, sensible people now call for repentance for the misdeeds committed during the years of Bolshevism. They see in moral purification the most important prerequisite for a spiritual and consequent economic resurrection of Russia and its peoples.

The Anthroposophical Society has not brought disasters into the world. Nevertheless it has laden upon itself a burden of guilt towards humanity. The first cause of this lies in the sin of self-isolation, the second in the concessions made to the lower nature of man, so that anthroposophists have shown themselves

unable to live *Anthroposophy* – but only this would entitle them to represent the anthroposophical cause in the world.

Yes, the world sinks into darkness and sin, yet still lives in the hope of escaping this abyss. It yearns for an example of good human relationships or for the appearance of the Spirit who can transform life and the world.

*The world today* – says Rudolf Steiner – *is full of untruthfulness, and the sense for truthfulness has to be cultivated within the Anthroposophical Society if it is to have a meaning, a true meaning of life while it exists – no matter how long it can exist under the present circumstances* (Jan. 13, 1917, GA 174). It is not important to calculate the date of this statement in a pedantic way, to inquire – whether it is from before or after the Christmas Conference. These words express the very crux of the matter.

Whoever insists on the continued existence of the Society at all costs is simply repeating the well-known thesis of ‘the End justifying the Means’. Such a person will rather hasten the downfall of the Society. There are countless other ways of bringing about the downfall of our cause and some have already been ‘practised’ too long. So we must ask ourselves how much time we actually have left.

If we seek for an analogy to the present situation of the Society the image of a large ocean liner comes to mind, sparkling white outside, furnished inside with comfortable cabins, grandiose halls, restaurants, conference rooms etc. A magnificent ship! Tragically, **it is steering directly towards a reef**, while a storm that would alarm even a seasoned sailor is building up on the ocean. This hurricane symbolizes the decline of today’s civilization, whose ‘front rows’, the ‘avant-garde’, is already in free fall to a place where no ground is to be seen.

On every deck, in each magnificent saloon, people are engaged in many-layered, purposeful activity. In other circumstances we should rejoice over it and support and deepen this activity with all means available. But on a ship that is moving towards a dangerous reef, things appear in a quite different light – some lose all sense whatever; others, good and necessary enough under normal circumstances, now only hasten the ruin of the vessel. The motion of the ship’s propeller, the indispensable means of propulsion on the open sea, must therefore be stopped or reversed without delay.

Let us explain this by means of a concrete example. Waldorf pedagogy, an excellent initiative, is increasingly losing its connection with Anthroposophy. There are already colleges of teachers where the mere mention of the concept ‘Anthroposophy’ is forbidden. More and more often we experience in pedagogical seminars that people who have appeared there ‘by chance’ do the lecturing. They talk complete nonsense and leave the participants nothing but disappointment over the new pedagogical method (or attract like-minded students).

Yet another example: a communication goes out that there is a wish to bring greater intensity to esoteric work, that a Second Class should be ‘put together’, no matter how and out of what sources. In the Society’s present situation it is comparable to making holes in the bottom of the ship in order to observe the sea-bed more clearly, or making a fire on deck to warm oneself.

Today, therefore, irrespective of the wishes, attitudes, ways of thinking, character, activity and spiritual interests of the ‘passengers’ we must urgently call out ‘All hands on deck!’ – as sailors do in order to clarify the decisive question – the question of ‘the navigation of the ship’. At all costs we must find out why the ship of Spiritual Science has altered course. Who bears the responsibility for this? Where are the reasons to be sought – with those sitting on the bridge? – or did the navigation instruments fail? Maybe someone stove an axe beneath the compass – as in ‘the good old days’? But what has happened to the crew? The starry heavens could have told them the ship was off course. We are steering towards the Bull instead of the Water Bearer. We are navigating in a direction where the ‘water of life’ has long flowed away, we are heading for dead rigidity. Consequently we have forgotten to orient ourselves by the stars and no longer trust our own eyes. In this case another command has to follow: ‘All hands to the star-charts!’ Otherwise the fate of the ‘Flying Dutchman’ awaits us, and may God have mercy on everyone on board.

‘Abandon all hope’, retorts the sceptic. ‘You forget the tremendous inertia potential of an ocean liner. The time left us is far too short. Consider also the widespread unwillingness to change things or even **recognize** the true situation; consider the ever-present fear of truth.’

Now – I reply to the sceptic –, even if you are right, I will write this book nevertheless. I will put it into a stout bottle of thick green glass and entrust it to the waters. And God alone knows whether at some time fate will have it that this

bottle is washed ashore and found there by the future 'Philosophers of Freedom', by human beings who base their life on ethical individualism, not servility and cajolery, and who draw their moral intuitions from the spirit – a god-like race. They should know that we, few though we may have been, understood very well what was going on around us. That we stood for the truth and remained victorious in our struggle and that this alone is what made their future possible.

For the sake of this future, but also for the sake of the heavens, the anthroposophists at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are under an obligation clearly and audibly to proclaim their '**articles of faith**', their **spiritual-scientific credo**, just as Rudolf Steiner did at the beginning of his scientific and cultural activity. Such a credo becomes a fact for the divine hierarchies; they experience it as a conscious plan for our life and help us to realize it. I am in no way speaking of a naïve faith or a superstition. I speak of an active will that is awakened to deeds through the active cognition of the widest earthly-cosmic connections. It is the faith of which the Apostle Paul spoke. If we live in this faith today we say: I believe because I have come to know. This faith carries the will not only into our muscles; it carries it into our thinking and allows morality to germinate in our soul.

Thus the author of this book does not wish to become involved in discussions, empty quarrels or criticism: He will devote his work to the systematic presentation of what, in his opinion, every anthroposophist ought to stand for in the complex relationships of our time if it is his wish to make Anthroposophy his view of the world and of life. It is the present author's most important task to use all the spiritual forces at his disposal to bring to the thinking consciousness of those who are united with him in a brotherly way in their spiritual activity all that is essential, all that became for Rudolf Steiner the foundation for his creation of the structure of Anthroposophy. This is of especial importance and relevance today: the elaboration, the accentuation of the cornerstones of spiritual-scientific social and occult-social teaching, which is founded on the totality of our knowledge of the evolution of the world, of the nature of man and the beings in the spiritual world.

It is also of decisive importance to understand that Anthroposophy is the unity of knowledge and life. This is obviously the reason why not only our cognitive activity but our everyday life is inundated by the muddied streams of civiliza-

tion in decline. We are constantly accused of things we have not the least to do with. From one dark corner in Eastern Europe for example we were accused of flirtation with Nazism. Hardly had this Bolshevik-shamanic talk subsided, when in the West the theme was taken up of the 'anti-Communists'! 'Penitent' members of the Anthroposophical Society appeared and would not leave it alone. They are victims of a double lie: they do not understand or appreciate Anthroposophy (hence **they** should not speak of 'penance' and 'repent' for something that did not happen at all). This is another reason that is growing in significance at the end of the century to a degree that we would never have considered possible, and which compels us to clearly formulate our credo and hold fast to it, come what may.

Anthroposophists have been subjected to persecution at various times already – in the socialist camp and also in Middle Europe. Nor is it likely that we will be spared in the future. But if it should happen that we have to suffer for the sake of Anthroposophy, it should be solely for **the sake of Anthroposophy and not a misrepresentation of it**. This question is of fundamental importance for all those who have made Anthroposophy the central issue of their life and see in it the means to serve humanity and culture.

Only such Anthroposophists are representatives of the anthroposophical cause in the world, not those who pursue spiritual science as a hobby or as a means to arrange their own life comfortably. Because of the conscientious, honest relationship of the first to spiritual science, the responsibility for the destiny of Anthroposophy has been placed into their hands. It remains for us to grasp these facts and act in accordance with the conditions of life in the present time.