Georges Ivanovitch Gurdjieff Died

Genêt

Letter from Paris, November 12. 1949

Georges Ivanovitch Gurdjieff died at the American Hospital here [on October 29th]. He was one of the most mysterious, eccentric, and discussed modern mystics, and his conversations with his pupil P. D. Ouspensky, with whom he later famously quarrelled, have just appeared in New York in Ouspensky's recently published autobiographical *In Search of the Miraculous*. Other celebrated early followers of Gurdjieff in his extraordinary Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man, the classes of which were held in a priory near Fontainebleau, were Frank Lloyd Wright; Alfred Orage, editor of the *New Age*; Clifford Sharp, founder of the *New Statesman*; Georgette Leblanc Maeterlinck; and Lady Rothermere, wife of the London newspaper baron.

According to Gurdjieff's passport, he was seventy-two when he died—he had claimed to be in his eighties—and he was born, of Greek parents, in Russia, in the town of Alexandropol, near Tiflis. He led a legendary life; as a youth, he supposedly walked from Georgia to Tibet, and there studied in a Lamaist monastery. He held his first classes in Moscow before the revolution, then fled with Ouspensky and some of his other followers to Constaninople, Berlin, and finally, France.

He lived for the last twenty-five years in Paris, in a shabby little Ternes Quartier flat where he spoke to his disciples over exotic dinners that included bear and camel sausages. In the Oriental manner, he held philosophical rendezvous in the cafés, his early favorite being the Café de la Paix and his more recent one the Café des Acacias. At both he became a familiar figure—a stout, Asiatic-looking man with piercing black eyes and a shaved, domed head that in all but the hottest weather he covered with a Russian fur hat.

He was buried not far from his priory, in the French hamlet of Avon, near the grave of his most noted disciple, Kathrine Mansfield.

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