AJES Vol. 8 No. 2 JAN 1949 pp 125-132

# The Politics of 'Pan-Slavism'

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## I

### Pan-Slavism as a Political Force

AMONG THE RUSSIAN MONARCHS, Alexander I was probably the only one who planned unifying the Slavs in the form of a federation of the Slavic nations. The liberal constitution he granted Poland was, possibly, the first step in the realization of his large scale political scheme.[1] The second step, however, never followed.

In 1848, a revolt spread in Hungary with the aim of separating Hungary from Austria. If this movement had been successful, Austria would have been doomed to *Anschluss*, its amalgamation with other German states. The Slav nations, then incorporated in Austria, would have been drowned, in those circumstances, in the German sea. The other ones connected more closely with Hungary would have been absorbed by the latter. Neither of these perspectives attracted the Slaves. Relations between Hungary and the southern Slavic nations were especially strained. In the meantime Austria acknowledged the Czech language in Bohemia as equal with the German, and it had appeared as probable that Austria would let the Slav nations establish national self-government.

Therefore, the Slavs had predilections for supporting the Austro-Hungarian monarchy rather than for separation from it and individual unification. Serbian students in Budapest began to campaign for Slav unity, and in spite of the pressure from the Hungarian nationalists this movement became increasingly radical. However, it was not supported by the other Slavic nations.

In 1848, a Slav Congress was convocated in Prague. A Polish poet, Wincenty Pol, greeted the Congress with a poem *Słowo a Sława* (Word and Glory). That was a period of so-called *Sturm und Drang*. National self-consciousness was awakened, but the Congress in Prague proved to be more moderate than was expected. Any idea of uniting the Slav nations into a federative state was unsuccessful. The Austro-Hungarian Slavs considered it more advantageous and realistic to remain loyal toward

[1] Alexander I gave his Polish kingdom a parliament, full internal self-government with separate finance and tariffs, and an army. Details on the plans of Alexander I are given by G. Vernadsky, "Alexandre I et le problème Slave," (*Revue des Etudes Slaves*, VII, 1927); also, G. Vernadsky, "La Charte Constitutionelle de l'Empire Russe de l'an 1820," (Paris, 1932); B. Mirkine Guetzévitch, "Un project de fédération europeenne," Melanges Nicholas Iorga, Paris, 1933.

the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, and correspondingly, the Slav Congress of 1848 proclaimed the loyalty of the Slav nations to Vienna.[2]

No matter what Emperor Nicholas I's attitude was toward the Slav movement, his anti-Hungarian campaign in 1849, suppressing the Hungarian revolt with the aid of Russian troops and saving Austro-Hungarian integrity, corresponded to the wishes of the southern Slav nations and to the predominant moods of the other Slavs in Austria-Hungary.

The masses were not yet ready for a political union, and gave but little support to the Slavs prominent in Pan-Slavism. The venture of a federation of western Slavs was undertaken once more in Vienna. Back in August, 1866, there took place in Vienna a Congress of Austrian Slavs. Palacki and Rieger represented the Czechs, Goluchovski the Poles, Strossmayer the Croatians. They drew up plans for a federal union that would primarily benefit all Slavs. Their plan was a so-called "pentarchy." The scheme called for a reorganization of Austria and provided for its division into five parts: Upper Austria, Lower Austria, Bohemia, Yugoslavia, and Poland. The central government was to have among its members five chancellors representing each section of the Pentarchy. This project was never put into effect.

In the meantime, the Pan-Slavic movement in Russia had been confined to a very limited activity of the Slavophiles, and never received open official support. Alexander II received the eminent Czech Palacki, Rieger and others while on their pilgrimage to Moscow, but was very distant with them. Evidently the Russian Government at that time was trying to avoid international complications with the Western Powers.

As it was many times disclosed, the early Slavophiles rather vaguely envisaged the unification of the Slavs as one based upon the brotherhood of the Slavs; however, with time, the idea found its expression in the form of a Slavic Imperialism, the idea of merging all Slav States into one Russian Empire. This idea became especially popular in Russia toward the end of the nineteenth century. It was particularly well expressed by Danilevsky in his book "Russia and Europe" (1871).

Danilevsky saw the Slavic problem as a struggle between two different types of culture: The Romano-Germanic, individualistic and egocentric on one side, and the Slavic culture—permeated by a spirit of national unity and Orthodox Christianity—on the other. The Slavic people had to unite to defend their culture.

[2] Documents relating to the Slav Congress in Prague, in 1848, were published in St. Petersburg in 1860 under the title "Slavianskii s'ezd v Prage v 1848." Many details are given also by Vlaho Vlahovic, "Two Hundred 50 Million and One Slavs" (New York, 1945).

According to Danilevsky, Russia had to keep her national capital at St. Petersburg, yet at the same time to create a Pan-Slavic union with the capital at Constantinople. Such plans were never adopted by official circles, and it would be most unjust to explain all steps taken by Imperial Russia regarding the Slavic problem, by Russia's imperialist aspirations, and to see in the Slavophile movement nothing but a reactionary doctrine.[3] One would never repeat it who knows the work of the Moscow Slavic Committee[4] and the part played by Ivan Sergeevich Aksakov, who represented the purely idealistic tendencies of Russian public spirit in regard to the Slavic problem in the Seventies.

The Moscow Committee had succeeded in establishing an active contact with the Slav countries. The committee freely expressed sympathy toward the idea of an independent Poland, and formulated the idea of forming a free Czechoslovakia under Russia's protectorate. Ivan Aksakov personally undertook two trips throughout the Slavic lands, where he communicated with statesmen and the masses of the people. Each public appearance of Ivan Aksakov on the Slavic problem was an event. The extent of his popularity is shown by the fact that a Bulgarian electoral committee nominated him as a possible candidate for the throne of Bulgaria. Yet, his activities and his popularity, while expressing certain definite trends, certainly had nothing in common with imperialism.

No one will deny that both in Russia, Bulgaria and Serbia—as, probably, even in this day in Czechoslovakia and Poland—the consciousness of the brotherhood of Slav peoples still plays a great rôle as a political factor.

The actions of the Russian government had not always been in complete accord with the true aspirations of the people. Thus, the Moscow Committee was dissolved by the authorities without much ado. Had the Russian government been motivated by imperialist aims, it would hardly have prosecuted an organization which was preparing fertile grounds for the rapprochement of Slavic nations, and might have been of assistance in the work of unifying the Slav countries. The Russian government, however, was not inclined to create international complications, and avoided anything that could be construed as furthering imperialist views toward the Balkans. It therefore displayed much caution, and disappointed the people, who were enthusiastic toward the idea of Slav unity.

[3] This is an interpretation of the late Edouard Benes in "The New Slav Policy" (*Free World*, May 1944). This interpretation contradicts the facts: "Slav currents found no response within the Russian government" (Vlaho Vlahovic). The Russian poet Tyutchev expressed his indignation against the official policy of his government in ignoring the Panslav feelings, see his poems "To Count K. V. Nesselrode" (May 1850) and "Prozochestvo" (A Prophecy), March 1, 1850.

[4] A. Georgievskii, " The Moscow Slav Benevolent Committee and its Fate" (*Memoirs of the Historical-Philological Faculty at Vladivostok*, v. 1, Sect. I). In Russian, 1919.

Actually, both formerly and in our own days, Russia has worked to liberate the Slav peoples: once, from the Turkish yoke; latterly, from the Germans, and never had she evidenced, at least officially, any desire to swallow all Slav nationalities or even unite them into one Slav union.

## II

### Soviet Russia and the Slavs

A VOLUNTARY FEDERATION of Slav countries was hardly possible before World War II, and did not become easier after the defeat of the Axis powers.

The idea of a Pan-Slavic Union was easily disseminated and found many adherents among the Slav peoples while they were subjugated and striving for freedom. Until they had tasted of the sweet fruits of independence, and established their own government, they had welcomed the idea of unification with Russia. Naturally enough, they preferred unification with Russia to the yoke of an alien people.

Hatred toward the Germans has been the most effective unifying stimulus among Slavs. The famous *Slavy Dcera*, a great poem composed by Jan Kollar, glorified Slavism and depicted the Germans as the traditional enemy of the Slavs. Hitler had brought to an end the everlasting struggle between the German and Slav worlds. However, as soon as this struggle was over the most important stimulus for unification disappeared. Such a possibility had been anticipated long ago by the Czechs:

"Pan-Slavism is an alleged aim of a political unification of Slavs that Germans ascribe to them thus creating a kind of scarecrow. Partially an innate sympathy of all Slav peoples to their kin and their hatred for their common enemies and partially the idea of reciprocal relation between their literatures, as proclaimed by Kollar in particular, could suggest such an opinion." (*The Czech Scientific Dictionary*).

Some Russian Slavophiles dreamed about a "World Orthodox Empire" the foundations of which the Slavs were called upon to lay. On the way to such a fantastic Empire it would be necessary to first reconcile the Greek Orthodox Church with Catholicism. Poles, Croats and the majority of Czechs and Slovaks are Catholics, while millions of Ukrainians in the Western Ukraine, as well as the Moslem Serbs in Bosnia, hate militant Catholicism no less than they do the Germans.

In connection with the war against Hitlerism the Pan-Slav banner was raised again. It was hoisted in Moscow, but with none of the old Pan-Slavic slogans. The new "Pan-Slavic" organization created at Moscow in 1941–43 has nothing in common with the old Pan-Slavism of the nineteenth century. The president of this organization was a general, A.

Gundoroff, and its activity was still limited by the problems of war with Germany.

The old Slavophiles believed in religion and in moral ties.[5] They thought that a State is perfect only which has grown organically, not through armed occupations (Ivan Kireevski), that the old Russian State was wholly established upon an ethical and religious basis (Homiakov) and that the Slavic organization, in its pure form, is pacific in character, based upon free conviction. The Slavophiles were, therefore, antagonistic to the State built with the aid of coercion (Konstantin Aksakov). Their beloved and idealized Russia was "Holy Russia," strange to any bureaucratism, and adverse to coercive Russification.

It would be more dangerous, indeed, to propagate or even repeat such ideas in present-day Russia than it was at the time of Nicholas I, when most old Slavophiles developed their doctrines, and were considered suspicious or insane persons.

Practically nearer, but still an ideological stranger to contemporary Soviet Policy, are the ideas of the later Russian Pan-Slavists (Danilevskii, Tyutchev) who dreamed to unite all Slavs under the sceptre of the Russian Czar, who had to become a "Vseslavianskii Czar." There was, however, an element of "biological nationalism," a complex of national superiority in those political dreams, a kind of messianism close to Hitler's Naziism. Communists are resolutely averse to such ideas, and believe in unification through the understanding of class interests and class solidarity, not through national kinship. It is impossible, therefore, to expect a renascence of any kind of Slavophilism or Pan-Slavism in Moscow.

There is in Moscow a Pan-Slav organization, but no Pan-Slavic ideology.

The magazine *Slaviane* (The Slavs), published at Moscow since the war, contained proclamations to Slavic peoples to support the war against Germany, information about German abuses and violations, and reports about conferences of the Pan-Slavic Committee. After the liberation of the Slav countries from the German yoke, the same magazine began publishing articles attacking anti-communist statesmen, and promoting Marshal Tito in Yugoslavia (then a Moscow favorite) the so-called Lublin

[5] Religion was considered by many of Slavophiles as a potential weapon of unification. Jura Krizanic, a Croatian clergyman, pioneer and apostle of Panslavism—whose manuscript on Slav History had lain for more than two centuries in Moscow and only recently was uncovered by the eminent Russian academician Eugene Tarle—dreamed to unite all Slav nations with a common language and one national church.

The Russian Slavophil, Kiriyevsky, believed that Slav Orthodox was a genuine Slav religion, and that Russia's duty was to gather all the Slavs around her. The Soviet policy at present is not quite alien to these ideas. An anti-Catholic and anti-Uniat movement is evidently encouraged by the Soviets in Poland, Karpatho-Russia, and Croatia, and the Russian Orthodox Church and Moscow Patriarkhat has become a weapon for strengthening the Soviet influences in all Slavic countries.

government in Poland, the Fatherland Front in Bulgaria, etc. General Gundoroff in his article "Congress in Belgrade" (*Slaviane*, 1946) also pointed out that one of the aims of post-war Slav policy was to establish closer connections and ties with the organizations of Slavs in foreign countries.

The Soviet government does not neglect any means that might assist it in widening and strengthening its influence. The Orthodox Church, after re-establishing the Patriarchate, is used by the Soviets as an instrument not only to attract the hearts of the orthodox population of Bulgaria and Serbia, but also to compete with and displace wherever it is possible, Catholicism.[6]

The term "Pan-Slavism," when used, is merely a disguise for the real political motives of the Soviets. Unquestionably, Soviet policy is pursuing its own goals, and with the aid of its own specific methods.

As a substitute for religion the Soviets propagate the Marxian doctrine of the class struggle and socialism, and instead of "Pan-Slavism," the proletarian International. As concerns a Slav nationalism, if anything it has served but as an instrument for edging into Central Europe. Kindred relations are not of great importance in Soviet policy, and it is not less significant for the U.S.S.R. to establish a rapprochement with Rumania and Hungary than with Bulgaria and Poland. Social and economic problems are generally at the fore, and the creation of an East-European bloc fits a Soviet ideology better than a Pan-Slavic one.

Having occupied the Slav countries, the Soviet government transforms them into its satellites, trying to exterminate any anti-Soviet opposition. There are no traces in the policy of the human Slavophile philosophy of the first half of the nineteenth century. On the contrary its policy looks like imperialism, though permeated with new ideas, and is no less repulsive.

The Soviet methods of consolidating different countries round the Kremlin are well known. To organize a provisional government composed of absolutely loyal communists was the first step, in Poland just as in Azerbaijan and Korea. Dimitrov and Kolarov in Bulgaria; Gottwald in Czechoslovakia; Broz in Yugoslavia; Beirut and Osobka- Morawski in Poland are all active members of the revived Comintern. Since those provisional governments have been organized they have been receiving every assistance from Soviet Russia in exterminating any kind of opposition. No means are neglected. Executions, imprisonment, penal servitude and forced labor, and in all cases confiscation of property are the most

[6] A conference of the Uniats gathered in Lvov, March 8, 1946, decided to abolish the Brest Union with the Vatican of 1596, and to return to the orthodox church. (*Izvestia*, March 17, 1946).

habitual. In order to attract the sympathies of the toiling masses, persecutions of "enemies of people" are accompanied by social reforms such as distribution of confiscated lands.

According to the Soviet patterns only the most radical political parties are permitted in all Slav countries; the others are dissolved and persecuted. National armies and police forces absorb a number of Soviet officers, soldiers, and agents of the M.V.D., the Soviet secret police. Disguised in a new uniform they practically control, or at least support, the system of terror and extermination of real and even potential enemies of communism and Soviet Russia and even of Soviet communists.[6a]

Since all "bourgeois" freedoms are suppressed, and the opposition exterminated or deprived of freedom, elections show only spectacular support of the existing government by the population. Step by step the system of government becomes identical with that of the Soviet Union. And not only the system of government, but also the ideology, and political interests and aims. It is, therefore, but natural that the hegemony of Soviet Russia does not appear as aggression. It looks rather like leadership and protection by a stronger and more experienced power. There is no reason to call it imperialistic or militaristic; practically, however, it is a peculiar system of political and economic expansion and domination.

There were many obstacles to the unification of the Slav countries: religious differences, dynastic intrigues combined with foreign influences, historical competition and discords about boundaries. All these obstacles disappear together with the liquidation of the old order. Differences of religion cease to be important since all churches are equally suppressed. Dynasties are abolished, and national discords are obliterated by the dominant ideology of internationl brotherhood of all working people. The so-called "iron curtain" protects the sphere from influences from abroad, and all political and economic interests are submitted to those of the U.S.S.R. Newman has correctly said that "the Soviet economic and political system are such that a close association inevitably means absorption."[6b] But from the communist point of view, all means are justified by

[6a] "To resolve general problems, to judge and condemn," writes A. Ciliga, a Yugoslav communist expelled from the Comintern in 1929 for his opposition to the policy on Yugoslav problems advocated by Moscow leaders, "there exists the Russian Communist Party; the others are there merely to carry out its decisions. It seems incredible that such a system of servility could have been born and developed within an international workers' movement; yet it exists and it triumphs." "The militant Yugo-Slav communists did not escape the reprisals." "Action was taken in a progressive, slow way, by gradually tightening the meshes of the net." "The Russian Enigma," (London, 1940), pp. 54, 58.

Thus, the first conflict between Moscow and Belgrade took place in 1929.

[6b] B. Newman, "Balkan Background" (New York: Macmillan Co., 1945), p. 314.

an end, and all victims and sacrifices of the present are compensated by the bright future.

There are, naturally, in every Slav country, many people who are dissatisfied and incensed with the new government and regime. In spite of repressions, the opposition still exists.

By the end of 1946, the amalgamation of all Slav countries was practically accomplished, all of them signing trade pacts with Soviet Russia and promising mutual assistance. On December 8, 1946, a Slav Congress took place in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. This was the first post-war gathering of all the Slav nations. According to the Soviet press, the Belgrade Congress might be called "a Congress of brotherhood and unity of the Slav peoples."[7] It was in fact a Congress of victorious Slav communists.

There were no poets to greet the Congress as Wincenty Pol did a hundred years ago, at the first Slav Congress in Prague. Instead, the Soviet press greeted the Slav Congress with reassurance: "The Soviet Union is lending unselfish aid to the Slav sister-peoples; it lays no claims to predomination, it is not out to seize their territory, and it does not attempt to impose its social system upon them."[7a]

The purposes of that Congress were formulated in its message of greeting to Stalin and Molotov, and in its "Appeal to all Slav and freedom-loving nations of the whole world"; the Congress proclaimed its aims to win a stable democratic peace, to expose war-mongers, and to exterminate the last remnants of fascism. It was not only to the Slav nations but to "all freedom-loving nations of the world" that the Congress addressed its appeal "to strengthen their brotherly friendship with the Great Soviet Union."[8]

A consolidation of all communist and pro-communist nations round Moscow is proclaimed by the Slav Congress with the purpose of mastering all forces against the "fascists," in other words anti-communists. A Pan-Slav Union is thus transformed into a specific group of Slav Nations inside an expanding Union of Socialist Republics which has a tendency to absorb and control Romania, Hungary, Korea, as well as Slav countries.

Pan-Slavism has degenerated as a philosophy of Slav ethnic culture in contradistinction to the West-European one; it has also degenerated as a conception of an eventual Slav Federation or even a Slav Empire.

Contemporary Russia neither is nor wishes to become a Slav nation. She is the U.S.S.R., a great socialist empire of a variety of nations, with boundless ambition for expansion.

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[7] *Izvestia*, Dec. 10, 1946.
[7a] N. Leonidov, "The New Phase in Slav History," *New Times* (1946), p. 9.
[8] *Izvestia*, Dec. 15, 1946.