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THE SLAVIC QUESTION IN THE PAST AND TODAY

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Recently we have been witnessing tendencies to renew pan-Slavism, which already once changed into pan-Russism and pan-tsarism in Russia. To revitalize pan-Slavism today means to revive pan-Germanism, pan-Americanism, and other "pan-ideologies" which are ultimately incorporated into pan-fascism. The world of today – through the tortures and pains of recent past – aims at democracy and humanism and any efforts to restore pan-Slavism appear to be politically immature and utopian.

It is necessary to look at the sources of this issue. Pan-Slavism was born at the beginning of the seventeenth century among the southern Slavs. It was the idea of a Croatian journalist and historian Juraj Križanić (1618-1683), who was the first to present the idea of tribal belongingness of the Slavs. In the middle of the seventeenth century he visited Ukraine and Russia. He described his journey in an interesting "Itinerary from Lvov to Moscow" and "An Appeal to the Ukrainians". In his utopian approach, Križanić linked the idea of Slavic unification under the leadership of the Russian tsar with the idea of ecclesiastical union under the Roman Catholic Church. After his naive proposal to take the subjugated Slavic nations under his protection was given to the tsar, he was sent to Siberia. His essential work was formed during his banishment in Tobolsk (1659-1677) "Politics or disputes about ruling". An unusual example of "welcome" of a foreigner in Russia, was the visit of the Slovak nobleman Móric Beňovský, who was constantly followed by the Russian secret tsarist police.

The idea of Slavic unity, which had been theoretically justified by Czech and Slovak revivalists at the beginning of the nineteenth century – Kollár, Šafárik, Dobrovský, Jungmann, etc. – as a defence of the national identity of the subjugated Slavic nations, a spiritual weapon against Germanization, Magyarization, Russianization, and other forms of denationalization, was unintelligible to Russians. They had their state, they did not experience their nation's subjugation (the Mongolian yoke was accepted passively because in the fourteenth century half of the boyars were Tartars). Russian children could always go to Russian schools. The members of the Russian intelligentsia had never been persecuted for their mother

tongue and love of their culture. We should not wonder that the ideas of Slavic unity and brotherhood sincerely supported by the Poles (Mickiewicz) and Ukrainians (Shevchenko and the Cyrillo-Methodian brotherhood in Kiev, 1845-48) were transformed into pan-Russism in Russia, and were a temptation for tsarism to subjugate other Slavic nations. The leaders of Slavic national-liberation movement could not expect any support from Russia under such circumstances: "The leaders of the Slavic idea – I. Dziuba writes – were never lucky with the tsarist regime, which used their services if it corresponded to its political plans but ungratefulness and suspicions were the answer to their proposals that did not fit in the traditional concepts of the interior system or if it created obstacles to tsarist diplomacy."[1]

The awakening of the Slavs in their relation to Russia who had gradually began to see its real image, came as late as after the tsar's bloody suppression of the Polish revolt in 1830-31. By then, Russia, as the only Slavic country, great in size and spiritual potential had been admired by the Slavs, as their hope and the bulwark of their struggles for survival. Then, in the first period of the Slavic revival, Russophilia was a progressive phenomenon among the Slavic peoples. Political emigrants from Russia, whose number had been increasing in the West (Gercen, Turgenev, Bakunin; Ukrainians – Drahomanov, Stepniak-Kravchinskii, Vovk, Paljui, etc.), helped people to understand Russia better as the country where tsarism repressed not only Ukrainians, Poles, Belorussians but also the free-thinking peoples of Caucasus and Asia. Critical people began to be interested in the peoples living in Russia, their life, subjugation and efforts to achieve freedom.

One of the first was the Czech poet and journalist Karel Havlíček (1821-1856), whose works were translated into Ukrainian by I. Franko. During his visit to Russia in 1843 he stayed with O. Bodianski, the first professor specializing in Slavic studies at Moscow University. He learned from him that the Russians repressed their "home" Slavs – Ukraininans, Poles, and Belorussians. It was a blow to Havlíček and other Russophiles which called for reply: How can the Russians be Slavophiles when they oppress their own Slavs? Havlíček understood that, as a bulwark of "samoderzhavie", Russian Slavophilism was false. On his return home in 1844, he wrote an article "The Slav and the Czech" where he stressed that "Ukraine – is a permanent curse to which the oppressors sentenced themselves. This is a revenge of the oppressed freedom of Ukraine... Unless amends are made to Ukraine for an injury, no real European peace and Slavic understanding will be possible".

In European journalism it was one of the first courageous voices raised in defence of Ukraine. The facts about it were transferred from the ethnographic and folklore attitude during Romanticism to the socio-political sphere. The first Slavic congress held in 1848 in Prague was a remarkable contribution. The Ukrainian delegation was great in number. J. V. Frič (1829-1890), the Czech revolutionary, par-

[1] Dziuba, Ivan: *U kozhnoho svoya dolya* (An episode from the relationships between Shevchenko and the Slavophiles). Kiev, 1989, pp. 65-66.

ticipant in the Prague barricades, defended Ukraine still more radically. He met a Ukrainian writer M. Vilinska (1834-1907, writing under the pseudonym of Marko Vovchuk) in Paris. In 1867 he published an article in Berlin "Long live Ukraine", where he criticized Russian imperialism and required freedom for subjugated peoples. The article was of epoch-making importance and met with a remarkable response in evaluating the national issue in multinational Russia and became a moral support for many fighters for the freedom of Ukraine.

The Slavic issue appeared on the international scene for the first time during the so-called 'Spring of nations' awakened by the 1848 revolution. Following the example of other freedom-loving European peoples, the Slavs, almost unknown to and often ignored by western politicians, began to claim their rights. The ideas of the liberal French revolution (Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité) influenced the leaders of the Slavic revival. Programmes for betterment and later for the liberation of the subjugated Slavic peoples were prepared in the countries where the Slavs lived. The programmes called Slavisms in the Slavic literature[2] expressed the stage of cultural and political maturity of the particular Slavic people. The Poles and Czechs were to the fore, the then "non-historical" unhappy peoples who relied on their medieval kingdoms. Both had their national culture well-shaped through history and both could lean on their national geniuses: the Poles on Copernicus, the Czechs on Hus and Komenský.

The Slavic programme of the Poles was expressed in the 'Books of the Polish People and Polish Pilgrimage' (Księgi narodu polskiego a pielgrzymstwa polskiego, 1832) written by the great Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855). He was a leader of the Polish revolutionary messianism linking the subjugation and liberation of the Polish nation with the issues of freedom and violence. In 1849 Mickiewicz served as editor of the democratic journal 'La Tribune des Peuples' in Paris. In accordance whit the spirit of that programme, he organized Polish military troops against tsarist Russia in Turkey. The Polish revolutionary messianism influenced strongly the whole of Slavdom, and most strongly the Ukrainian Cyrillo-Methodian brotherhood (1845-1848). The programme demanded the abolition of serfdom and arrangement of a federation of free and equal Slavic peoples. Ukraine entered the 'Spring of nations' through this revolutionary programme. – The Czech and partly also Slovak Slavism, presented itself in the so-called Austroslavist programme. The Czechs Fr. Palacký, Fr. Rieger, K. Havlíček, and the Slovak Ľ. Štúr knew that the life of the Slavs in the more liberal Austria-Hungary was easier than in the tsarist absolutist Russia. The Slavs in Austria-Hungary had their representatives in the Parliament (Diet), where they could legally fight for their language and culture, and their conditions for the defence and development of their own national cultures were better than those of their brothers in tsarist Russia with its rul-

[2] For more details, see Frank WOLLMAN: *Slavismy a antislavismy za Jara národů.* Prague, ČSAV, 1968, p. 494.

ing despotism, where even the smallest mention of freedom and patriotism was punished by imprisonment and deportation to Siberia. In 1848, in terms of this programme Štúr declared "Memorandum of the Slovak nation" in the Hungarian parliament in Bratislava demanding the right for the promotion of the native language and culture for the Slovaks. While Štúr could throw down the gauntlet to the Magyar feudal lords in the old Kingdom of Hungary, Shevchenko in Russia could not do so. After the disclosure of the Cyrillo-Methodian brotherhood, he was imprisoned in 1847 together with the historian M. Kostomarov and the writer P. Kulish, and then banished for ten years.

In the revival period, the strongest movement among the southern Slavs was the so-called Illyrian movement for the unification of Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, led by the Croatian poet and journalist Ljudevit Gaj (1809-1872). The point was at first the unification of language and literature and then the political unification of the southern Slavs. The leader of the Serbian revival was the philologist Vuk Karadžić (1787-1864), the author of the first Serbian grammar (1814) and Serbian vocabulary (1818). The Bulgarian anti-Turkish movement was led by V. Levski and the poet Khristo Botev (1848-1876). The Russian victory over the Turks helped the liberation of Bulgaria.

In nineteenth-century Russia there were two contradictory currents: Slavophiles (Pogodin, Shevyriov, Aksakov, the Kirievski brothers, etc.) who fought against the western orientation of half-feudal Russia and the westerners (Gercen, Chernyshevskii, Dobroliubov, Turgenev, etc.) who criticized the patriarchal backwardness of Russia and demanded its Europeanization. Russian Slavophilism degenerated into pan-Russism later giving rise to the most reactionary "Cherna sotnia" with the slogan "Beat the Jews, save Russia". P. Fedotov, an outstanding Russian historian, wrote that its adherents were the source of Russian and later of European fascism.[3]

Slavophilism absorbed a large complex of social, political, religious and cultural-aesthetical issues. The first point was its relation to tsarism and the official Orthodox Church (which had always been a bulwark of tsarism), to serfdom, and to "other peoples", that is those subjugated by tsarism. Its relation to the revival of the Slavs was also important, but it was never unambiguous and depended on the interests of tsarism. The same should be said about the relationship of the Slavophiles to liberal-revolutionary movements in the West. The journalistic works of Ivan Franko are very important for better understanding of the issue. They reveal the tsarist despotism based on secret police and Siberian 'katorga'.

Russia was at first a tsarist empire, then a Bolshevist empire and the history of every empire is based on wars of conquest. That develops imperial thinking which influenced even the great Pushkin who, during the Caucasian crusade in the 1830s said: "Give up, Caucasus, Ermolov is coming!" The approach of the Ukrainian

[3] Fedotov, P.: *Novyj Grad*. New York 1952, p. 164.

Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861) was entirely different. He sympathized with the Caucasian peoples and incited them to go on fighting "Fight – you win!" (Caucasus, 1845).

The attitude of the Russians' to the Slavic peoples became evident in the naive wish of Pushkin that "the Slavic rivers should flow into the Russian sea". The imperial thought of the Russians during tsarism evidently overpowered the Russian people so much that it even affected the great poet. Prominent Slavic politicians and the greatest Slavic poets, among them the Slovak poet P.O. Hviezdoslav, did not agree with this emotional rather than rational approach (Krvavé sonety, 28).

In the darkness of tsarist Russia, Shevchenko asked: "Shall we wait to see our Washington? With a new and just law?" ("Yurodivy", 1857). The imperial thought of the Russians also showed contempt for other peoples, that is non-Russians. The programme of tsarism contained "Russianization also by state means" ("Vestnik Evropy", 1827, p. 217).[4] Suspicion and enmity of the Slavophiles towards European humanistic culture was only their antithesis "Europe-Russia". The conquering wars of Russia, subjugation of many peoples, violent Russianization – all that gave birth to the aggressive messianism of Russia.

Apologists of pan-Slavism in present-day Russia, with V. Zhirinovski at the head, speculate on the generous feelings of the young Slavic peoples. They bring to light the corroded weapon of their predecessors, referring sometimes to the last tractate of the Slovak revival leader Ľ. Štúr 'Slavdom and the world of the future' (1852), consciously concealing the difficult conditions of its birth. This should be mentioned more thoroughly.

Russian Slavophilism of the first half of the nineteenth century had a strong hold on the southern and western Slavs (hardly at all on the Poles because they, together with the Ukrainians and Belorussians, suffered most under Russia). The Slovaks were probably most influenced by Russia. Merciless Magyarization made them set their hopes on the Russians, who were the only Slavs to have their own mighty state. The voice of the Russian tsar was respected in Europe, he had an army of several millions. All that fascinated the subjugated Slavic nations. The eyes of the Slovaks were naturally turned to Russia awaiting salvation from it. After the defeat of the Slovak uprising in 1848/49, Ľ. Štúr asked the Emperor for support. But Vienna was also a disappointment, it did not give any help. The national tragedy was followed by a private one, Štúr's elder brother died, being survived by seven children. Štúr wrote his tractate Slavdom and the world of the future in that situation (it was written in German as "Das Slawenthum und die Welt Zukunft"). Hegel's philosophy is intertwined with Herderism.[5] In an almost desperate situation and in deep depression, Štúr wanted to bring all the Slavic peoples together under Russia's leadership and to strengthen their unity. He joined the group of those de-

[4] Cited according to VERVES, Hryhorij: *Ukrajinci na randevu z Jevropoju.* Kiev 1996, p. 47.

claring reactionary tsarist pan-Slavism, drawing from them all his information about contemporary Russia".[6]

P.J. Šafárik was one of the first to speak out against the tractate and accused Štúr of betraying the ideals of his youth. Later he was sharply condemned by distinguished Slavists (Osuský, Giller, Rapant, J. Jirásek, Ormis, Chizhevskii, Wollman, Mráz, etc.). Frank Wollman said: "Štúr was the only one among the non-Russian Slavs, who mentioned Russian pan-Slavism in its special form of pan-Russism, where it dropped down to the lowest degree of the official Uvarov's trio Orthodoxy-samoderzhavie-nationality as an expression of post-revolutionary pressure and disappointment.[7]

It is remarkable that as early as in the mid-1870s severe doubts about the authenticity of Štúr's work appeared. The Pole Agaton Giller, who – as V. Matula writes – "was well acquainted with Slovak efforts and matters from autopsy"[8]. He was suspicious that the Russians had falsified the work, the conclusions of which definitely impressed them. A. Giller did not like the authentic odes on Russian tsarism and proposals to borrow Orthodoxy and Russian. All that was as if "inserted by a foreign hand" into Štúr's work. In his book 'Z podróży po kraju słowackim' (Lwów 1876, p. 315), A. Giller wrote: "Moscovites are known not only for falsifying but also for spurious documents. Their writer Jozefovich published a series of false documents...There were other historians who did the same."

We learn from recent research by Slovak historians (V. Matula) that M.F. Raevskii, the then archpriest of the Russian Embassy in Vienna, was involved in the matter. Ľ. Štúr gave him his manuscript in all confidence. Raevskii sent it to Russia where it was translated into Russian and published by V. Lamanskii in 1867. We agree with A. Giller that Štúr should be evaluated "not according to his last work but according to his achievements as a Slovak citizen and writer".

To be objective, there are positive features of the work of 'Slavdom and the world of the future' that should be underlined. The work was published in Slovak translation only 150 years after the author's death. Western liberalism was criticized not only under the influence of Russian Slavophiles but also of reality. Štúr was frustrated by the defeat of the Slovak uprising and by the Emperor's treachery. It was painful to witness how Magyarization continued under the silent approval of the Emperor and how the Czechs defended themselves against Germany. His best Czech friend J.V. Frič informed him. Seeing the indifference of Western countries

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[5] Johan Gottfried HERDER (1744-1803) – German humanist philosopher, prophesied a great future for the Slavs, Ukraine in particular, "which will be a new Greece. One day, its happy, gifted people will wake up and its fertile soil will be restored to life under the beautiful southern heaven" (*Journal meiner Reise im Jahr 1769*, 1769).

[6] Encyklopédia slovenských spisovateľov, Vol. 2, Bratislava, p. 173.

[7] Frank WOLLMAN, op. cit., p. 455.

[8] Historický časopis, 38, 4, Bratislava 1990, pp. 518-21.

to the Slovak problem, but also to the problems of other Slavic nations, he was looking for salvation in Russia.

Today we are witnessing what was foreseen by the Polish and Ukrainian explorers of the "mysterious" Russian empire, which was a colossus on feet of clay. Its Achilles' heel were the subjugated peoples. The greatest poet and journalist of Ukrainian diaspora Jevhen Malaniuk (1897-1968) gave a compelling account of them. As a man of Russian education (Russian secondary school, St. Petersburg technical college, Russian studies, and poems dedicated to Akhmatova and Gumilov, etc.) he wished Russia happy and moral recovery: "The Russian people will be able to cope with its difficult heritage only after the fall of the empire and after the defeat of Russian imperialism and colonialism in a really free and democratic nation state." The route of the Russian people towards freedom and restoration of human dignity is in the destruction of the empire, in the liberation of the peoples subjugated by Moscow" (Kniha pozorování, 1956).

The view of the well-known American political scientist Z. Brzezinski on spiritual freedom was similar. Speaking about the relations between Russia and Ukraine, he said that "a strong and independent Ukraine is in the interest of Russia".

"Unity" with other peoples of the USSR who remembered the embraces of the "older brother" would not be useful for the Russians. From this point of view, the hopes of Russia to be the leading country, motivated by Štúr's tractate, are just a speculative delirium. If we think about the fate of this great Slovak, there emerge questions: What would have happened if, writing his tractate, he would have gone to visit Mickiewicz in Paris? Or, if he would have met Shevchenko, who was suffering in Siberia at that time? What if he had experienced gulags, famine in Ukraine, Moscow tanks in Prague and Bratislava during Dubček's 1968 spring?... Can we say that in those cases the leader of the Slovak national revival would not have prophesied leadership for those who betrayed the ideas of Slavic brotherhood and even dirtied their hands with Slavic blood?

Russia as it was – does not exist any more. The prominent foreign correspondent Daniel Šmihula gave a convincing, erudite, politically well-informed account of it: "We do not border the USSR any more, we border Ukraine, which is trying to set itself free from Moscow and is desirous of entering Western European structures including NATO. The sometimes almost naive pro-Russian orientation of some of our compatriots probably has its source in the tradition of Štúr and Vajanský, but the Slavophile-Orthodox vision of Russia concerns a Russia which no longer exists. Even in the past century it did not correspond to reality and, particularly, nineteenth-century Russia could not be inspiring for the people of Central Europe. Moreover, revolution and the Stalin regime literally physically uprooted all that could be positive of Tolstoy and Turgenev's Russia. What can be found alive in that country today is the Soviet tradition and post-Soviet reality. Those whose sympathy follows from the pro-Communist attitude would be disappointed. Today's Russia is

looking at the West trying to come closer, to become member of the Western club and arrange its economy according to modern capitalism" (Nové Slovo 38/1997).

Relapses towards imperial thought are, unfortunately, still observable in Russia. Recent events in Belarussia, which should be joined to Russia by the President's will, can serve as evidence. How can we speak about Slavic friendship, when the sovereignty of a nation is degraded and humanity is trampled down. Slavdom – yes, but first humanity as required much earlier by J. Kollár.