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Pan-Slavism

Mikhail Bakunin

April 9, 1870

Pan-Slavism is the order of the day in our official and unofficial world. It is the dominant idea of the present reign. After having emancipated our peasants, as they say, after having given them liberty and happiness, our generous benefactor, Czar Alexander II, no longer has any thought today but that of going to deliver the Slavic people, our brothers, who still groan under the yoke of the Germans and the Turks.

They speak of nothing but this in the court at St. Petersburg, in the higher regions of the army and the bureaucracy. The salons of St. Petersburg and Moscow offer at this moment a spectacle that is as amusing as it is instructive. Some great ladies who ordinarily only speak French and who look down on the Russian language, because it is the language of our peasants; some pure-blooded Germans, in the service of the Emperor; men of state, generals, officers civil servants, who have only two ideas in their head, two sentiments in their heart: first to please the Emperor, and then to make their fortune and career, – all these people are now dying with love for our unfortunate brethren, the Slavic peoples. The marvelous discipline of a well-organized empire! The master has ordered it, and everyone is immediately animated by suitable inclinations and ideas.

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We have had a memorable example of this enchanting staging of sentiments on command, during and after the Slavic Congress, held in 1867 in Moscow, when with the permission of their master, or to speak still more truthfully, when following an order they had received from their master, the more or less titled lackeys of the emperor of Russia offer a generous hospitality to the Slavic subjects of the emperor of Austria and the sultan of Turkey. The program of sentiments consistent with the political situation and officially imposed, was formulated, we know, with great care, by the minister of foreign affairs. The roles once divided up, each learned their own by heart, and recited it in a manner so natural and with such a great appearance of liberty, that our Slavic guests, who asked nothing better than to let themselves be fooled, were delighted with it.

It was a high comedy, where everyone played at the same time the role of spectator and actor. There were also naturally a good number of simpletons who took their roles seriously and believed in good faith that it was a question of Slavic emancipation. They lavished congratulations and sincere tears of joy, while the leaders gave the Judas kiss.

That Congress was a real saturnalia of slaves, an orgy of mutual hypocrisy and official lies. On the part of all the Russian members, it was an act of cynicism, and on the part of the Slavic members, a low deed; for the introduction and basis of this Congress was the massacre of a great Slavic nation, Poland; the enslavement of another Slavic nation, Little Russia; and finally the slavery in fact, which, under the name of emancipation, still weighs today on a third great Slavic people, the people of Great Russia.

And it was in the name of the Czar, organizer of all these massacres, cause and supreme aim of all this slavery, that the Russian slavophiles have promised, and that the Slavic delegates have announced to their fellow citizens, the resurrection and deliverance! Our Russian slavophiles, in large part civil servants or official agents of the Empire, and only in small

part saps, have obviously acted in the interest of the Empire. But in what interest have the Slavic delegates, the Riegers, the Palackis, the Brauners, sought to mislead their populations?

We do not hesitate to speak of trickery, because the eminent men we have just named are too intelligent, too learned, too practical, too clever to let themselves be fooled. They know better than anyone what the Russian Empire is, and what the Slavic peoples can expect from it.

They see very well how this boa constrictor attempts to crush, in its immense entrails, the last vestiges of the nationality of the people, Slavic or non-Slavic, this it has swallowed. Profound experts on the history of the Slavic peoples, they know that nothing would have been so dire for them so far as the protection of the government of St. Petersburg, who, after having drawn from their agitation, fomented by himself, all the desired utility, has never failed to deliver them defenseless to the vengeance of their Turkish or German oppressors. In the end, they are political men too perceptive and too well informed to be ignorant that at this very hour when a crowd of countless agents of this government roam all the Slavic countries from Austria to Turkey, preaching holy war and announcing to all, in the name of the liberating Czar, the coming hour of common deliverance, that at that very hour, Russian diplomacy, which is too wise to dream of the impossible conquest of all the Slavic countries at once, already prepares the elements of a new division, and that it will ask no better than to concede, at least temporarily, Turkish Serbia, Montenegro and perhaps even Bosnia to Austria, provided that they let it get its hands on all of Romania, and that it is allowed to erect, under the high and very liberal protection of the emperor of Russia, with a prince of the house of Romanov, the quasi-independent viceroyalty of the Bulgarians.

On the other side, Palacki, Rieger, Brauner and Co. also cannot be ignorant that between the court of St.-Petersburg and the court of Berlin there has long existed an understanding,

according to which, in the case of a triumph obtained by the by the united armies of Prussia and Russia, over the Austro-French coalition, Russia will seize Galicia, while the kingdom of Prussia, transformed a German Empire, will help themselves to Bohemia, Moravia and a large part of Silesia.

They know all of that, and they have always known it. why then are they allied to Moscow? Why do they mislead their populations, by representing the emperor Alexander II to them as the future liberator of the Slavic world?

It is a question that Slavic patriots must resolve for themselves. We are content simply to pose it. However we may be permitted to give them advice. Let all the Slavic peoples who feel oppressed today, warned by sad experience, especially by the example of the unfortunate Poland, and following that today given them by the Bulgarians, seek their emancipation, their salvation in the revolution and in the revolutionary solidarity of all peoples, Slavic or non-Slavic, but never in the reaction, never in the combinations of diplomacy, and especially not in the dissolving, corrupting and misleading protection of the emperors of all the Russias.