

The Czech-Moravian Slavic Union "Slavic Cultural Diplomacy" as the Keeper of Slavic Identity

New Social and Cultural Developments in Czechia and Russia

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Abstract—The article considers recent social and cultural developments in Czechia and Russia, and, particularly, the project called “Slavic Cultural Diplomacy”, which project aims to preserve and develop the Slavic languages and culture, as well as the national identity in the era of globalization.

Keywords—*identity; Slavic correlation; Slavic cultural diplomacy*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the humanity faces new phenomena such as the increasing globalization, the information and communication revolutions, migration flows, which have changed dramatically the economies’ ethnicity and such. In this context, the countries thus face the vital task to preserve their identity, protect their national languages and cultures.

The program of the Czech-Moravian Slavic Union “The Slavic Cultural Diplomacy: Analysis, Strategy and Tactics for the Future” addresses the vital directions of preserving languages and cultures of Slavic people, which are composing not merely the important part of European culture, but also of the world culture [1]. The program emphasizes that the full knowledge is defined not only by practical need, but it also requires this information reserve, providing for the spiritual maturity primarily of the rising generation; its worldview potential, which constitutes part of each man's identity.

II. THEORETIC ASPECT OF SLAVIC CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

Highlights of the program “Slavic cultural diplomacy—analysis, strategy and tactics for the future” have been outlined in the article of Prof. Vojtech Merunka, President of the Slavic Union. He designates such ills, which emerged in late 20th and the early 21st century, as dissolution of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, the tragic developments in Ukraine and other.

The processes of globalization and liberalization in the 21st century, according to Merunka, is hindering the development of the Slavs' identity, and for this reason a new

historical actuality requires setting of other policies and directions for the purpose of saving the Slavic world.

I would like to recall that the Slav not once stood at the moment of "To be or not to be". The turn of the 21st century witnessed the tendencies of economic and national assimilation on the part of German middle-class and Hungarian nobility in reference to the Slavic people.

The born at that time idea of Slavic reciprocity opposed such developments and, given general political weakness of national liberation movements, played a critical "defensive and mobilizing role, especially in the Czech and Slovak national resurgence" [2]. This had been aided by research work within the Slavic studies by Josef Dobrovsky, Josef Jungmann, Pavel Safarik and other. The scientists found respond to their vision of the role of the Slavic world in humanistic historical and philosophic conception worked out by Johann Gottfried Herder.

The appellation “Slavic reciprocity” has come into historical dictionary after the release of the discourse of Jan Kollar “On literary reciprocity between Slav tribes and vernaculars (in 1836 in Czech; in 1837 in German). The scientist concentrated on the program of Slavic cultural reciprocity and its implementation as the most reliable means to protect the Slavic world against disunion, and to strengthen it and develop further. This program inspired the development of the Slavs, of their national culture and gave occasion to their wider cultural exchange. The actuality of this conceptual idea remains apparent these days. [3]

Addressing the project “Slavic cultural diplomacy—analysis, strategy and tactics for the future”, it is worth emphasizing the importance of the assumption concerning the Slavic languages' preservation and diffusion, promotion of rich historical and cultural heritage of the Slavs, particularly among the rising generation, and the expansion of scientific and cultural contacts between scientists from around the globe.

We cannot but agree with prof. Merunka’s reflections that after the Second World War the Slavic nations had been in the socialist camp, which presented somewhat “the opponents of the non-Slavic West”. Despite this Slavic languages, constituting part of the single European cultural

space, were constantly developing—there were built and standing scientific, cultural contacts between both Slavic and Western scientists.

Today we are witnessing the contrary—mother languages of the Bulgarians, Czech, Serbs, and Croatians become rather exotic, since the pride of place in the international communication goes to Western languages (English, French, German, Italian and such).

For this reason and in the current context, according to the author, the community has the task to actively spread Slavic languages among the non-Slavic people, to expand knowledge about the authentic culture of the Slavic world, especially among the young generation. Accordingly, it is useful to use the media sources such as Internet, television and other.

III. SLAVIC CULTURAL DIPLOMACY—PRACTICAL ASPECT

It is notable that the initiatives on popularization of knowledge on the Slavic world existed in other countries as well. For example, in 2006 the Pushkin State Russian Language Institute opened specialized courses—developed by the author of this research paper—and conducted classes for BA students on the following programs: "Russia and foreign Slavs—the philosophical and historical and cultural aspects of interconnections", "The Dialogue of Slavic cultures", "The Russian theme in the Slavs' culture", "The Slavic cultures' interconnections", "The category of fairness in the culture of South and East Slavs (the Middle Ages)". The general tone of these specialized courses is not only the expansion of students' insight into an authentic culture, but also reflection of the "record of affinity" between Russia and the Slavic people in different historical periods.

Coming in touch with the paramount events of the Russian-Slavic ties, a modern Russian student not only was discovering a profound exceptional culture of the Slavic people, but also was realizing himself integral part of this large Slavic entity. He was beginning to have a glimpse of the little-known pages of his Motherland, whose history is deeply intertwined with big names – the Belorussian Simeon of Polotsk, the Czech Eduard Napravnik, the Polacks Jan Czernski and Bronislaw Pilsudski, the Slovak Dusan Makovicky and many more.

These courses are generating a lively interest of students of other ethnicities—from Moldova and Rumania, China and Serbia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Vietnam and Hungary, and help them find out more about Russia. One practical example of this: one Chinese student after the first lesson refused to attend the author's specialized course, stating that he had come to study the Russian language and that the Slavs were of no interest to him. Still he had visited the lessons several times, had listened to his classmates, watched films of Czech, Polish, Serbian authors, and wrote his Bachelor project "Pushkin in the Czech Republic". After completing the course, the student unexpectedly had stated, "Owing to your specialized course I came to better understand Russians."

I would like to tell you about another initiative that helps schoolchildren and students get a knowledge of other Slavic people's culture. This is the poetry and song contest called "Serbia in My Heart", held since 2010 with support from the Serbian Embassy in Russia. In the meantime, the number of its participants has reached around 500 contesters from different Russian countries—Belgorod, Barnaul, Dolgoprudny, Kostroma, Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Ryazan, Stavropol, and even Gomel (Belarus). Students of the Moscow and Petersburg State Universities, who study Serbian, have been offered the nomination—translation from Serbian into Russian.

IV. CONCLUSION

All these, the author believes, present a further proof of the importance of the "The Slavic cultural diplomacy" program on popularization of the Slavic people's heritage and preservation of their national identity.

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