

*Bevziuk Yevhen Volodymyrovych, Transcarpathian state university,
candidate of historical sciences, associate professor, department of international
business and world policy*

*Бевзюк Євген Володимирович, Закарпатський державний університет, к.і.н.
доцент, кафедри міжнародного бізнесу та світової політики*

The Official Attitude of the Russian Empire to the Ideology of Pan-Slavism on the Eve of the 1848 Revolution

Официальная позиция Российской империи по отношению к идеологии панславизма перед революцией 1848 года.

On the eve of the 1848 revolution the ethnic medium of the western Slavs underwent the process of modernizing its national ideology. Although this process was an all-European phenomenon and large ethnic units were undergoing self-determination, the spiritual renaissance of the western Slavs had specific regional and ethnic characteristics, thus attracting the political attention of the governments of great empires – the Austrian and the Russian.

The Pan-Slavic political vector in Russia's foreign policy was only being formed in 1830-1840s and had no substantial basis for practical implementation. Mykola I and his government were busy maintaining the existing European order within the Holy union. However, being a Slavonic country, the Russian government took into account the ethnic and national peculiarities in the political life of the Austrian Empire and the Prussian kingdom. Thus, in 1847 the Minister of national education Uvarov outlined the official framework of the imperial government's attitude to the Slavonic issue in a secret circular note: "We must uphold the beginning of the Russian way of thinking, the Russian virtues, and the

Russian feelings. These are the primordial national sources, not Slavonic-Russian, but only Russian”¹.

Highly significant is the attitude of Mykola I to the Pan-Slavonic idea as the ideology of political unity. On the margins of the minutes of I.S. Aksakov’s interrogation (who was an imperial officer) in the III-rd department the emperor wrote, “Under the disguise of sympathy to the imaginary discrimination of the Slavonic tribes there is a criminal design of an uprising against the legitimate power in the neighbouring countries and of a general union ... which is destructive for Russia”². Thus, the foreign political attitude of the official Petersburg to the issue of the Slavonic renaissance and forming its ideological basis coincided with the discussion of the Pan-Slavonic idea and its interpretation in Austria and Prussia. This “pan-idea” with its various interpretations in the general ideology of the national Slavonic renaissance in the pre-revolution years is of great significance in the ideology of nations that were on the way to self-determination from ethnicity to personal national identity.

Another argument for consolidating Pan-Slavism as a political movement was an active scientific interest to the Slavs as an object of scientific research. The Russian government’s interest to the Slavonic studies is testified to by Mykola I’s permission of 20 January 1836. The emperor allowed to send Moscow students M. Ivanyshchikov and M. Kastorskyi on a mission to Berlin university. At the end of their mission they gave S. Uvarov, the Minister of national education of Russia information on the level of “Bohemian scientists and Hungarian Serbs”¹. After getting acquainted with the document S. Uvarov suggested that the emperor should give material help to the spiritual leaders of western Slavonic national movements. The addressee(s) and the amount of material help on the part of the Russian government had never been officially stated. However, on 6 December 1838 Uvarov wrote a memorandum to the emperor, “There is a favourable chance ... to

1 Уваров С. Циркуляр // Русский архив, 1892. – Кн. 7. – С.347-351.

2 Аксаков И.С. Вопросы, предложенные Ивану Сергеевичу Аксакову III-м отделением / Быть России в благоденствии и славе. – М., 2002. – С.348.

send a sum of money. Professor Pogodin is travelling to the Slavonic lands ... and he can dispatch the pecuniary aid ... without attracting the unnecessary attention of the Austrian government”².

To our mind, the material support to the Slavonic contacts was not just a philanthropic deed of the Russian emperor. This can be testified by a famous Russian researcher of the Slavs professor M. Pogodin’s report to the Minister Uvarov after his travel to Europe³. Pogodin wrote, “... there is a widespread opinion among the Slavs that the Austrian empire is about to collapse and they will separate from it. ... Then, according to the Slavs, a Slavonic state will be founded and headed by Russia”⁴. On the basis of these quotations from documents we can state that Russia was conducting a political monitoring among the western Slavs, and the Pan-Slavonic idea in the national ideology of the Austrian Slavs was present which fact caused the pro-Austrian forces to counteract its spread.

Professor Pogodin’s reports to the imperial Minister lead us to the conclusion that during the scientific mission the famous researcher of the Slavs was additionally conducting a secret mission of the government that the official Vienna could only regard as a scientific mission. And it is no mere chance that the Russian scientist Pogodin suggested that the government should take into account the material needs of the political leaders of the Slavonic national movement and give them “twenty-five thousand roubles in banknotes a year which will satisfy their needs even to excess... The help will surely be given secretly”⁵. Uvarov gave Pogodin’s memorandum to the emperor Mykola I. The emperor wrote with his own hand, “It is very interesting, but one needs to be very careful. 2 thousand in silver can be given”⁶.

1 О пособии чешским ученым Шафарику и Ганке. 9 декабря 1838 – 16 марта 1839 / РГИА. – Ф.735. – Оп.2. – Е.х. 60. – 42 л.

2 О пособии чешским ученым Шафарику и Ганке. 9 декабря 1838 – 16 марта 1839. – Л.21–22

3 Погодин М.П. Письма министру народного просвещения 1840 г. / РГИА. – Ф. 1108. – Оп.2. – № 1. – Л. 28–46.

4 Погодин М.П. Письмо первое. Министру Народного Просвещения, по возвращению из путешествия в 1839 и 1842 гг. // Русская беседа, 1859. – Том 1. – С.60.

5 Погодин М.П. Письма министру народного просвещения 1840 г. – Л.46.

6 О выдаче проф. Погодину 3 тыс. руб. из хозяйственных сумм Московского университета 12 августа 1839 – 12 апреля 1840 / РГИА. – Ф.735. – Оп.2. – № 127. – 55 л.

The emergence of the cultural and political Pan-Slavonic tendency in the national movement of the western Slavs and the attention it attracted in Russian foreign policy are especially observable in the revolutionary 1848. Russia's official position on the Slavonic national movements at the initial stage of the 1848 revolution can be best illustrated by an extract from the Minister of national education S. Uvarov's speech to the emperor of the Russian empire Mykola I. Uvarov reported to the emperor, "Foreign Slavonic writers have chosen the idea of Slavonic unity for dangerous dreams. ... Quite often under the literary descriptions of old times we can see bad liberal intentions"¹. Therefore, Russia's official position showed an uncompromising attitude to liberalism without paying attention to the manifestations of cultural Slavonic unity that, by the way, was based on the ideology of cultural Pan-Slavism.

Two documents are of great significance to research the problem of Pan-Slavism. They are connected with V. Hanka's (who was an outstanding figure of the Slavonic renaissance) sending a note to Kyiv on convening the Slavonic conference in 1848 in Prague. Thus, on 1 May 1848 V. Hanka addressed an appeal to the Russian Field-Marshal-General and a secret imperial counsellor A.Ya. Storozhenko under the title "Slavs, brethren!" At the back V. Hanka wrote with his own hand, "Dear Mr. Storozhenko! ... We do not want to be united with the big Germany. We are Slavs and will remain Slavs to the last drop of our blood. We would welcome our brethren the Russians at our conference"¹. In the context of the general Slavonic national movement this document is important for it was signed by 22 well-known Slavonic scientists and political figures. Field-Marshal-General Storozhenko informed the Russian tsar of the letter via a Russian deputy in Poland. The emperor's resolution of 15 (27) May 1848 (which is very quick for the XIX century – Author) is extremely significant and it was sent by the Warsaw deputy to Field-Marshal-General Storozhenko. The original of the letter with the following

¹ Уваров С.С. Доклад «О цензуре». 24 августа 1848 г.: Доклады министра народного просвещения императору Николаю I // Река времен, 1995. – Вып. 1. – С. 74.

content is kept in the National library of Ukraine, “To the secret counsellor Storozhenko. Having read my note on the issue of Vyacheslav Hanka’s letter the emperor orders to leave the letter unanswered”².

Thus, the tsar regime did not welcome the Russian’s participation in the Slavonic conference and in the general Slavonic movement initiated by the foreign leaders of the Slavonic renaissance. The further development of the European political actions testified to the fact that Russia performed the role of a gendarme in suppressing the national liberating struggle of the dependent peoples in the Austrian empire. It would be plausible to analyse archive documents showing the activity of the Slavonic charity organizations and the attitude of the Russian monarchy to them³. For many years Russian charity and cultural organizations had maintained close contacts with European national and cultural societies, e.g. Slavonic Matytsas. Ukraine’s archives have a significant amount of documents dealing with the activity of national and cultural societies⁴. With the help of the fiscal system the Russian empire controlled the activity of the Slavonic societies⁵.

Therefore, actualization of the Slavonic issue in the pre-revolution decade, the increased attention to it on the part of the western social and political elite showed ambiguity in the Austrians’ attitude to the national Slavonic ideology. Tsar Russia openly tried to control the process of spread of the Pan-Slavism ideology that the imperial officers thought dangerous for its liberal ideas. The European governments’ dread of the presence of pan-motives in the Russian foreign policy can be considered well-grounded. In the Slavonic geopolitical sphere the Russian

1. Воззвание “Slowianie, bracia!”, присланное В.Ганкой А.Стороженко, напечатано на польском, чешском языках с припиской Ганки к Стороженко на одном из листов. 1мая 1848 Прага / Національна бібліотека України. Інститут рукописів. – Ф.8. – Од. збер. 2551–2554. – 4 л.

2. Секретное предписание наместника в царстве Польском, сенатору Стороженко об оставлении без ответа письма В.Ганки./ Національна бібліотека України. Інститут рукописів. – Ф.VIII. – Шифр 2561. – Л. 2.

3. Отчет Киевского славянского благотворительного общества за 1877 год от 22 января 1878 года / ЦДІА м. Київ. – Ф.442. – Оп. 56. – Од. зб. 80. – 36 л.

4. Учено-литературное общество “Галицко-Русская Матица”, историческое общество „Нестора – летописца” / Національна бібліотека України. Інститут рукописів. – Ф.8. – Од. зб. 3170 – 3171. – 3 л.; Бібліотека інституту “Оссолінеум” у Львові / Львівська наукова бібліотека. Відділ рукописів. – Ф.5. – Од. зб. 532.

5. Высочайшее утверждение правил, определяющих отношения к славянским благотворительным обществам. Год 1878. // Львівська наукова бібліотека. Відділ рукописів. – Од. зб. 80. – 42 л. – Ф.442.

empire tried to maintain its all-Slavonic status and this fact evoked discussion for both pro-Austrians and liberal, conservative supporters of Austroslavism.

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