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The relevance of the Dostoevsky's "One special mot about the Slavs" in the context of the modern "Russian world"

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to discover the parallel lines between the Dostoevsky's philosophic conception of the Russian world and its future predictions in his political articles of "A Writer's Diary" and Russia's current role in politics regarding Slavic countries and the third parties. With great reference to Dostoevsky's philosophical prose "A Writer's Diary" as to a "prophetic revelation", this has been done by analyzing the history of some relations underpinning the current situation. Through showing what Russia's role is now to what Dostoevsky called "The Russian world", this research reveals the most prominent discrepancies in between his predictions and the current state of affairs.

Keywords: Dostoevsky, "A Writer's Diary", pan-Slavism, the Balkans, Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878, NATO, EU, Russian World;

1. Introduction

The increase of interest to the F.M. Dostoevsky's "A Writer's Diary" is constantly growing due to the extremely actual content of this work. In the end of XIX century leaning on the facts of that period, Dostoevsky was able to outline the main tendency of the development of connection among Slavic peoples, one of the poles of which is Russia.

2. Pan-Slavism

During the accession of the ideas of pan-Slavism, Dostoevsky presented his prophecy that the idea of the society of Slavic unity was absolutely impossible because of the true attitude of the Slavic peoples to Russia. The writer's diary pays great attention to the Slavic issue in connection with the latest Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878.

The ideas of Slavic unity, or pan-Slavism, became especially popular in Russia in the second half of the 19th century. Together with the intensification of the policy in the Balkans and the desire of the Russian society to support the Slavs in their struggle with Turkey, such concepts in which the Balkans were a central issue of Russian foreign policy and its historical mission began to appear. Moreover, the national movements started to emerge in the Slavic countries, calling for the restoration of the independence of states from the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires. Slavic peoples were beginning to hold congresses on unification issues.

The key event in the history of Slavism and ideas about Slavic unity was the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish war. After the Bulgarian uprising in 1875, ideas about the military confrontation with Turkey began to arise in Russia. However, Russia dared to intervene only after Serbia, and later Montenegro, entered the war and found itself under threat of defeat. Despite the victory of Russia in this war, its results did not greatly influence the position of the Slavic peoples and the resolution of the problem of Slavic unity.

The ideologists of Pan-Slavism proposed solutions to the Eastern issue, which were to liberate the Slavic peoples from foreign domination, create a Slavic political bloc with the capital in Constantinople that would be an important point of the pan-Slavic federation under the auspices of Russia [8]. The social movement was getting into the spirit of the ideas to help the Slavic peoples and the highest mission of Russia in this case. It was the sympathy of the entire Russian people and the influence of emperor's closest circle to a large extent that encouraged Alexander II to take a risky step toward the war in the Balkans. It is important to mention that at the end of the war, Bulgaria was given an autonomy from Turkey. Besides, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro were recognized as independent states.

However, in a contrast to ideologists of pan-Slavism Dostoevsky had clearly understood the absolute impossibility of the unity between the Slavic peoples and Russia. So, he assigned a special altruistic role to "liberating" actions of Russia in "A writer's diary".

Reflecting on the expediency of "troubles, vexation and everlasting worries" in relation to the small Slavic peoples, Dostoevsky leads the reader to the idea of a sacred mission performed by Russia in a pan-European and global context. The writer expands the circle of the small family, with its everyday discords and uneasiness [7], to an understanding of the Slavic peoples' united family and the function of Russia as the mother of these growing children, uniting them into a whole with the power of maternal love.

Despite the shared faith in the firmness of further pan-Slavic unity of that time and his own attitude to Russia as an all-Slavic empire, Dostoevsky tries to convince the readers that there is no Slavic peoples thinking of the unity with Russia. All of them are waiting for Russia's help at the time of the imminence of threat but when it is a time of peace, they consider Russia as the main threat. Furthermore, all this Slavic peoples will bend every effort to distance themselves from it. If we take this statement into consideration and compare it with the current situation in the world, Dostoevsky's words seem to be a true prediction.

3. The nowadays situation

With the collapse of the USSR, the geopolitical situation in the region has seriously changed. But not only had many of the newly independent countries, but Russia itself to shape its state identity. In many ways, the ideas of the Slavic world have lost their relevance, replaced by the triad "Ukraine-Russia-Belarus". NATO on the contrary did not fall apart and its expansion continued – in 1999 the Czech Republic and Poland joined NATO, in 2004 - Bulgaria, Slovakia, Slovenia; in 2009 - Croatia and in 2017 - Montenegro. Former Soviet republics were joining NATO, fearing to fall under influence of Russia again. Prospectively, Bulgaria, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia and the Czech Republic joined the EU, expanding integration with the Western world and strengthening protection against Russia [3]. "Russia needs to prepare adequately for the fact that all these liberated Slavic folks will rush into Europe in a state of intoxication" - a characteristics that very accurately illustrates the trend given [3, p. 362-363].

Perhaps, out of Slavic republics only Serbia for a relatively long time had experienced sympathy towards Russia, but for some reasons it became a "folklore" version of the current political situation as well, and the anti-Russian intelligentsia of Serbia believes that the discord between Serbia and the EU is no longer purely Serbian, but imposed by external forces. Moreover, Moscow positions backed down in Bulgaria, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia too. Montenegro

maintains a duplicitous position: on one hand, it accepts Russian investments in its economy and supports visa-free regime, on the other hand, it harshly criticizes the Russian authorities, although there are currently no pronounced conflicts in-between [4]. Thus, once recognized by Alexander III Russia's only friend Montenegro is no longer the one. In Bulgaria, pursuing a moderate policy towards Russia government could not stand the ground and was deposed during the elections; nowadays government establishes the status of relations with Russia as undergoing a “crisis of confidence” in official documents [9]. Macedonia like Montenegro struggles for maintaining close relations with Russia and joining NATO and the EU [5]. The whole situation in Southeast Europe was aggravated by the Crimean issue, which many countries recognized as the great-power ambitions of Russia.

However, the actions of the Slavic countries towards each other are becoming increasingly inconsistent. As Dostoevsky noted, all these "lands" tend to quarrel among themselves but will turn to Russia in the moment of misfortune; indeed, Montenegro announced its desire to achieve independence for its church from the SOC1, or take for example Bulgaria’s direct involvement in the Kosovo-Serb conflict – both Serbs and Bulgarians were waiting for Russia’s intercession from the NATO bombing – and the fact that assistance was not provided was one of the turning points for redirecting politics to the west [9]. And Russia is not the one odd – very inconsistent in its attitude towards Kosovo – despite it expressed a strong disapproval of UN actions, it does not disdain to use this situation as a precedent for the Crimean situation and to legitimize its actions in the 2008 Russian-Georgian war.

The return of Crimea to Russia largely influenced the attitude of the Slavic countries towards Russia, in which they saw a direct threat to their statehood. “First of all, Russia, as we all know, will have no thought, and should never have to expand its territory about the Slavs, to attach them to itself politically ...” – a policy that Dostoevsky considered to be the only true in bringing back “prodigal” Slavic folks to their mother Russia [2, p.363]. Accordingly, by Dostoevsky’s words, the maximum of political freedoms was of vital necessity for the “Russian world” to make them gather around Russia free-willingly [2, p.364]. At the same time, he stressed that this cannot happen in any soon time and perhaps it will take a hundred years. Taking in consideration that these countries were in the sphere of the USSR influence under the terms of The Warsaw Pact, after 1991 Russia still did not abandon its desire to keep all these Slavic folks around it, and there were reasons for that.

However, at the moment, the creation of the buffer zone periphery has failed. Ukraine, considered one of the most reliable allies, right now in every possible way denies any possibility of improvements in relations with Russia, and Belarus stands on a firm position of neutrality between the EU and Russia. And they have their reasons to do so, since it looks as if Russia is really got down to manage the business. Russia seeks to retain power in the region, and therefore, retreating from Dostoevsky's “prophecy”, uses various leverages of pressure, leading a policy that is rather aggressive outwards to influence the internal situation in the Eastern European region. Using the status of a permanent member of the UN, Russia is able to veto any reforms passing through the UN, and therefore maintain status-quo, limiting the possibilities for the deployment of NATO bases in the Slavic countries - for example, as it does with Bosnia and Herzegovina [1].

The implementation of the “Russian world” notion in our time has shown its opposite effect – particularly the states which used to be by near Russia drifting away [11]. The self-identification of Russia of the past few years has become confused and according to the old habit wrongly perceived in Russia as Russia & Co system. At the moment it is important for Russia to allow other countries to choose the path to governance consistency on their own. It is also important for Russia’s self-identification in the system formation of equal and independent statehoods of the Southeast Europe.

4. Russia - Slavic unity - NATO/the USA

Dostoevsky mentioned the fact of Slavic peoples' standoff and its major direction towards Europe. The understanding by these countries of Russian contribution into their independence will be not appreciated properly soon.

NATO and the USA are still trying to decrease Russian influence on its Slavic brothers. Such countries of the Slavic region as Poland, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Ukraine are purposefully making steps towards of being the part of European word within the frames of global arena.

Ukraine can be estimated as an example of such countries. During "Orange revolutions" it has made the first step towards becoming a member of NATO. In any conflicts embracing Russia and European Union, Ukraine has always supported European side, providing it with the excessive criticism against Russia and its attempts to address the problem.

Bulgaria is also can be defined as a pro-western country in the Slovenian region. It, just like the majority of countries of Eastern Europe, tightly depends on the EU and the US financial assistance [10]. Thus Sophia is forced to adhere to the Euro-Atlantic line. Nevertheless, the biggest part of the average Bulgarian residents maintains the warm attitude towards Russia and the Russian people.

But not all countries have such positive attitude to the European influence. On the 7th of October Jens Stoltenberg arrived in Belgrade to participate in the joint exercises with Serbian army that was called "Serbia-2018" [10]. According to Stoltenberg, these exercises were the most ambitious that had ever been organized within the Serbian borders in the union with NATO. But even though some military cooperation between Serbia and NATO is shown, the majority of the country residents still has negative attitude toward the NATO activities and European influence. The reason of it includes the importance of historical memory. In 1999 NATO without any sanctions from the UN Security Council had made an armed attack against former Yugoslavia. The statistics showed 80% of Serbian residents are against of any kinds of cooperation with NATO. But it did not stop the Serbian government to sign Individual partnership plan with NATO. Serbia is not a member of the organization, but nevertheless NATO has firmly settled down there.

If to take the global and European political situation into consideration, the Slavic unity more seems as the myth, than the reality. Notwithstanding all contradictions, ordinary people do not face any obstacles in communication with each other; cultural communities organize festivals and the days of Slavic culture. Nevertheless, the crisis of the Slavic world still remains. Dostoevsky showed the upward talent for strategic prediction and accurately defined the main tendency of communication between Russia and its Slavic "brothers".

5. Conclusion

F.M. Dostoevsky's "A Writer's Diary" can be estimated as a phenomenon of not only Russian literature but also the world one too. The facts given by Dostoevsky two centuries ago are very accurate for the modern political situation. The Slavic people's relations are currently in the state of crisis and one of its pole is Russia, that according to Dostoevsky is the only actor who can rebuild the Slavic unity.

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