FIFTH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SLAVIC STUDIES

On March 15-18, 1972 in Dallas, Texas was held the annual meeting of American Slavists. Their annual gatherings already became an established tradition. The meetings have to enable contacts among scholars, to offer them the opportunity to communicate results of their work and to point out lines for further development of slavic studies.

The 1972 Convention Program Committee under the chairman professor George Hoffman (Austin, Texas) organized the communications around four general topics: 1. State of the field, 2. Anarchism, authority and law, 3. Contemporary problems of society and environment and 4. The conflict between national identity and socialist policy. In addition to this, special and general sessions were dealing with topics related to recent development in the USSR and in South Eastern Europe, mostly focussed on Yugoslavia.

The panel organized around Theme 1 (State of the field) discussed the development of area studies, the status and role of professional journals, the problem of funding sources for scholarly research and for further training of graduate students. The presidential address delivered by the president of the Association, professor Holland Hunter (Haverford College), dealt with the same issues: “Slavic Studies - The Road Ahead.” At a special panel was presented the state of slavic studies in other countries. The Association’s distinguished guests, professor Constantine Giurescu from Bucharest and professor Hermann Gross from Munich presented achievements obtained in their respective countries. (Professor Boguslaw Galeski from Poland was unable to come).

Papers presented in the framework of Theme II emphasized topics concerning the judicial system as source of stability and unstability in Russia and Eastern Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth century, the role of philologists in multi-national situations as well as the impact of literature and philosophy on these situations. The panel concentrated mostly on judicial systems of Russia: on the nineteenth century reforms and imperial policy (Alexander III). Interesting papers were presented upon Russian university life during the two last centuries. However, the panel which emphasized the role of philologists and literature dealt with the multi-national societies in South Eastern Europe. Professor C. Berceanu presented the Rumanian aspects, professor L. Czigany the Hungarian, A. Kadić the Yugoslav and St. Skendi the Yugoslav, Albanian and Greek ones.
Around Theme III were gathered papers related to the modernization and environmental problems, connected to the urbanization and the population trends, as well as to the resulting socio-economic changes. Discussions emphasized interregional migrations in the USSR and locational shifts in Soviet industrial employment in recent times, approaching the phenomena through their demographic, political, economical aspects. One of the papers dealt with the mobility of labor in Yugoslavia. Another one presented the industrial concentration in Budapest and its effects on Hungarian economy.

The most provocative problems were raised at the panel related to Theme IV, dealing with the conflict between national identity and socialist policy. The discussions were concentrated on the very complex phenomenon of modern nationalism and its features in Eastern Europe, as well as on the confrontation of the socialistic theory and praxis. Interesting questions were posed and discussed as, for example, the national identities as obstacles to political and social assimilation, the impact of a nation building on a socialistic system, the problem of regional integration, the conflict and convergence between socialism and nationalism. Special sessions were dealing with economic aspects of the above mentioned questions especially with the confrontation between internal economic regional interests and socialistic trends for integration, as well as collisions between national identities and socialistic economies. A group of papers were concentrated on the role played by literature, press and mass media in general on national sentiments and respective socialistic norms. The papers emphasized the USSR and Eastern Europe, but also Yugoslavia, due to the recent national crisis which this country went through in most recent times. Professor Ivo Lederer (Stanford) presented a key-note speech, entitled “The Conflict Between National Identity and Socialist Theory.” Professor M. Petrovich (Wisconsin) analysed the same problem in a paper dealing with Yugoslav critics of Stalin’s theory. Professor A. Dragnich critically approached Croatian claims towards Serbia in a paper “Yugoslav Government - Decision Making and Nationality Differences.” The attitude of Serbian Social Democrats in regard to the nationality problem was discussed in the paper of R. Milenković. J. Lampe gave a good and informative paper concerning the development of Serbian economic historiography. The Macedonian problem was touched in professor L. A. D. Dellin’s paper: “Conflict between nationalism and internationalism.”

The recent events in Yugoslavia attracted the interests of the conference. The papers concerning the Yugoslav politics were presented at a special session: “National Identities as Obstacles to Socialist Goals” (I. Avakumović-Vancouver), “Violence and Social Change in Yugoslavia” (B. Denich-Colum-
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Bia), "Yugoslav Socialism and the Obsolescence of Praxis" (W. N. Dunn-Pittsburgh), "Territorial Consequences of 1971 Constitutional Revision in Yugoslavia" J. Velikonja - Seattle). The discussions showed a polarization of views and approaches among scholars of Croatian i. e. Serbian origin with neutral interventions of the American-born Slavists.

Finally, a group of students in geography, which spent a summer in Yugoslavia, organized a special session dedicated to "Yugoslavia 1971: The Changing Cultural Landscape." They talked upon internal migrations, tourism, process of urbanization, demographic changes and nationality problems. Besides Yugoslavia, other sessions discussed the nationality problems manifested in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, German Democratic Republic as well as in Ukraina, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The reflexes of nationality problems were found in peasant reactions to reforms and collectivisation, in the position of urban ethnic minorities etc.

The gathering of a large group of Slavists was profited for parallel meetings concerned with specific area studies. The International Research and Exchange Board (IREX) meeting preceded the AAASS conference. The reports presented to the representatives of universities, members of the IREX, dealt with the progressing stage of exchange with Eastern Europe and research opportunities. A Bulgarian Study Group (prof. M. Pundeff, M. Petrovich and others) met during the conference and decided to continue with the publishing of the "Newsletter." The group is planning to organize a conference next May, 1973 in Madison, concerning Bulgaria in past and present times. The American Association for South Slavic Studies, founded last December in Chicago, held a meeting in order to pursue further activities. Finally, a new Journal for South East Europe is initiated in Pittsburgh.

The meeting of American slavists in Dallas manifested some kind of general appraisal of slavic studies in the U.S. The participants were numerous, although in a declining number from previous conferences, due to the budgetary restrictions imposed during the last years to universities in general. But, opposite to this, the further progress and growing interest in slavic studies in the States is obvious. Another characteristic was also manifested: although the Soviet field still represents the bulk of research and scholarly interest (which is a natural consequence of the role played by the USSR in the modern world), the area studies concerning different parts of Eastern Slavic Europe are assuming a constantly growing importance in the framework of slavic studies in general. At least the Dallas conference proved these trends.

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