

**IMPERIAL RUSSIA
(1721-1917):
PANSLAVISM: MAMA
BEAR AND HER CUBS**



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Description

Through the use of various primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain how Pan Slavism developed in Eastern Europe, what role Pan Slavism played in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, and how it reached its zenith in the years leading up to the Great War, and how it ultimately led to Tsar Nicholas's decision to mobilize his troops in defense of Serbia in late July 1914.

Subjects

European History, World History

Grade Level

11-12

Duration

90 minutes

Tour Links

- Bronze Horseman Statue, St. Petersburg
- Column of Glory, St. Petersburg

Essential Questions

- What was Pan Slavism? Why did it develop in Eastern Europe in the last half of the 19th century?
- What was Russia's role in the development of Pan Slavism? What about Serbia and the South Slavs?
- Was Pan Slavism simply a reaction to Pan-Germanism, or was it part of a much wider 19th century European notion of ethnic romanticism?
- What role did Pan Slavism play in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78? What role did Pan Slavism play in Russia's decision to mobilize its troops at the opening of the Great War in 1914?

Academic Summary

Fyodor Dostoyevsky, writing during the 1877 Balkans campaign

Ask the people; ask the soldier; why are they arising? Why are they going to war and what do they expect from it? They will tell you, as one man, that they are going to serve Christ and to liberate the oppressed brethren... We shall watch over their mutual harmony and protect their liberty and independence, be it even against all Europe.

Louis Levine, "Pan-Slavism and European Politics" in Political Science Quarterly, Dec 1914

There was one point, however, at which the interests of all those Slavic peoples met. They all found themselves in the subjection of other nations who despised them. To German, Magyar, and even Turk, the Slav seemed an inferior being who had achieved nothing in politics or in the arts of life. The reaction against this was a desire on the part of the Slavs to assert the value, not of this or that particular Slav people, but of the Slav race as a whole. The leaders of the nationalist movements pointed with equal pride to the political greatness of Russia, to the poetic genius of the Serbs, to the missionary zeal of the early Bulgarians, or to the cultural acquisitions of the Czechs. They interpreted them as illustrations of the common genius of the race. This naturally led to emphasis on the common origin of the Slavs and their bonds of kinship. It resulted in a vague, semi-poetic, semi-philosophical idea of a great Slav race with a common life in the remote past and with a great common destiny in the more or less misty future.

The movement among the western Slavs had its parallel in Russia. The war of 1812 strengthened the national currents in Russian life. A movement to free Russia from western influences and to steer it in the direction of national ideals made its appearance. In the minds of some this national idea was extended to include all Slavs. In 1818 a secret society was formed in southern Russia under the name of "United Slavs," for the purpose of bringing about a federation of all Slavic peoples. The members of the society shared the fate of the revolutionary Dekabristes whom they joined later. But the idea persisted through the following decades and found a warm reception in the literary circle of the Slavophiles who attempted to give definite expression to the national current of Russian thought. The Slavophiles never succeeded in elaborating a systematic philosophy. Their leaders — Khomiakov, Aksakoff, Kireevski — worked in a desultory manner and disagreed on many essential points. But fundamentally they were all inspired by the same idea that it was the great historic mission of Russia to regenerate the world." They arrived at this idea by a peculiar combination of Schelling's mysticism with the politics of Hegel and with a deficient interpretation of Russian history. They drew a distinct line between Western Europe and Russia. The civilization of the former, they maintained, was based on a one-sided rationalism, on Roman ideas, and on the principle of conquest.

It resulted, therefore, in the breakdown of spiritual unity, in political strife, class

struggles and socialist Utopias. There was no hope for the West to emerge from this maze because it contained no seeds for new growths. It could be saved only by the principles which underlay the civilization of the Slavic world. The Slavs had always shown a deep sense of spiritual unity in their Orthodox religion; had never engaged in conquests, and were not influenced by ancient civilization as transmitted by Rome. They had consequently always been free from political disorders and had maintained the principle of democracy and justice in the village community. In the Russian people the peculiar traits and institutions of the Slavs found supreme expression. The Russian people, therefore, were now to take the lead in history and to establish a new and glorious world-civilization on the Slavic tri-unity of orthodoxy, popular sentiment, and autocracy.

The Slavophiles were decided Pan-Slavists. To their way of thinking, the world drama was a struggle for the supremacy of Slavism. They were, therefore, interested in the struggles of the Slavic peoples for emancipation. But they regarded Russia as the supreme expression of the Slavic world and they expected the other Slavs to recognize this superiority. Khomiakov's poems sang of the time when all the Slavic eagles would rest under the wings of the "Eagle of the North". All the Slavophiles spoke of the western and southern Slavs as their "minor brethren". They imagined the union of the Slavic world based not only on the political hegemony of Russia, but also on acceptance of orthodoxy and on the recognition of Russian as the common literary language of the Slavs.

On 28 July 1914, in response to an ultimatum from Austria to his ally Serbia, Tsar Nicholas II ordered a general mobilization of the imperial Russian army. A few days later, armies from across the globe began battling each other in what was to become the bloodiest conflict at that point in human history, a war that would shake the very foundations of Europe itself. In its wake, three once great empires would stand no more. Russia would be one such victim. Rocked by internal strife and external losses, she would collapse into revolution and civil war. Today, as the world approaches the 100 year anniversary of the war, questions remain as to why it ever started. Fingers still point to the various key players, assigning blame to such countries as Austria, Germany, France and Britain. Many people today wonder why the giant bear of Eastern Europe would support such a troublesome ally. The reason was simple: the concept of "panslavism", a desire to unite all Slavs in a common bond.

Panslavism was both a natural outgrowth of western Romanticism and a response to German unification efforts during the mid-nineteenth century. The term "panslavism" was first used in the mid-1830s by intellectuals in Russia to describe a cultural, linguistic and religious bond felt by many in eastern Europe, but a general feeling of a Slavic unity had permeated Russian and south Slavic life since the 15th century.

By the later decades of the 19th century, with German nationalism perceived as a threat to Eastern Europe, Russian ideas behind panslavism took on a new impetus. In seeking to unite all Slavs, proponents of panslavism saw themselves as champions of an oppressed ethnic group that had been persecuted for a long time, first by the

Ottomans and the Austrians and now by the Germans. The Balkans were the key. In the eyes of many Russian intellectuals, these south Slavs had "lost their way" under Ottoman domination and it was up to mother Russia to lead the way home. Under Alexander II's rule, panslavism came to be seen as the true destiny of Holy Russia. The Ottomans and Austrians, of course, had little use for any such talk of Slavic unity. Russian leaders knew if they were to liberate their brethren, it would mean war. Ottoman Turkey, Europe's 500-year-old "sick man", was falling apart. Fortunately for proponents of panslavism, a storm was brewing in the Balkans. Serbia, with Russian help and money, was arming for war.

Serbia, nominally independent since 1813, also saw itself as the defender of slavdom. Although one would think that this position would have brought the Serbs into direct competition with Russia, much as Austrian overtures towards a united Germany had unnerved Prussia, eastern Slavs welcomed the gesture. Alexander knew that Serbia was too weak as a world power to defend herself and therefore would rely on Russia's power and generosity. For its part, Russia would respect Serbian independence, at least on paper. The problem that arose was what exactly constituted independence. In 1869, a memorandum by Russian General R.A. Fadeev attempted to settle that very question. He stated,

The independence of each member of the liberated family in his internal affairs, a separate Ruler and separate political institutions, as may be most convenient to each -- all this is already settled by history. But independence in an international and military point of view is quite a different question ... in the present state of Europe, there is no room for a heap of small nations ... every Russian, as well as every Slav, should desire to see chiefly the Russian reigning House cover the liberated soil of Eastern Europe with its branches, under the supremacy and lead of the Tsar of Russia.

In a grand show of unity and brotherhood, the tsar opened his state to his brothers during the Moscow Slav Congress in the fall of 1867. Slavic representatives from all over the Balkans attended, including tiny Montenegro, well known at the time as a steadfast ally of the Russian empire. Slavic unity was slowly becoming a reality. All that remained now was a call for help from one of the bear's cubs. The cry would come in 1875.

That summer brought a peasant revolt in Herzegovina against the Ottomans which quickly threatened to engulf the region. Within a year, Serbian and Montenegrin troops were marching off to war in a fight to liberate their "brother slavs" from the oppressive Turks. Although Russia officially declared neutrality in the conflict, many of her citizens fought gallantly in private armies and many more supported the war from home. By the spring of 1876, thousands of Russian rubles were pouring into Montenegro and Serbia, ostensibly to help with a growing refugee problem, but it was generally suspected that most of the money was going to support the war. When the Bulgarians rebelled against their Turkish oppressors as well, Russia broke with international trend and threatened to intervene.

In the following year (1877), Russia joined the cause herself. On April 24, Tsar

Alexander II issued a war manifesto outlining Russia's reasons for entering the war. She had moved against Turkey for purely ideological reasons. Since no one in Europe would stand up in defense of the south Slavs, the Russians would do it themselves. The Ottoman Empire's rule in the Balkans had been oppressive and cruel. Russia had tried for years to secure better treatment for her brothers, but to no avail. Now she would secure that remedy by force.

In Belgrade, news of the manifesto led to a general rejoicing. Across the Balkans, Slavs echoed the sentiments of the pan Slavic newspaper *Istok*. Its lead story on 27 April proclaimed that the day of redemption was upon them. Tsar Alexander, with the help the Slav God, would free Christians oppressed by the infidels. The paper called on Slavs across Serbia to thank God for the advance of the, "holy and powerful mother of Slavdom, Russia."

By early winter, Russian troops were within miles of Constantinople. The Ottomans quickly surrendered, and the resulting treaties confirmed Russia's role in Balkan affairs, but other European countries began to worry that the tsar's moves threatened to destroy the delicate balance in the region. The Hapsburg Empire in Vienna was especially concerned, as she had designs on the area the Russians were now threatening to dominate.

By the time Nicholas II came to the throne in Russia in 1894, panslavism was entrenched in the foreign policy decisions of the empire. In 1908, when an internal revolution broke out in Turkey, Bulgaria declared its outright independence. Taking advantage of what it believed to be the confusion of an unstable situation, Austria annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, a move that brought violent criticism from both Russia and Serbia. Pan Slavs from both the Balkans and Mother Russia were incensed at the thought of "German" occupation of Bosnia. The tsar realized, however, that his empire was too weak to fight a war against Germany (sure to follow her ally Austria) at that point. Although the rhetoric coming out of St. Petersburg during the 1908 crisis was heated and threatening, in the end Russia allowed Austria's moves in the Balkans to go unchallenged.

Serbian officials accused the Russians of pandering to the West. As a result, the tsar realized that he would have to step up support for his Slavic brothers, or take the risk that they would be forced to look elsewhere for protection. Russian messages to Belgrade asked the Serbs to be patient. Nicholas then looked to building up his own forces for the fight he was sure would come.

On 28 June 1914, a young radical pro-Serb revolutionary assassinated the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne while he was visiting Sarajevo, Bosnia. Austria, after consulting her German allies, issued an ultimatum to Serbia demanding Hapsburg control over the Slavic piedmont. Russia was forced into a difficult decision. If she again turned a deaf ear to Serbia, any hope of panslavism would be dead. Tsar Nicholas also realized that Austria was issuing a challenge to Russia, one where her status as a great power was at stake. This time, Russia refused to back down. On July 28, one month after the assassination, Nicholas called for full mobilization of the army in defense of his brothers. On August 4, the Russian minister for Foreign Affairs addressed the Duma and spelled out why they had gone to war. After going over the facts of the previous six weeks, he stated,

Though it had to undergo severe trials, the union of the Orthodox Balkan peoples will, so God wills, one day be realized ... For that purpose Serbia had to serve, that Serbia with which ties of history, of common descent and faith unite us ... An attitude of indifference on our part would have meant the abandonment of our centuries - old role as protector of the Balkan nations.

Panslavism had brought the world to war. Over the next four years, millions of Russian soldiers died trying to defend their brothers. After some initial success, the war quickly turned against the Russian army. By 1917, the tsar was gone, brought down by a socialist revolution interested not in Pan-Slavic ideas but rather feeding hungry Russians. In the end, Panslavism would triumph, just not in any way Russian romantics thought it would. Yugoslavia, a new country created for the south Slavs in 1919, would be led by Serbia alone, although Russian ties would remain strong for much of the 20th century.

Through the use of various primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain how Panslavism developed in Eastern Europe, what role Panslavism played in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, and how it reached its zenith in the years leading up to the Great War, and how it ultimately led to Tsar Nicholas's decision to mobilize his troops in defense of Serbia in late July 1914.

Objectives

1. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain Panslavism as it developed in 19th century Eastern Europe.
2. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain what role Panslavism played in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78.
3. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain how Panslavism reached its zenith in the years leading up to the Great War.
4. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain what role Panslavism played in Tsar Nicholas II's decision to mobilize Russian troops in defense of Serbia in late July 1914.

Procedure

I. Anticipatory Set

- Writing / Question: What are the elements of nationalism? How do we define a “nation”? (5 min)
- Handouts – Copies of the primary sources and readings from the websites listed. (5 min)

II. Body of Lesson

- Lecture / PPT – Pan Slavism and 19th century Russian Nationalism (30 min)
- Independent Activity – Students read the sources and articles about Pan Slavism in 19th century Eastern Europe. (30 min)
- Suggestion: Have the students read some of the articles for homework to prepare for class discussion.
- Suggestion: Break students into groups and assign different articles to each group.
- Group Activity – Socratic Discussion: What was Pan Slavism? What role did Pan Slavism play in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 and in Russia’s decision to support Serbia in 1914? (20 min)

III. Closure

- Assessment – Essay / DBQ: Explain in detail how Pan Slavism developed in Eastern Europe, what role Pan Slavism played in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, and how it reached its zenith in the years leading up to the Great War, and how it ultimately led to Tsar Nicholas’s decision to mobilize his troops in defense of Serbia in late July 1914.

Extension

On tour: Column of Glory, St. Petersburg

While on tour, students in St Petersburg can visit Trinity Cathedral while touring the historic city center (it is not far from the metro station). In front of the northern façade sits the Column of Glory, a memorial to Russian soldiers who fought and died in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78. Today’s column is a replica. The original one, erected in 1886, was dismantled and sold to Germany in 1929 by Soviet Premier Josef Stalin. The cathedral itself was closed by the same regime in 1938, only to be returned to the Russian Orthodox Church in 1990. In 2004, the memorial was rebuilt using the original blueprints and it was presented to the city of St. Petersburg for its 300th anniversary.

Web Links

Lesson Plan Websites

- bakuninlibrary.blogspot.com/2013/12/pan-slavism-1870.html
Panslavism (primary source). Essay written in 1870 by Mikhail Bakunin, a famous Russian anarchist, on the dangers of Pan-Slavism. The essay criticizes Pan-Slavic movements then circulating in Russia as just a carefully concealed ruse designed to expand the empire at the expense of brother Slavs. Highly recommended for students and teachers.
- www.unz.org/Public/PoliticalScienceQ-1914dec-00664
Panslavism and European Politics (primary source) – essay written by Louis Levine PhD, political scientist for Political Science Quarterly (December 1914)
- imrussia.org/en/society/527-the-birth-of-pan-slavism
The Birth of Pan-Slavism (web essay). From Alexander Yanov, retired professor of Russian History at the University of California Berkley. This essay, presented by the Institute of Modern Russia's website, is in two parts and tells the story of Pan-Slavism in Russia and Eastern Europe from its birth as part of the romantic nationalist movement in mid-19th century Europe to its role in Russia's foreign policy decisions since the 1870s. Highly recommended for students and teachers.
- www.rusyn.org/polpanslavism.html
Pan-Slavism (website) – from the World Academy of Carpatho-Rusym Culture
- opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2892&context=ocj
The European War: Panslavism (primary source / essay). Essay written in October 1914 from Paul Carus, German-American author and philosopher. This essay is biased towards the German-Austrian position in the war in “defending” the German people from Russian Panslavism. Carus even goes so far as to call the Slavs a “hot-blooded and excitable race.” He also refers to Tsar Nicholas as a “helpless tool” and to Kaiser William as a “peaceful man” who deserves the Nobel Peace Prize. Highly recommended for students and teachers, especially those in AP/Advanced classes.
- distamavis.wikispaces.com/file/view/Russian+NationalismSD.ppt
Russian Nationalism (powerpoint)
- www.teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1
Reading Like a Historian: Primary Source Documents (video). Great 2-minute video on how to incorporate primary sources into the Common Core and history classes. From Shilpa Duvoor of Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City, CA. Highly recommended for teachers.

Background Information

- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan-Slavism
Panslavism – Wikipedia article

- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prague_Slavic_Congress,_1848
Prague Slavic Conference of 1848 – Wikipedia article

Other Relevant Passports Lesson Plans

- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/russia/crimean-war-1853-to-1856
The Crimean War 1853-56
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/russia/dostoevsky-notes-from-underground
Imperial Russia – Dostoevsky: Notes from Underground
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/russia/dostoevsky-grand-inquisitor
Imperial Russia – Dostoevsky: Brothers Karamazov - The Grand Inquisitor
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/russia/dostoevsky-little-orphan
Imperial Russia – Dostoevsky: The Little Orphan
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/russia/imperial-russia-panslavism
Imperial Russia – Panlavism

Key Terms

- Austro-Hungarian Empire
- Balkans
- Bosnia
- Panlavic Conference of 1848
- Panlavism
- Russo-Turkish War
- Slavs
- Tsar/Czar

