

**Е.Г. Кострикова, *Геополитические интересы России и славянский вопрос: Идейная борьба в российском обществе в начале XX века*, Москва: Кучково поле, 2017. 384 с.**

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The research by E. Kostrikova published in 2017 continues the series of works by modern Russian historians that focus on perception of the Ottoman Empire and Balkan countries in pre-revolutionary Russia (such as: “The Tsar and the Sultan. The Ottoman Empire in eyes of Russians” by V. Taki and “The sick man during wars and revolutions” The image of Turkey in Russian magazine satire 1908-1918” by T. Filippova). Despite having “The Slavic question” (which in the paper is being perceived as the problem of unification of the Slavs in face of foreign danger) in the title, the author pays primary attention to the Balkan aspect due to traditional importance of the Balkan region to the Russian Empire. The research material, consisting of various archives, press and memoirs of famous activists of the beginning of the XX century, allows the researcher to explore the reaction that Russian publicity had to current Balkan situation (from Bosnian crisis to the pre-world war crisis) through the prism of the geopolitical tasks of the Russian Empire in the region.

The author forms such tasks quite traditionally: to keep the dominating position of Russia in the Balkan countries and to establish control over strategically important straits of Bosphorus and Dardanelles. But the author willingly puts emphasis on the ideological atmosphere that determined the understanding of those tasks and the instrumentation needed to complete them as seen by representatives of various social strata and political currents, instead of focusing on political and socio-economic processes.

The perception of the place of Russia among the Slavic nations proves to be heterogeneous. The author singles out the pan-Slavists – the followers of the Slavophiles of the XIX century, united around the Petersburg Slavic society (P. Kulakovsky, P. Parensov, A. Bashmakov, V. Korablev), supporters of “all-Slavism” (N. Aksakov) and neo-Slavism (A. Pogodin, E. and G. Trubetskoy), and, finally, nationalists (M. Menshikov). Despite sharing a common view on the need to unite the Slavs, the groups had varying ideas on the ways to achieve this union (the suggestions range from the inclusion of all Slavic nations into Russia to the creation of a federation of Slavic states). Moreover, the groups expressed different opinions on the priority of blood relations and religious commonality in identifying possible allies of Russia among the Slavs.

The author highlights the problem of assessment of foreign policy of Russia by representatives of mentioned movements, primarily in the Balkans. It was often perceived in the context of the confrontation between “Slavs” and “Teutons” in order to achieve control over Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. The retreat of Russia in the Bosnian crisis and

the sad fate of the Balkan Union, whose participants eventually turned their weapons against each other, led to open criticism of the actions of the foreign ministers A. Izvolsky and S. Sazonov. They were repeatedly accused of excessive compliance, inconsistency and inability to defend Russia's interests in the international arena. Many of the accusations found in press were unjust (a lot of diplomatic concessions of Russia were influenced by the lack of support from its allies – France and Great Britain), and the ministers, especially S. Sazonov, had to act quite consciously to preserve the image of their department in the eyes of the public.

The chapters of the book that focus on the Balkan wars of 1912-1913 are the most successful ones. They contain a detailed description of the interaction between Russian ambassadors and the Balkan countries' governments aimed at upholding the interests of the latter and preserving the Balkan Union. The chapters shed light on the broad activities of Russian doctors in the front line, on the coverage of the Balkan events in the press (most notable among other journalists were V. Nemirovich-Danchenko and N. Mamontov), and on the involvement in politics among the masses that actively participated in demonstrations in St. Petersburg in order to support the Slavic peoples in the Balkans. At the same time, the author manages to disclose these events not only from the point of view of the Russian public and government, but also from the perspective of the governments and the press of major European powers, allies and rivals of Russia in the region, namely Britain, France, Germany and Austria-Hungary.

Among the few drawbacks of the work the lack of attention given to socio-economic issues is the most notable. The author barely touches upon issues related to Russia's economic pervasion into the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire. Besides that, the author does not go into whether the views of political and public figures on the Slavic question mentioned in the work reflect personal preferences or interests of larger social groups (for example, the bourgeoisie with its specific interests in the Balkan region). Lastly, the work lacks visual accompaniment that could have been handled in the form of photographs or caricatures and would provide proper insight of the press readers of the early XX century on the events in the Balkans.

Nevertheless, the author manages to bring together many disjointed details to compose an entire multicolored mosaic which presents readers with the diversity of views and opinions on the "Slavic question" that was inherent in the Russian public on the edge of the First World War. The research done by E. Kostrikova is of great interest to those who are not indifferent to the interrelationships between Russia and the Slavic nations, to the development of public opinion in the Russian Empire and to Russian foreign policy in the early 20th century.