

**NEAR EASTERN
AFFAIRS AND
CONDITIONS**

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Near Eastern affairs and conditions by Stephen Panaretoff

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48
P3



**NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS
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LECTURE I.

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE BALKAN SLAVS.

THE word Slavs, as it is usually written in English and other European languages, does not exactly represent the name by which the people to whom it applies designate themselves. In all Slavic languages of to-day as well as in old Slavic writers the name is *Sloveni*. The root of the word is found in the names of Slovenes and Slovaks borne by two Slavic peoples to-day, and the name of Slavonia, which forms a part of Croatia. The derivation of the word is obscure and has given rise to various interpretations. According to some it was originally the name of a country, while others see in it the name of a tribe, which by extension in the course of time was applied to the whole race. Reasoning from the name *Nyemets* which they derive from the Slavic word *nyem* (dumb), applied by Slavs in general to a German, some writers have derived the name *Sloveni* from the word *Slovo* (word or speech) and have explained it to mean the speaking people in contradistinction from the dumb people, or those whose language was incomprehensible to the Slavs.

Besides the name *Sloveni*, the names of *Anti* and *Venedi* are supposed to designate Slavic tribes, and the latter name—*Venedi*—still survives in the name *Wenden* or *Winden*, by which the Germans call the Slavs who live in Saxony and the Eastern Alps.

The Slavic invasions of the Balkan Peninsula began with the sixth century, although there are writers who maintain that Slavs entered the Peninsula before that date on predatory inroads, either by themselves or in company with other tribes. With the sixth century, however, the Slavs began their incursions across the river Danube into the Peninsula not so much with the object of plundering as of settling in it. By the middle of the seventh century they had established themselves so securely over the larger part of the Peninsula, that the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, who wrote in the tenth century, in speaking of the conditions in the Peninsula in the eighth century, says that "the whole country was Slavicised and became barbarian," that is, non-Greek. Another Greek writer, towards the end of the tenth century, remarks: "And even now the whole Epirus and nearly the whole of Greece and Peloponnesus and Macedonia are occupied by Slavs." These and other testimonies about the extent of the Slavic settlements in the Balkan Peninsula served as the basis of Prof. Fallmerayer's theory propounded about ninety years ago that the modern Greeks are not the genuine descendants of the ancient Hellenes, but hellenized Slavs. This theory finds now few supporters and has been disproved by later historians as exaggerated, but the evidence of a large influx of Slavs into Greece and the Peloponnesus