

**A BULWARK AGAINST
GERMANY; THE FIGHT OF THE
SLOVENES, THE WESTERN
BRANCH OF THE JUGOSLAVS,
FOR NATIONAL EXISTENCE**

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A bulwark against Germany; the fight of the Slovenes, the western Branch of the Jugoslavs, for national existence by Bogumil Vosnjak & Fanny S. Copeland

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A BULWARK AGAINST GERMANY

THE FIGHT OF THE SLOVENES, THE
WESTERN BRANCH OF THE JUGO-
SLAVS, FOR NATIONAL EXISTENCE

BY

BOGUMIL VOSNJAK, LL.D.

LATE LECTURER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB (CROATIA)

TRANSLATED BY

FANNY S. COPELAND



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PREFACE

ONE of the primary causes of the World-War was Germany's determination in the interests of Pan-Germanism to crush the Jugoslavs; and from this point of view the cataclysm of 1914 was merely the crisis in the long and dogged struggle which has been waged for centuries between Germanism and the Jugoslavs, and of which European public opinion has been so curiously ignorant.

In this struggle the Serbs and Croats were more fortunately placed than their brothers the Slovenes, who, being the most westerly of the Jugoslavs, were compelled to bear the brunt of the German attack. In the early Middle Ages the Slovenes were first among the Jugoslavs to found an independent State, and though they were also fated to be the earliest victims of German conquest, they nevertheless continued to form a strong ethnical barrier, beyond which Serbs and Croats, sheltered from the tyrannical influence of the Holy Roman Empire, could develop their social and national characteristics. But it was not until the nineteenth century, when Pan-Germanism began to expand towards the southern seas, that the Slovenes became in truth the Bulwark of their race, and the severity of

their struggle warned the rest of the Yugoslavs that their fate too was hanging in the balance. Owing to their north-westerly position the Slovenes form the true national, political, and economic rampart of Jugoslavdom, and like outposts on exposed ground they watched the advance of the gigantic foe whose purpose it was to destroy the Yugoslavs and enslave Italy. For the dire menace of the German peril was always felt in the Slovene north sooner than in Zagreb (Agram) or Belgrade or in the cities of Lombardy.

A recognized State has its diplomatic representatives abroad, whose duty it is to represent its interests, and to keep other nations informed as to its home affairs. A nationality without an independent State organization is in an unfortunate position, as its diplomatic work perforce devolves upon private enterprise. Undoubtedly the political leaders of a nation without a State owe it to their position to keep foreign countries informed of the conditions at home, especially if these conditions might imperil the peace of the nations. Unfortunately, the leaders of the nation dealt with in this book have not done this, and now, in the midst of the most tremendous upheaval the world has witnessed, a Yugoslav who has never before taken a share in politics has been called upon to rectify their omission. As the book had to be written in a foreign

country, the author was obliged to draw mainly on his personal knowledge and memory, and the material at his disposal unfortunately, was not as extensive as it would have been in his own country.

For this and other reasons the book does not pretend to deal exhaustively with Slovene life in all its aspects. Only a historian of literature could adequately interpret Slovene intellectual life to the British public, and illustrate the value of Slovene literature to the nation and to humanity ; for the Slovenes boast a considerable number of men of letters worthy of a niche in the world's pantheon of literary genius. And only a master of word-painting could do justice to the beauty and charm of the Slovene lands in language of sufficient wealth and beauty.

The author is conscious of being neither a poet nor a literary expert, and has therefore contented himself with sketching in broad outlines the origin and history of the Slovene people, in an endeavour to acquaint the British people with a small and unknown ally, but one whose pluck and perseverance has long and sturdily withstood Pan-Germanism on the shores of the Adriatic.

The chapters in this book were written in spring, 1915—with the exception of Chapter II, which was written in spring, 1916—with the object of bringing the Slovenes nearer to

English readers, and to unfold to them a new national world and its past and present, its aims and aspirations. It may come as a surprise to some readers to realize that German methods have been at work for a thousand years in the Slovene lands, and to trace the connection between the events and conditions described in these pages and some of the burning questions of the hour.

It is almost an article of religious faith with the Slovenes that the present crisis will decide their fate. They feel that it is a question of now or never, and that the long, grim struggle must at last lead to national independence, or else end in national extinction.

But the end of this struggle cannot be a matter of indifference to Europe, for by the national death of the Slovenes an extremely important strip of territory would become German. In that case Germany would be the real gainer, as German Government tactics and German social ideals would triumph where to-day the Slav democratic ideal is still holding its own against fearful odds.

My book is not conceived in a spirit of hate or controversy. It is merely intended to throw an important light on the life-or-death struggle waged by a poor but self-reliant and courageous people who are coming forward at this great moment in history, convinced of the justice and integrity of their cause.