IN SEARCH OF NEW INTEGRATION

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CHANGE

As you all know, an enormous change has occurred to shock the whole world at the end of the 20th century. This was the collapse of the USSR, together with the breaking up of the Soviet bloc and its reorganization into a new East European world system. This change was, in fact, on its way for a long time; amidst the structure of the Soviet system, crisis factors had accumulated, beginning with the serious incident of the so-called Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia in 1968, not to mention the large-scale riot against the Hungarian Communist regime far back in 1956. Having lagged behind greatly in the competition for economic growth and material prosperity, though keeping up with the United States of America in the arms race, the Soviet Union has suffered from destruction within itself. Especially after the war started by the Soviet army in Afghanistan in 1979, which was viewed as morally unsustainable and unsupported by the rest of the world, it has been destined to disintegrate into pieces. And finally it ceased to be a center for the newly designed and hoped-for utopian world of socialism.

This change has so far been accompanied by other changes in and out of the bloc. The end of the cold war also brought about a new political atmosphere within the former bloc; various processes of disintegration are still in progress among the former member countries, republics, provinces, and races, and have resulted in every kind of military clash between them. Apart from the tragedies in the former Soviet bloc, there has also been observed a new wave of national self-consciousness in the countries which attained their independence, even on the level of scientific studies, that seems to enlarge the sphere and scope of our interest in them. National languages are asserting themselves and claiming for
individual distinctiveness in their economic lives, state policies, traditional cultures, histories, and so on. Like the vast diffusion of our cosmos, the changes in these areas, in view of the study in which we have so far engaged, seem to require from us another alternative for understanding the object in full.

How should we relate to such a shift to a new diversity of scientific objects both in the former Soviet Union and in the East European countries?

ALTERNATIVE

The end of the cold war and the new launch of a peace rocket in a joint program suddenly and finally opened the gates of the Russian secret archives, not only to its own scholars, but also to scholars in the Western world. It might be said that the Russian open-door policy had been promoted by her diplomacy of «new thinking», as well as by her economic transition to a market economy as a whole. Taking the opportunity of this change in the Russian atmosphere, many more Western scholars are enjoying freely visiting the Russian archives. Favoring with this circumstance that has taken place in Russia, together with the corresponding change in diplomacy and strategy on the US side, American scholars and students of Slavic studies seem to have changed their own stance from so-called «area or strategic studies» to embrace wider interests. Scholars in other countries, under the influence of the US example, are also remaking their research methods somewhat to defer from those used in the era of the cold war. And there is more. The new economic and diplomatic contacts by Russia with such Asian countries as South Korea also gave rise to a new stimulation in Slavic and Russian studies. More extraordinary is the fact that Russian and East European scholars are gradually joining Western scientific organisations or societies in the field of Slavic studies, thus giving a new impetus to us. Occasionally, joint research programs are being planned together by scholars east and west. Though some differences in the research methods or standpoints between them are still to be found, needless to say, such kinds of mutualism in scientific activities in the future will bring about, positive results for the whole world as it faces up to the new century.

Now what alternative is it advisable for us Japanese scholars to take?

HISTORY

Our JSSEES formally began its activities in 1978, when the Japanese govern-
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ment had come to be aware of the necessity for its own basic center for Soviet studies, and the Slavic Research Center attached to Hokkaido University in Sapporo was officially recognized as an independent scientific center. The coincidence is not important in itself. What is important and should be emphasized is that our society has its own publication only in foreign languages, mainly either in English or Russian, and is run financially by ourselves with a minimum subsidy from the government. Different from those Japanese societies or organizations for Slavic or East European studies which already existed, we put an emphasis simply on introducing our scientific works not to domestic colleagues, but solely to foreign scholars and researchers. Moreover, our society, as is proven by its members’ papers on the pages of every issue, invites scholars to write from almost all ranges of the social and humanistic sciences. After elaborate preparation for issuing our scientific journal, the first issue was introduced to the world in 1980, the year when the war in Afghanistan broke out. Then, afterwards, through more than 20 years of activity, we reached the conclusion that the appropriateness of our own alternative and choice in the direction of scientific activity was finally confirmed. So far, we have largely depended on Western achievements in Slavic studies, but our society is now seeking after more originality and the achievement of our own status among the world’s scientific activities. This means, in other words, that we, our members, ought to give and supply much more to the outer world, rather than exclusively receiving of our own scientific information or accepting foreign information. At the gateway of our new century, what strategy we should have that accords with the new world environment so-called «globalization»?

STRATEGY

In May of last year, we Japanese scholars and students at large working in Slavic studies, even including some officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, held a commemorative joint meeting at Sophia University in Tokyo, to discover and discuss a new horizon for future research work in Japan. The event was publicly announced as the formation of the «Japan Council of Russian and East European Studies». It was indeed a great topic for us all. Although not a small number of scientific societies, associations or organizations for Slavic studies already existed, we dared to declare that we should gather together under the common flag of «larger scale area studies», in order to have a single channel or

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gateway to and from the world. The integration of the Japanese inner organizations was partly motivated by the fall of the Soviet system, and partly advised by AAASS. As noted above, the great change that occurred both in Russia and in East European countries has reached to every corner of their societies, which forced us to arrive at a new method of approach and a new attitude toward the renewed Russia and East European countries. Now, we are also required to have widespread cooperation and multiple observations for the better understanding of those countries now reformed. The truth is that the suggestion for forming a united scientific organization in Japan for Slavists was originally brought up at the «Japan-US Joint Scientific Committee», which opened in Tokyo in 1995. It must be emphasized here again that we prefer to choose another strategy. However, we have to enlarge our effort not in the direction of a «closed system», but of an «open system». The reason for and the necessity of the new integration must be explained in another context. Yes, there has been a rapid growth of worldwide information technology, by which help we should be able to have better contact with scholars in foreign countries, including, of course, those in Russia and East European countries. The Japan Council that is in the making will be ready to have, in cooperation with ICCEES, contact with every scholar in every country. This integration strategy does not deprive each of us of our independence, or give any regulation or control over participants. The council is rather a loose congregation of five large organizations of Slavists; namely, The Japanese Association for Russian and East European Studies, Japanese Association for Scholars in Russian Studies, The Japanese Society for Slavic and East European Studies, The Society for Scholars of Russian History, and Japan Society of International Politics (Department of Russia and East European Countries). There still exist other organizations, that have not yet joined his council for some reasons. But we believe that it would not take much time for them to join us to form a scientific confederation in Japan.

In conclusion, our society hopes to explicitly declare our positive attitude toward the new integration. Under the influence of the unfortunate experience of militarism, state mobilization and oppression during World War II, we have been inclined to avoid any orientation from the side of the state or government. In the meantime, as they are closely connected to and recruited into the state policy under the slogan of «area studies», American scholars have had no hesitation about receiving support from the government. Such distinct differences
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in the nature of scholars' attitudes, are now losing their fundamental meaning; the end of the cold war has weakened the sharp contrast between these two options. It is not that much more financial aid and less regulation over each scientific work might be expected in Japan. Integration, however, of genuine scientific organizations in Japan has the character of NGO or NPO activities. The council does not ally us with any state interference or control, but it offers us a united conduit for information that connects with the whole world.