

**Speech by Rayko Zhinzifov
at the Congress of the Slavs in Moscow on
the significance of the Slavonic script and on
the destiny of Bulgarian people.**

Moscow 1857

“Brethren Slavs! Being a Bulgarian, I kindly ask you to allow me to say a few humble words on behalf of that Slav tribe or nation known under the name of Bulgarians who inhabit a considerable part of the Balkan Peninsula. I admit that my Words are weak and colorless but they, of this I can assure you, come from the depth of my soul and are full of sincere love and profound gratitude towards the great Russian people, who have created the only powerful and strong Slav state in the world.

Here, in this place, a sacred gonfalon is hoisted and waving over our heads. This is a sacred banner which, after a long period of separation, is for the first time waving over us all — Slav brethren, a banner bearing the images of the Saints Cyril and Methodius, enlighteners of all Slavs without any exception and equal to the Apostles. No one will dare to deny that this sacred banner is the common possession of all the Slavs. This is a fact. Let us not forget, however, that our Slav enlighteners and inventors of the Slavonic writing, the Saints Cyril and Methodius, were born in Bulgaria or, which is the same, in Slav Macedonia, that they lived and grew up in the midst of the people, whose forefathers spoke the same language which the Slav enlighteners learned thoroughly and into which they translated the Gospel.

It was from their hands that all Slav clans, including the Russians, received the Holy Gospel in a language that was comparatively accessible to each one of the kindred Slav tribes. It was through them and their faithful followers that in the great Russian land the seed of the Slavonic science and of the holy and true Orthodox faith was sown, which is the corner stone of the whole past, present and future historical development and enlightenment of the Russian nation.

Brothers! Neither is this the place, nor have I sufficient time to dwell in detail on the historical destiny and deeds of the Bulgarian people, I cannot either point to you in detail what place the Bulgarian people had and have in the historical development of the Slav peoples and what they contributed to the development of Slav-Russian literature in the Russian lands with their works in Slavonic and Old Bulgarian. But I deem it my sacred duty to tell the

Russian people that the entire Bulgarian people are now groaning under the heavy unbearable yoke of the Asian barbarians!

Brother Russians! Is it possible that you, powerful and strong of spirit and body as you are, will forget the long-suffering Bulgarian people who for more than five centuries have been under the hateful yoke of the ferocious and blood thirsty Turks'?

(No, we won't forget!)

Is it possible that you, whom God has favored with all the blessings, in the widest scene of this world, will not lend a helping hand to the suffering Bulgarian people'?

(Yes, yes, we will lend them our hand!)

Brothers! The Bulgarian people firmly believe that when the hour comes and this hour is soon to come, the whole Russian nation will lose no time and come to their aid to save them from the centuries- long heavy bondage!

...

We heard here resound the sounds of the powerful Russian language, the sounds of the Czecho-Slovak language and also the sounds of the Serbo-Croatian language.

Allow me, too, to say a few words in Bulgarian. I now propose the Bulgarian toast. It is a pity there is no wine !"

He was served a glass of wine. Holding it in his hand, Mr. Zhinzifov, with great enthusiasm and in a loud voice read the poem "Toast," written by him:

"Now with wine that's sparkling brightly let us fill our glasses, brethren, all together, all united, take your glasses now and raise them. Slavs we are like those, our brothers: Muscovites and Czechs and Slovaks, Bosnians and Serbs and Croats, Montenegrins, Herzegovins. Let it spread now far and farther, over all Bulgaria sweeping, from the Danube to the Vardar, free the language of the people."

(Applause.)

(Rayko Zhinzifov, Publicistic Works), Vol, II, Sofia, 1964, pp. 201-202; the original is in Russian.