

Slovak Literature and Culture from the “Postcolonial” Perspective

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The study mainly deals with a state of Slovak culture and literature during the period of ideological supervision of the USSR in Czechoslovakia. By looking at two types of authors, through their life stories and analyses of their work the study defines two types of dissent in Slovakia: 1) after the year 1968, 2) after the years 1950 and 1968. The study points out to the parameters of the Western thought (partly also retrospectively) in the Slovak alternative culture and literature, their resistant strength and fight for freedom of thought against the ideological “colonization” and manipulation of consciousness.

Keywords: literature and ideology / Slovak literature / Slovak culture / Soviet Union / dissidence

The study poses a question if the postcolonial literary science, focused on cultures of the so-called Third world, allows for a country in the middle of Europe (but maybe also somewhere else), such as Slovakia, to show signs of the postcolonial country and culture. What is meant is the state of research in literary science in a free country – in Slovakia, when current research has been additionally gathering records of culture and literature, which are alternative to the hegemonic socialist and communist ones. Parallel or alternative culture is very significant, as it holds signs of idiosyncrasy and identity. At the same time it exhibits a high quality and a complex connection with the scholarship of western culture and its value scale. The analyses of this study represent an attempt to prove that Slovak culture and literature maintained their idiosyncrasy in spite of the efforts of surrounding countries and cultures to “colonize” them.¹

Because the aforementioned problem is continuous,² it persists throughout Slovak history and thus could represent material for a monograph, the study focuses by way of a *pars pro toto* via two figures of Slovak culture on resistance against ideological “colonization” of Czechoslovakia after 1968, with a short retrospective of the fifties. Emphases are put on two types of resistance and dissent. The first one manifests in life and work

of Dominik Tatarka – Slovak Vaclav Havel, a signatory of the Charter 77, and his distinctively dissident life story after 1968 (which means almost twenty years of his dissident existence). The second case, where a dissident situation lasted from the fifties until the revolution of 1989 (which means almost forty years), is represented by name of a doctor and an author Pavol Strauss.

After the birth of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in 1945, a character of the Slovak culture demonstrated a colonial character of the country. Since 1948, culture had been controlled by the only political party – the Communist party of Czechoslovakia, manipulated by regulations from the center in Moscow. It functioned on principles of ideology, folk-siness and partisanship.³ Although there was present none of the three forms of governance usually found in colonies (direct rule, protectorate or dominion), this type of hegemony was even sophisticated, allowing for a solidarity game and manipulating with a so-called code of a socialist man. Besides an official work, there existed an alternative one, which was either happening in a total “internal emigration”⁴ or pointed out to the common “schizophrenic” form of publishing, which meant that authors had been expressing in their publications both ways pro-governmentally and also alternatively, especially after Stalin’s death (since 1953).

It is precisely Dominik Tatarka (1913 – 1989) who represents a good example of this kind of existence. He is one of the most educated authors (he studied at Charles University in Prague and at the Sorbonne in Paris). His depute came in 1942 – a collection of novellas *In the Anxiety of Searching*. He took part in the Slovak National Uprising against fascism (1944 – 1945), which put him among politically reliable authors in the fifties. His novel *The Clerical Republic* (1948) deals with the Slovak war state. He was a board member of *Slovak Writers’ Union*. A hegemonic power of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia asked its loyal members to help convincing the public about the guilt of Slovak intellectuals, whom it wanted to get rid off and who were put on trials in Prague at that time. Among others there were to be found guilty members of a left-oriented group called DAV (V. Clementis, L. Novomeský, G. Husák) and Slánsky and Gemünder. Tatarka together with L. Mňačko and A. Bagar published their opinions in the same issue of a daily Pravda. Tatarka’s contribution called *To hate an enemy more fiercely – to love a native party more ardently* (Bátorová, *Dominik Tatarka slovenský Don Quijote*), had a character of a pamphlet, referring to no names, being just a spouting of expressive comments without any arguments, which was not Tuatara’s style of writing. Nothing like that would be found either before or after that in his whole production. At the end of the pamphlet there was a statement, which, in the subtext – between

the lines, undermined its whole meaning and unambiguity: “We haven’t learnt to hate these villains yet, but we will do so!” Only once in a lifetime Tatarka referred to this pamphlet. While recording *Recordings*, Eva Štolbová asked him about it and he said: “... And suddenly Ďuri Špitzer appeared and made one bloody, bloody speech against bourgeois nationalists. (...) And so, I must tell you, my books *In the Anxiety of Searching* and *The Clerical Republic* (...) Because somebody called me a class enemy. (...) And everyone, everyone condemned me. And one day, you know, Janko Kostra and his bitch Krista Bendová made an effective speech to my execution.” (Štolbová, *Navrávačky*).⁵

Further Tatarka’s production serves as an evidence that this pamphlet, which helped to accuse the innocent, had been forced upon him. As the first one among authors and theoreticians he dared to publish his opinion against the unification of production (principles: partisanship, folksiness, ideology) on the pages of the best quality literary magazine *Cultural life* and stressed an author’s right for a unique utterance. He published this courageous opinion in an article called *Word* addressing his contemporaries about literature. He came out from a Russian reformist theoretician Burov, whose work was known to few in Slovakia (Strauss, *Kultúrny* 6–7).⁶ Using the name of the Russian theoretician was a covering maneuver to enable publishing of such a heretic reflection about work uniqueness at that time. *Cultural life* was a magazine, which also brought the first version of Tatarka’s great essay – a farce *The Demon of Conformism* (1956, as a book in 1963), in which the first disclosure of power mechanism of colonial and interstate machinery was presented. In an international context this essay has been compared to an essay of Czesław Miłosz *The Captive Mind* (English exile, 1953), or *September Nights* of a more recent Czech dissident Pavel Kohout.⁷ An absurdity of relationships, hypocrisy and manipulation with human mind are depicted right at the beginning of the essay *The Demon of Conformism*.⁸

...My closest could not withstand to live together with a traitor who held on to his betrayal as to his principle. They have searched and found for themselves a different company, a company of people impaired in this or that manner. In one way or another, I don’t know, they also got into a public process with traitors. They were condemned. And I, in the name of my saint conviction and adherence to principles, asked for the most severe punishment for them, I asked for a death penalty for my wife and my son. After this act of mine, there was not left anything of me but a principle, just a horrible principle: rely and agree!

Names used in the essay are symbolic. The name of a main protagonist Boleráz holds within a dualism of pain – suffering and also healing.

In the figures of hegemonic political holders of “truth” – the powerful ones – “engineers of human souls”, real figures of colleague authors and publicists, who docilely promoted the politics of the Communist Party, can be recognized: Juraj Špitzer and Vladimír Mináč. I am convinced that *The Demon of Conformism* would not come into existence if Tatarka, with the aforementioned pamphlet, had not taken part in the political campaign against bourgeois nationalists and had he not had twinges of conscience.

Dominik Tatarka also dared to question an author of exemplary novel of socialist realism *The Wooden Village* František Hečko, who was on the sunny side, as his novel manifested all required attributes that socialist realism, as a method, was to contain. Tatarka’s crushing critique of František Hečko’s writing method appeared in an extensive polemic essay in *Cultural life* in 1955. (Tatarka, *Proti* 113).

The sixties were the time of political release and amnesties. There was a prevailing effort to enforce a return to the ideas of democracy, which led to the reformatory processes in culture and also in politics – towards Alexander Dubček’s socialism with a human face. Tatarka had been writing a travelogue *Man on the Road* (1967), a book of essays *Against the Demons. A Collection of Essays about Literature and Art* (1968), he had been in a center of the cultural public, had been awarded a state award, had made work trips to Paris and other countries resulting in great reportages and essays. In 1963 a film about bohemians in Slovakia during the years of the Second World War was produced based on his decadent-surrealist novel from 1943 called *The Miraculous Virgin*. Another of his novels was published as a book – *Wicker Armchairs*. It depicted a big platonic love from his Paris period with a historical background of Czechoslovakia’s disintegration and a foundation of the Slovak state in 1939, when the author returned early home from his studies at the Sorbonne. A series of essays concerning Slovak autonomy were published in *Cultural life* at the end of the sixties, as this question had been raised again as an unsolved political problem around 1968. Tatarka strongly advocated for an acknowledgment of the Slovak independence.⁹

Tatarka wrote and published a significant call for co-existence and value awareness: an essay *The City of God*,¹⁰ in which he had anticipated next decades of strong repressions of democracy. He borrowed its name from St. Augustine, that is from a work of religious provenance, which itself was a provocation for a revising, though still communist, regime. At the same time it was an appeal to think about a forgotten or hidden religious identity, which belonged to this country – Slovakia. An introduction to this essay *The City of God* is quite artistically dramatic. It reaches parameters of a myth, but also has a very human dimension. It consists of

a tension between the anticipating skepticism – a terrible prophecy of his own extinction – a social death – and the courage to talk:

I am running towards an extinction, my own personal extinction, with a freedom of a freely falling fifty years old stone. Before a final fall under the lake surface an opportunity came along to voice publicly my dream, my ideal of a social arrangement, an arrangement of my republic, a republic that would be internally free and just, not an inhumane state mechanism (Tatarka, *Smena* 3).

This is how figures of Greek tragedies talked to the crowds before their death. Tatarka spoke here not only about his own dream, even though that would be sufficient as a picture opposing reality. Both fear and courage though can be heard in his prediction. As if the age of fifty-five years that he had just reached was magic, as if he himself determined an age of his public existence, as if he was aware of conducting by his acts his own suicide. He stepped on the road, which had an end at the gallows or Golgotha. Later he wrote to his girlfriend: “...but real was the gallows, I hung at” (E. Štolbová talks about Golgotha) (Tatarka, *Navrávačky* 7).¹¹ Before this, however, there was one more height awaiting him: By no accident he had addressed young people – students – at the Slovak National Uprising Square in Bratislava after the entrance of Warsaw Pact armies in August 1968, a few months later than he predicted his own social end. The essay *The City of God* is the evidence of a compact, integrated personality – a monolith and of a mature reflection, an intellectual performance, which besides the pieces of knowledge offers also their analysis, their diagnosis and a way out. After an experience of recent repressions self-censorship was in place as well. Tatarka’s description of the processes of punishment, watching, persecution and isolation is identical with descriptions of discipline machinery in Foucault’s work *Discipline and Punish* (Slovak translation: Foucault, *Dožerat’ a trestat’. Zrod väzenia*).

In *The City of God* Tatarka suggests the means against “secrecy” and a manipulative machinery of the fifties: transparency and public performance, which inevitably brings “an execution” or its modifications – ostracism, etc. But there is no better way. Tatarka also criticizes a federative arrangement of the future state: there will be two pyramids instead of one, but basically nothing will change. He proposes transparency as a tool against controlling the majority by the governing minority:

A citizen of this republic must exact that no state or party officials would be able to pass secret resolutions or secret obligations behind his back or behind closed doors. A free circulation of information will be a result of the real exercise of the popular power. The mysterious nimbus of the state secret and partisanship will dissolve. Things will be called by their real names. Partisanship will be called

a question of power, a question of the state security or sovereignty. Nation will free its secretaries from their secrets, from secrets of their secret obligations, from the application of irrational and absurd directions. Secretaries without secret will extinct like prehistoric dinosaurs. (*Manuscript 7*).

A pyramidal system of power he characterizes as: "...hierarchical, careerist, hegemonic, undemocratic. ...The Slovak or Czech nation does not have power-based ideals. They have democratic, Christian ideals. They have just been in defense for millennia." (*ibid 7*).

"*The deity of state*" – the only power – as suggested by Tatarka, should be comminuted, shared: "The Republic as a God's community, as a unity of God's communities should have the Establishment really elected, the power shared as much as possible..." (*ibid 7*).

The Christian perspective plays a significant role here. Besides diagnosing the political systems and their functioning, he speaks of culture which he connects to Christianity. He condemns utilitarianism as dehumanized and ascribes it to the American capitalism:

Are we threatened by the renaissance of a religious Christian sentiment? And would that be a thread of socialism in the Republic? ... the basis and objective of each revitalizing process in society is culture. The culture in its immense richness of forms and manifestations is as wide as life itself; it is identical to the fate of nations and humankind, its meaning and fulfilment, its 30–40 millennium eternity. The culture remains sovereign as a Human-God, as a God-Man. A policy maker, capable of greater and longer term conceptions, delineating a national program and state activity, a policy maker as well as a philosopher should draw their inspiration and basis from the culture, including national history. A dehumanized derivate of Americanism, dehumanized deity of omnipotent state was created out of non-respectfulness of sovereignty of culture as a meaning and identity of life, out of its misunderstanding, out of its misuse, out of its rationalistic or utilitarian interpretation... In the background of the Christian culture, in the background of millenniums, in the background of eternity, eternal fights, this Republic of ours seems to me as a God's community. That is the meaning of our current democratic endeavors (*ibid 10*).

In 1968 Tatarka, as a well-respected persona of the Slovak culture, is also known to the youth. He is often invited to debates in universities. In an escalated political situation, when on 21 August 1968 the Warsaw Pact armies occupy Czechoslovakia, in one of the demonstrations Tatarka speaks to students who then carry him by hands above their heads. This is the gesture of a speaker from Ancient Greek tragedies, who speaks to the public before his death (Kerényi 98–99). In fact, this scene was the last public appearance of Domonik Tatarka. He gives back his state awards and honors and decides for a "social death". He lives for the nineteen

years under a police surveillance in Bratislava and refuses to collaborate with the consolidation regime. He dies in the spring of the year of the Velvet Revolution.

In the dissident period he finds support in the Czech alternative scene. He signs the Charter 77 as the second signatory after Václav Havel;¹² he meets with Václav Havel, Ludvík Vaculík and other Czech dissidents (see Fronda). Thanks to these, his manuscripts get abroad. His book *Alone Against the Night* (Tatarka, *Sám proti noci*) is published in the Czech language abroad, he gives his hereditaments to the Museum of Czech Literature and several manuscripts and archival documents are situated in the Archives of Forschungstelle Osteuropa at the University in Bremen.¹³

A physician, essay writer and poet, Pavol Straus,¹⁴ had even a more dismal fate. For his disobedience, the Communist regime put him into total oblivion already in the 1950s. He was not allowed to publish until 1989. He started to publish merely in the 1990s. In contrast to Dominik Tatarka, Pavol Strauss could act merely in the underground – he publically participated in church masses in the town of Nitra, treated people as a physician in private, transcribed manuscripts, critical essays and journals and disseminated these in the form of samizdat.

In the 1980s, when I met with his artwork and this author in person, two types of existence were clear to me: unfree, manipulated, schematic, institutionalized being, which lived easily with a shine of elegant success. In a closer look (in case of intelligent canny individuals only at the second sight) this was rather superficial and in the best case conversationally polite. Nonetheless, it was a boring uncreative being, which was determined by one and only ideological stream of thoughts and thus deprived of dynamics and tension, adventure of quest and thinking per se. The second type of being was unpleasant for the existence of the former, because it was confronted with something fundamental for a human being: the opportunity to adequately co-create the world. It was proving guilty the regime for its lies about the socialist democracy directly through its inability to accept or even listen to an opinion, which was different to the predetermined hegemonic ideology. That is why many individuals had to forcibly withdraw themselves and resigned for the public life. They lived rather simply, less flamboyantly, without political functions or resources, which provided perhaps a superficial but important support and a sense of recognition. These people were not usually publically honored and recognized. To maintain a human dignity in this lifestyle required an almost impossible human strength.

Merely the individuals, who could not and did not know to live differently but authentically, were able to maintain a free, differentiated, discour-

sive being. The creative power of personality also resided in this authenticity. If this had the basis in a possibility of creative acts (from constructing airplanes in one's own yard to hand-carving a musical instrument), it saved the person's integrity by releasing their creative power in a creative act or other artistic expression. The activity of this kind of people and artists is contagious, because it is attractive, visible, although being hidden. That is its specificity and contribution to history, because freedom flies in the air as a fragrance and unsuspecting people look around, where it comes from. As bacteria it unobtrusively settles down in a good humor, in fast spreading bon mots, which make the life bearable in the totalitarian regime. They got seeded in lives of children, who lived in this environment and carried the relay baton of free thinking and human dignity.

In research studies it is necessary to differentiate between the two types of being from case to case. The analyses are not easy. Nonetheless, after the Second World War it is possible to differentiate two kinds of affected people: those prosecuted in the 1950s when their existence was at stake and those after the 1968 when their "social death" was at stake. In some cases these were identical and their social hardship, ostracization and full-valued inner life represented a special form of social being. As the totalitarian regimes "developed" and their power oscillated, the nature of "inner emigration" was changing, too. The discriminated creators (at least part of them) could partially and temporarily permeate through their inner emigration towards the public. In comparison to the Czech dissent, which was even on the outside "visible" and "loud", active and "organized", the Slovak one, except for Dominik Tatarka, could be rather labelled as a "silent dissent".¹⁵

Pavol Strauss represents the genre of diary journals. *The Man for Nobody* (Bátorová, *Paradoxy Pavla Straussa*)¹⁶ is his typical book written in this genre, which captures the period of the Second World War and it can also be perceived as a forecast of his own future. His most exclusive genre is aphorisms, which he defines this way: "Aphorisms are a piece of observed life in a microscopic sarcastic perspective." (Unpublished collection of Matica Slovenská). Jokes and laughter are the other side of tragedy and sadness. The life path of Pavol Stauss led him to question reasons for the tragic fate of his mother, reasons for a war apocalypse, his own reduced being, as well as socio-political situation, in which many intellectuals of his kind lived after the Second World War. His kind of thinking and reflection as a physician – the writer on reality – differs from others in the fact that a physician notices outer features and determines from these inner "actions" of organisms, he/she constantly and unintentionally diagnoses, defines and determines, sees connections, inner relations and func-

tioning of things and actions. Since his expert field is based on diagnostics, i.e. defining the complexity of the current state of reality, hypothetically, he sees the whole reality in contradictions. Paradox constitutes the basis of his intellectual activities. The insight is subsequently formulated into an aphorism.¹⁷ This genre emerged in the ancient times. In case of medicine it was the collection of Hippocrates’ collection of medical aphorisms, i.e. definitions and principles.

In the essays and diary journals the form of aphorisms is very obvious. It is a very brief, apt, un-descriptive, and often elliptic sentence. Eventually it is a set of these individual sentences with the value of knowledge and confession of found/unfound truth. The dualism in possibilities is almost a rule. In his essays and diary journals Strauss is ambiguous but also calmer than in his aphorisms. Witty comments on reality belonged to a specific conversational technique within the intellectual circles in the interwar period. In the Strauss’ aphorisms the witty comments address significant life experiences. The diagnosis of his own environment and time period: “People procreate through a natural sexual intercourse. However, fools procreate through mass media.” (*ibid*). The discursive and rational thinking of Strauss as an intellectual in natural sciences and philosophy becomes expressed in the form of aphorisms. The medical terminology in the aphorisms reveals his profession. Through characterizing the state of thinking, observing brain-washing and opinion unification through media propaganda Strauss explains the features of the regime. His quest for truth surpasses his quest for people. He differentiates these: “The chased chasers are not gentle and understanding fellows. And enemies of enemies are not our friends.” (*ibid*).

With regards to the adverse social conditions, aphorism as a genre reveals and confronts the social system as violent, dictatorial and unfree: “Aggressors do not know the fun. That is why they substitute joke with aggression. Aphorisms are not valid in the dictatorship because they are a humorous attempt of life correction” (*ibid*). This way Strauss elaborated on the function of humor as a resistance element and its importance and impact on social and political life. People who knew Pavol Strauss remember him as a man of gentle humor and clear and rather melancholic smile. Besides the aphorisms one cannot find any sharp sarcasm or irony in his daily life or other genres of his writing. Rather sadness, melancholy, skepticism and silence. “It is all clear only to the fools. That is why smart people are sad” (*ibid*). He did not like to adjust: “Well, I do not break my leg to get liked by being plastered.” (*ibid*). He speaks about his distancing from the type of artefacts which are institutionalized and positively recognized by the regime: “It is a happy generation of writers of this period, if they are

advised by the Establishment, what to write and what it should look like. Finally any invention is needless. However, unfortunately, this literature as well.” (*ibid*). And moreover: “If people were punished and unpaid for their artwork, I wonder how many artists would remain in this world” (*ibid*)

Strauss critically elaborates not only on the artistic ballast but also on the need to write, no matter if for others or oneself. The existential situation of an activity, which doesn't lead anywhere, the lack of acceptance and recognition lead the author to the explanations and solutions, which stem from the Christian faith in God: “I consciously start with the cross. You can hang everything on the cross, both joy and pain. On the vertical cross-bar. And you can embrace everything with the horizontal cross-bar. To endure, see and try everything. Not to cease being good and kind. However, this is not a philosophy but a life principle.” (*ibid*). Statements – aphorisms, which link the ethical and aesthetical values point out to the deep meaning and criteria adopted by the author: “The first law of beauty is limitation. The first law of good is limitlessness.” (*ibid*). The extent as a value criterion of beauty and boundlessness as a value criterion of good. In this point one can observe the basis of aesthetical quality of Strauss' artwork together with the ethical quality of existence within the given circumstances.

Besides the features, which were presented until now, one can summarize that aphorisms were Strauss' quest for truth. These reveal him as a complex, dualistic and pluralistic thinker, a sharply seeing creator, who dealt with fundamental ontological questions within the harsh socio-political circumstances: the meaning of life, suffering, knowingness, solitude, patience, faith in thinking and wisdom.

With regards to the author's statements, which define aphorisms as the highest artistic form “Who doesn't cope with writing aphorisms, should write short stories and novels.” “It is not a shame to have an idea, thus, why to shamefully entangle it in a narrative.” (*ibid*), it is possible to consider this genre as his most characteristic one.

Conclusion

In this paper the question was posed whether the current situation in Slovakia, i.e. in Slovak culture and literature, can be considered as postcolonial. Whether the situation in Slovakia (or more precisely Czechoslovakia) after the year 1968 in culture and literature can be considered as a mental colonization and supervision, which impacted on its development.

In addition to the two authors, who were described in detail, it is also essential to mention the strong Catholic dissent, represented by

Ján Chryzostom Korec.¹⁸ In March 1988 the Candle Demonstration in Bratislava marked the launch of the overt resistance against the power of the regime (see also: Halla, J.: *Svičková demonstrace v Bratislavě a postihy jejích účastníků v dokumentech Východu na obranu nespravedlivě stíbaných*).

Thinking about the alternative culture and value of artworks (in the period of their creation as samizdat they could affect only a limited circle of people) is not worthless for today. The fact, that they were written without any auto-censorship and bear the signs of tension and struggle for universal values of human being and the sense of human existence, they provide a possibility to choose a life style for today's generation seeking the meaning and hungry for values worthwhile to live for. This type of existence captured in the authentic artworks of the authors of “inner emigration” provides a vision for a way of experiencing and creating values in the twenty-first century.

The two authors, whose life and work has been elaborated here, *pars pro toto* mean a real relationship of Central European literatures and societies towards the USSR. It is about seeing this relationship through a colonial and postcolonial perspective in literature and social sciences. The Soviet colonial structure collapsed because more dominant Western social and value structures were established in Central Europe which were not possible to be replaced over the decades.

NOTES

¹ Similar to other countries, when the specific and constitutive elements of sovereignty of individual nations began to form during the period of Enlightenment, two important developments took place in the territory of current Slovakia: 1) The first codification of the language, 2) the return to the tradition of Great Moravia, including the cultural traditions of Cyril and Methodius and the Christian mission. In the Romantic period, this trend deepens with the second codification of the language (1843), which, except for a few changes is still used today; this was the language of the first political newspapers, almanacs, collections of poetry, etc. Culture is perceived as constituted, despite the setbacks of Slovak fighters for independence in 1848. The first cultural institution Matica Slovenská and three Slovak *gymnasiums* are constituted in 1863 (Martin, Kláštor pod Znievom, Revúca). These institutions are dissolved in 1875 (after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867) by the regulation of the Hungarian government. Slovaks cooperate with other nations (*pars pro toto*, we can mention the example of Štefan Moyzes who helped Croatians establish an important institution Matica Chorvátska, the first Croatian political newspaper, and who was one of four parliament deputies representing Croatia). This rupture was followed by the assimilation attempt of the Hungarian government, which lasted (including Aponyi Laws of 1907), until 1918, when the Czechoslovak Republic was created. Although Slovak is an official language in the new state, there is a strong tendency towards Czechoslovakism. This results in tension and makes it easier for Slovakia to get under German supervision and domination, who establish the so-called “Model State”, which was the first independent Slovak

state. Slovaks rebel against this manipulation and they prepare an armed resistance against the fascist powers, which they enter in earnest in 1944. This historical fact is important evidence of the practical functioning of democratic ideas. After 1945, the old-new President Eduard Beneš is asking for assistance from Moscow and under its supervision the restored Czechoslovakia conducts mock court processes and judicial murders. This fact leaves a deep mark in the minds of Slovak intellectuals. We present these historical facts (freely researched and published in Slovakia after 1989), at least in the notes, to facilitate a better understanding of the events in Slovakia in the second half of the 20th century and to gain a better insight into the thinking and creations of both studied authors (compare with Lipták, *Slovensko v 20. storočji*; Letz, *Slovenské dejiny V*; Bátorová, *Roky úzkosti a vzopätia*).

² After the disintegration of the Great Moravian Empire the territory of the current Slovak Republic became part of the Hungary, called Upper Hungary. Later it became part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 it became a part of the Hungary again. After 1918 it became part of the Republic of Czechoslovakia (until the violent dissolution by Adolf Hitler in 1939), afterwards it was under the supervision of Germany as a “vassal state” (an “independent” Slovak Republic), after 1945 it was part of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, under Soviet ideological supervision, especially during the time of the personality cult of J. V. Stalin. Since 1968, it was under the ideological and military supervision of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, Slovak culture from the earliest times was a separate culture (codifications of language, grammar and dictionaries, political and literary newspapers and institutions, original literature etc.). Later, especially after 1918 when Slovak became an official language it was able to develop its activities side by side with Czech. The period of the “Model State” (1938–1945) meant a complete emancipation of Slovak culture (Novomeský). After 1945 – under the dictate of socialist realism. For decades, the Slovak culture and literature was divided into official and unofficial

³ Colonialism is in fact characterized by certain features, starting with the reasons for colonization (to name a few): strategic importance – military conflicts, sources of raw materials – new types of goods, economic profit etc. The disadvantages for the dominated countries were (to name a few): racism, creation of new frontiers, colonial government directed by whites, only a few Africans participated in political life, the loss of political sovereignty, economic subordination, violent enforcement of colonialist regime. The period of the Cold War was marked by the creation of an economically (CMEA) and politically – military (Warsaw Pact) intertwined complex of countries. The fact that the central power after World War II was residing in Moscow meant a violent assertion of Moscow’s own criteria and a loss of political sovereignty. Many of the countries of the so called Eastern Bloc were controlled by using military forces or by creating a single party system, whose members possessed privilege at all levels. Judicial murders in Czechoslovakia in the 1950s and in Hungary after the revolution in 1956, social murder during the consolidation after 1968 in Czechoslovakia and ultimately the individual revolutions and unrest in these countries are a testament to the fact that this manipulation, in particular the inability to travel and profess their faith as well as various political constraints within various scientific disciplines, indicate a type of hegemony of one country over another, much like the colonial political system.

⁴ The term “internal emigration” was used in the so-called Third Reich (Loewy, *Literarische politische und Texte aus dem deutschen Exile 1933 – 1945*). We use it in a transferred sense, so its meaning is different to the one of the 30s of the 20th century Germany. It differs mainly in the fact that the “inner emigration” – to exist outside of the official stream and in a sub-standard position as a citizen and artist was a free decision. There is also a difference in the repercussions for expressing one’s own opinion. In pre-war Germany this was almost impossible because of the extreme threat to one’s existence and because of the likely internment in the concentration camps. Despite this difference, we use this term in order to highlight the

similar type of free existence in two totalitarianism regimes of the 20th century: the Fascist and the Communist (see also: Courtois et al, *Čierna kniha komunizmu. Zločiny, Teror, Represálie*).

⁵ Navrávačky (Recordings) were re-written conversation talks with Tatarka formerly recorded on the tape recorder. Ján Kostra was a prominent communist poet and Krista Bendová was a prominent novelist of the regime.

⁶ Art theorist Tomáš Strauss, who also dealt with Russian alternative art and read Burov, personally informed the author of this article about the discussion with Tatarka about Burov.

⁷ Pavel Kohout, as 21 years old worked as a cultural attaché in Moscow and after his return made a big career as the chief editor of the satirical weekly magazine, publishing two collection of poetry. In 1954 after the death of Stalin, the process of renewal began in the Czechoslovak Republic and was fuelled mainly by the discussion about the poetry of Pavel Kohout, who became an idol of his generation. He wrote the dramatic play *Septembrové noci* (*September Nights*), which criticizes the political demagogy and defend the desertion of young officer. The play was introduced a year before Khrushchev presented Stalin's crimes at a congress of the Communist party of USSR. Kohout is again at the top (Serke 99).

⁸ *Démon súhlasu* subtitled *Fantastický traktát z konca stalinskej epochy* (the subtitle was later replaced by: "...z konca jednej epochy"), (*The Demon of Conformism – A Great Treatise from the end of the Stalinist era*) was first published in the journal *Kultúrny život* (1956), as a library edition in 1963. The novel is a satirical pamphlet, in which Tatarka reveals the deformations, errors and mistakes of the cult of personality and reveals the essence of totalitarianism.

⁹ Selection doesn't contain the essay "O uctievaní bohov" ("About the worshipping of gods"), which was published in "Človek na cestách" (Tatarka, *Kultúra* 44, 66). See also Bátorová: *Dominik Tatarka slovenský Don Quijote*, Chapter 3, regarding the other literature as well as other informations on the subject.

¹⁰ The essay was published in May 1968 (Tatarka, *Smena*). Quotes are from the manuscript *Obec Božia* (*City of God*), a part of his unpublished collection stored at the Museum of Czech Literature, dated by Tatarka, with a handwritten note and a question mark: "Smena, 7. 5. 1968 s. 3?" The date is correct, but the manuscript was published under a different name *Obec božia – obec človečia* (*City of God - City of man*), (*ibid*, 3–6).

¹¹ Navrávačky (*Recordings*) are also memories of his childhood, mother, father and his studies. Published abroad was also: Tatarka, *Listy do večnosti* (*Letters to Eternity*). We can say that these and other books are Tatarka's fictionalized autobiography. Dominik Tatarka, dissident after 1968, novelist, essayist, screenwriter and journalist, was born in Drienové (Central Slovakia) in 1913, died in Bratislava in 1989, studied at the Charles University in Prague and at the Sorbonne in Paris. He entered world of literature with his collection of novels *V úzkosti hľadania* (1942) (*In the Anxiety of Searching*) and *Panna zázračnica* (*The Miraculous Virgin*) (1945), he actively participated in Slovak national uprising, in the 50s his work conformed to socialist realism. At the same time he secretly wrote the novel *Démon súhlasu* (*The Demon of Conformism*) (1956, the book was published in 1963). He insistently protested against the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact powers, returned a state award, gave a speech on the SNP square in Bratislava and was carried by students on hands, but afterwards he became ostracized in Slovakia. He was in contact with the Czech dissidents and one of the first signatories of Charter 77. He publishes in samizdat, wrote *Písacky* (*Scribbles*) and *Navrávačky* (*Recordings*). He is buried at the cemetery *Martinský cintorín* in Bratislava. His funeral became a manifestation of freedom and human rights.

¹² In addition to Tatarka, some others Slovaks signed the Charter 77 as well: Miroslav Kusý, Hana Ponická, Tomáš Petřivý.

¹³ In Forschungsstelle Osteuropa Universität Bremen (Germany), in the archives of the V4 countries, the archive material from the so called Eastern bloc countries is stored, which

bears a testament about the continued battle for democracy in the former Soviet Union, as well as in other countries. The author of this study found the manuscript of Tatarka, D.: Písačky (*Scribbles*) in an unpublished collection. Another version is also in the Museum of Czech Literature in Prague: The unpublished collection of Dominik Tatarka, manuscript in unpublished collection (*nespracovaný fond*); Písačky was also published in miniature editions abroad (see Tatarka, *Písačky*) (the “back” of the book contained a small magnifying glass).

¹⁴ P. Strauss was born on 30.8. 1912 in Liptovský Sv. Mikuláš. 1931–1937 – studies of medicine in Vienna and Prague. 1936–1937– two collections of poems in German language published in Prague Kanone auf dem Ei and Schwarze Verse. 1939 – Transfer from hospital in Plzeň to a military hospital in Ružomberok. Here he met Munko’s family of converts. 1940 – Physician in Palúdzka. Working on collections Worte aus der Nacht (published bilingually in 2001), Und der Bruder Abel lebt ja noch (remained in manuscript). In 1942 he converted to Catholicism under the influence of Munko and theologian Kozar. 1944 – Joined a military hospital in Ružomberok. There he participated in the Slovak National Uprising. He operated in the field hospital. After the retreat of the uprising, he is arrested by the Gestapo. 10.11. – released from prison, 1945 – he hides in monastery in Trnava. Married to Mária Loydlová. Employed in the oncology department of the hospital in Bratislava. 1946 – Became a head physician at the surgical clinic in Skalica, later the director of a hospital. Studied in Zurich under Professor Brunner. He published Kaleidoscope from trip across Switzerland (1947), contributing to the journal Verbum. 1948 – Mozajka nádeje (*Mosaic of Hope*) (essays), Stĺpy (*Columns*) (prose poems). Translations: Peter Lippert: Der Mensch Hiob spricht mit Gott (*Job talks to God*), Oda Schneiderová: Das Priestertum der Frau (*The priesthood of women*). Essays: Ecce homo (published in 1992). More than 20 scientific studies in magazines Slovenský lekár, Rozhľady v chirurgii, Lekársky obzor, Bratislavské lekárske listy. Bibliography to 1989: seven book journals, nine essay collections, seven collections of poetry, four translations (partially published), three text books published in Rome under a pseudonym. Many of his texts were reedited after 1989, some published for the first time. There are 13 collections of essays, aphorisms and journals as well as a bilingual collection Worte aus der Nacht / Words of the Night (2001). Film production by Ján Kollár captures three important figures of Slovak literature: P. Strauss, M. Haľamová and M. Rúfus. 1991 – Is published Requiem za živých (*Requiem for the living*), (Slovenský spisovateľ, Award SSS), 1992 – Honorary Doctorate at Šafárik’s University in Košice. 1992 honorary citizen of Skalica and Nitra, Nitra PF – scientific seminar – collective volume: Literárne dielo Pavla Straussa, (*Literary work of Pavel Strauss*), received itinerant trophy (travelling plaque). June 3rd, 1994 P. Strauss dies and is buried at the town cemetery in Nitra. 1996 – International Conference on Life and Work of Pavel Strauss at Catholic University of P. Pázmany in the Hungarian Pilis Csaba. 2000 – Revealing of memorial plaque in Nitra. 2002 – Foundation of Paul Strauss Society in his hometown Liptovský Mikuláš.

¹⁵ The term “dissent“ is one of most inaccurate terms. According to Z. Mlynář, it was introduced by Western journalists and people active in the opposition, who were not able to label them more precisely as anything other than “differently thinking“. Dissidence meant to express their opinions publicly, “not to live in a lie” (Solzhenitsyn), live a “*life in truth*” (Havel), “*the defense of own reality*” (Šimečka). In Czechoslovakia, dissidence is related to the term natural world, which was formed as a movement against the conformism of «*real socialism*» (M. Kusý).

¹⁶ Monography is strongly based on diary book by Pavel Strauss (Človek pre nikoho)

¹⁷ Ibidem: VI. Kapitola: Aforizmus – intelektuálna forma princípu a esencie života (ibid, Chapter 6: The Aforism – the intelektual form of principle and the essence of life).

¹⁸ J. Ch. Korec – after the imprisonment of the official bishops in 1951, he led the underground Catholic opposition as a secretly ordained bishop, later an inmate or under

police supervision, on the outside working as manual laborer. He wrote more than 70 books, which were spread by manual transcription or were carried out abroad (40 works were published in Rome, Cambridge, Wrocław, Vienna). In 1962 he was convicted of incitement of the youth and imprisoned again for 12 years. After 1989 he became an archbishop and cardinal.

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Slovaška književnost in kultura s »postkolonialnega« vidika

Ključne besede: literatura in ideologija / slovaška književnost / slovaška kultura / Sovjetska zveza / oporečništvo

V članku avtorica obravnava stanje slovaške kulture in književnosti v obdobju, ko je Sovjetska zveza po vdoru čet Varšavskega pakta na Češkoslovaško avgusta 1968 v tej državi začela izvajati ideološki nadzor. Težka zgodovina ter njen vpliv na razvoj kulture in književnosti sta obravnavana po načelu *pars pro toto*, z analizo življenjskih zgodb in del dveh različnih avtorjev. Osnova so torej besedila teh dveh avtorjev, ki so hkrati primer in neposredni dokaz upora. Avtorica na tej podlagi določi dve vrsti javnega nasprotovanja na Slovaškem: 1) po letu 1968 ter 2) po letih 1950 in 1968. Opozarja na družbenopolitične okoliščine in parametre zahodne misli (deloma tudi retrospektivno) v slovaški alternativni kulturi in književnosti, njuno uporniško moč ter boj za svobodo misli in proti ideološki »kolonizaciji« in manipulaciji zavesti. Avtorja, katerih življenje in (življenjsko) delo sta predstavljena kot primer upora, simbolizirata resnični odnos srednjeevropske književnosti in družbe do Sovjetske zveze. Ta odnos lahko obravnavamo skozi prizmo kolonializma in postkolonialističnih pristopov v književnosti in družboslovju. Sovjetska kolonialna struktura se je v Srednji Evropi zrušila, saj so bile tam prevladujoče zahodne vrednote in zahodne družbene strukture globoko zakoreninjene ter jih sovjetski vpliv še po več desetletjih ni mogel nadomestiti.

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