

## SUMMARY

### **Slovak Literature and the Power in the Second Half of the 50's**

The topic of the book is the relation between the Slovak literature and the Communist Power after the XX<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956 on the background of the political development in Czechoslovakia after 1956. The crucial feature of this development was the crisis of the Communist regime in the years of 1956–1957 and strengthening of the course of political persecution as well as ideological pressure on the culture after the Hungarian revolution in October 1956.

The first chapter deals with the conflict between the Union of Slovak Writers and the weekly newspaper “Kultúrny život” (Cultural Life) on the one side and the Communist Power on the other side that took place in years of 1956–1957. Stalin’s death was the beginning of the process of the emancipation of the literature from the principles of so called “socialist realism”. This process was developed especially in Poland and Hungary. Under the impact of these countries the emancipation of the culture began in Czechoslovakia as well. The discussion among Slovak writers became more intensive after the XX<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPSU. The journal “Kultúrny život” sharply criticized the official Communist policy. Similar discussion took place among Czech writers as well. In April 1956 the public discontent in Czechoslovakia reached its peak. People including some members of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia demanded the removal of the politicians responsible for the policy of the so called “cult of personality”, especially Václav Kopecký, Alexej Čepička, in Slovakia Karol Bacílek and Pavol David. They demanded the rehabilitation of Gustáv Husák and other victims of the political processes with Communist politicians accused of the “Slovak bourgeois nationalism”, freedom of the press, free election and free independent political parties. The position of Slovakia in Czechoslovakia was sharply criticized. The Slovak Party leadership regarded as their main political opponents former members of the Presidium of the Communist Party of Slovakia Ondrej Pavlík and Edo Friš. By the end of May 425 Party organizations in the towns, factories or institutions demanded the extraordinary Party congress.

After the II<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the Union of Czechoslovak Writers (22<sup>nd</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> of April, 1956) the conflict between the writers and the Communist power became public. The congress, especially in the speeches of Jaroslav Seifert, František Hrubín, Dominik Tatarka, Ladislav Mňačko etc.,

rejected authoritarian methods in the culture. Although the congress was the first public conflict with the Communist power in Central Europe after the XX<sup>th</sup> Congress of CPSU, the writers and intellectuals from the journal “Kultúrny život” didn’t give any message to the people from other social groups and they didn’t discuss the problems concerning the whole society.

The leadership of the CPCZ was discontented with the congress. Since May 1956 the Union of Czechoslovak Writers had been under the political pressure to revise its results. The National Party Conference in June 1956 condemned the Spring discussion in Czechoslovak society. According to it, in the struggle against the “class enemy” an ideology plays the crucial role. In the Summer and Fall 1956 a few groups of Slovak intellectuals demanded the continuation of the democratization of the public life. The most important representatives of the critical stream among Slovak intellectuals were Ondrej Pavlík, Juraj Špitzer, the editor of the journal “Kultúrny život”, Ivan Kupec, poet, and Ctibor Štítnický, the secretary of the Union of Slovak Writers. During the Hungarian Revolution in October and November 1956 Slovak writers didn’t support their Hungarian colleagues, on the contrary, they expressed in the official declaration their agreement with the Soviet intervention in Hungary. In April 1957 the Czechoslovak Party leadership decided for the removal of Juraj Špitzer from the journal “Kultúrny život” and for the exclusion of Ondrej Pavlík from the CPCZ. Other Slovak writers didn’t agree with this measure in spite of the pressure developed by the Slovak Party leadership.

The new impulse for the campaign against the so called “revisionism” was the plenary session of the Central Committee of the CPCZ in June 1957. At the plenary session of the Czech writers that was held after the session of the Central Committee the course and results of the congress of writers were condemned. At the plenary session of Slovak writers in December 1957 the effort of the Party leadership to approve a similar resolution failed.

The second chapter analyzes the relationship between the literature and the state power during the years of 1957–1959, under the conditions of the new campaign against the so called “Slovak bourgeois nationalism” and “acceleration of the cultural revolution”. The journal “Kultúrny život” tried to save its identity and independence under the conditions of a strong censorship. One of the important discussions in this journal was the one about the issue of modernization and the role of the folklore in Slovak culture. The crucial issue in this discussion was, however, the demand of the more intellectual freedom, strengthening of contacts with the world and the emancipation from the principles of the so called “socialist realism”. After 1956 the journal “Kultúrny život” ceased to be a pure journal about the literature, became a part of the political discourse in Slovakia and provided a limited space for the presentation

of alternative opinions. The discussions in this journal dealt not only with the cultural issues but dealt directly or indirectly with the political questions as well. The ideological pressure on the literature reached its peak in 1959. The activity of the critical stream in the Slovak literature was in this period suppressed. One of the reasons of it, except for the censorship, was the economical dependence of the writers from the Communist power. The goal of the Party leadership was the corruption of the intellectuals.

The third chapter handles the Congress of the Socialist Culture in June 1959. This congress was prepared as the demonstration of the power and success of the Communist regime in the sphere of culture. The congress preceded the plenary session of the Czechoslovak writers in March 1959 where the II<sup>nd</sup> Congress of Czechoslovak Writers was definitely condemned.

The separate chapter deals with the first period of the journal “Mladá tvorba” (Young Literature). The journal was established during the political thaw in 1956 and became a publication tribune for the several generations of artists that hadn’t have possibility to publish their works before. Since the contributors of the journal rejected the official principles of the esthetics of the so called “socialist realism”, the journal was from the first issue under the strong control of the censorship. The conflict between the Slovak Party leadership and the journal began in March 1957 and reached its peak in 1958 when a group of young poets (so called “concretists”) prepared an issue of the journal out of the control of censorship. After February 1959 they had to leave Bratislava and work on the “buildings of Socialism” in the countryside.

A special attention is devoted to individual cases of the intellectuals in the analyzed period. The separate chapter is dedicated to Ondrej Pavlík, Ján Smrek, the poet and Dominik Tatarka, the writer. The chapter about the “Action Opposition” deals with a wider context of the political process with Michal Tušera, Karol Terebessy, Anton Rašla etc., the circle of left-oriented intellectuals that demanded the further de-stalinization after the XX<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPSU. The result of the case was the persecution of the numerous leftists and critically oriented intellectuals and Party activists including the known opponent of the official policy of the CPCZ Edo Friš that was excluded from the Party.

The political process with sociologist Alexander Hirner and comp. was aimed in reality against the Slovak non-communist intellectuals. A. Hirner was an editor of prepared “Small encyklopeaedic dictionary” in the publishing house “Osveta” in the city of Martin. He was accused of preparing a political upheaval by the politically incorrect contents of the book, imprisoned and sentenced for a long period. Consequently, the prepared “Small encyklopeaedic dictionary” was not published and neither the planned “Encyclopaedia of Slovakia”.

In the period of the years of 1956–1960 the relationship of the culture

and the state power had an ambivalent character. The Communist power attempted to restore the previous control over the society like in the first half of 50's, on the other side its aims were not unconditionally accepted by the intellectuals. Among the goals of the Communist regime there was the continuity with the period of the so called "stalinism", especially in term of the implementation of the principles of so called "socialist realism" and declaration of the support of the regime. The existence of the informal relations between the regime and the culture, understood as an instrument of the Communist power, caused that the culture, under the conditions of the weakening of the role of the persecutions, gained, in the limited degree, an autonomy within the structures of the political power.

After the crisis of the Communism in the Soviet block the regime tried not only to reach the consolidation of its power but it also tried to restore its civilization project. The spontaneous resistance against such officially presented project was especially obvious in the sphere of culture. Author's conclusion is that the liberalization of the Communist regime, especially in the sphere of the culture in Slovakia after 1962, was much more the result of the internal conflict within the Communist elite and their graduated decomposition than its intentional liberalization.