

Trimarium

**The History and Literature of Central
and Eastern European Countries**

No. 2

(2/2023)

International Journal published by
The Institute of Literature in Krakow

 THE INSTITUTE
OF LITERATURE
A POLISH NATIONAL CULTURAL INSTITUTION



Peer-reviewed journal

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Cover illustration “Malopolska” oil mine in Boryslav – general view;

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DTP Alicja Stępnia

ISSN 2956-6452

e-ISSN 2956-7211



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The academic quarterly is being prepared with the grant within the framework of the task: *Polish culture in the region of the Three Seas and Anglo-Saxon countries – a project of complementary activities of the Institute of Literature* Financed from the funds of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland



Ministry of Culture and National Heritage
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Editorial

Efforts are now being made to connect the countries of Central and Eastern Europe with a transportation network that will allow for efficient movement and transport of goods. In some parts of the region, convenient connections already exist. In others, the problem is that the transportation network between actors outside the region is transit-oriented, with Central European exchanges taking place incidentally, so to speak.

The construction of roads and railway lines forming part of the trans-European transport corridor, such as the Via Baltica, or the Via Carpatia, which links the notoriously difficult north-south belt (connecting Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece), responds to needs that were recognized a century ago. From the perspective the authors have taken, it is clear how important a factor in overcoming the economic difficulties of the independent Central European states was the maintenance, sometimes the reconstruction, and in some cases the creation of new supply chains and channels of trade. The importance of this issue can best be seen from the example of Bessarabia, which experienced a peripheralisation resulting mainly from deficiencies in transport infrastructure. The region experienced powerlessness in this regard and even succumbed to resignation despite the efforts made at the beginning of the period in question.

The texts, written in different countries, which we have collected in the second issue of *Trimarium*, bring insights common to the region: the period of severing ties with empires and creating new ties coincided with the need for internal stability, especially getting state finances in order. The elites of the time were aware of the value of a country's own currency and the need to monitor the state's financial system, a fact that sounds surprisingly up-to-date. The effects of the measures taken to this end, despite some stumbling blocks, were felt positively throughout the region, as trade figures show. Individual countries handled the Great Depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s in different ways: the crisis hit them at different times and affected vulnerable sectors of the economy to varying degrees. As the economic conditions improved noticeably in the mid-1930s, further plans were made, including the intensification of trade between the partners. However, all this was interrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War.

Because the supply chains were disrupted by the Great War and its aftermath, and, in some cases, trade became more difficult and expensive, economic relations had to be redefined, and new ways and solutions had to be found. Sometimes this meant renewed cooperation with states that emerged after the break-up of empires. These processes can best be seen in the example of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. The four texts on economy in this issue contain quite a few examples from the Czech, Polish, Ukrainian and Bessarabian perspectives. They show yet another phenomenon: how countries that found Central Europe slipping away from their direct influence after the Treaty of Versailles and related treaties obstructed its economic integration efforts. Particularly striking is the attitude of Germany at the time, which, on the one hand, waged a tariff war against Poland, and on the other counteracted attempts to intensify Czechoslovak cooperation with the Balkans under the so-called Little Entente ("Malá dohoda"). We can also observe something we know so well today: successful attempts to take over lucrative enterprises and even control of

certain industries by new economic partners, namely countries that were already well established and had more resources.

At a time when societies were grappling with successive phases of transition in their economies and attempts to stabilize, develop and expand regional cooperation, they still wanted to participate in cultural life in a unique, distinctive way.

One notable figure from that epoch was Józef Albin Herba-czewski, who persuaded two neighboring nations a century ago to always remember that without the independence of one of them, the other had no right to exist. He wrote in bitter terms that he was used as a battering ram to tear down the Polish or Lithuanian wall in mutual relations between these nations. Today, perhaps, he would be more forgiving of that metaphor. Being a battering ram is not terrible, as long as one manages to unblock the channels of communication interrupted by various prejudices. The alternative is pessimism, a sense of impending disaster, a failure of understanding, a return to a life based on simple instincts, which, admittedly, can be made true, but by creating a world of primitive happiness, furnished comfortably and elaborately, but planned by an outsider. One that leaves no freedom to ask questions about fundamental matters, about the search for one's own path and that reduces people to "human resources." Witkacy created similar visions in Polish interwar literature, and it is astonishing how accurate some of the views were in light of later political and sociological analyses of the state of Western civilization, including the Chinese rhetoric to justify the position of the Middle Kingdom in conflict with the West that the writer imagined almost a century ago.

Such sensibilities were not unfamiliar in other parts of the Trimarium either. The Czech writer Karel Čapek also noticed serious cracks in the state of Western civilization at the time. And although, unlike Witkacy, he had a much more cheerful disposition and more optimism about the future, he similarly occupied a unique place in the literary landscape of the First Czechoslovak Republic. Čapek realised the ideal of an author who influences social life not only with his work, but also by example. The round table – an intellectual community with

diverse views that gathered around Čapek – also attracted those in charge of state affairs.

What was possible in Czechoslovakia was becoming unimaginable in the Ukrainian territories under Soviet rule. Even discussions on style in literature were fraught with risk. Expressing one's views, at best, carried the risk of being forced to submit a statement of self-criticism and, often, of being sent to a labor camp and living in oblivion. In such circumstances, even the most tenacious scholars and writers lost motivation to work. If they wrote texts, even whole books at first, only to put them away into a drawer, it often happened – as in the case of Hryhoriy Maifet – that they gave up on writing, considering such efforts superfluous at a time when there was no possibility of publishing what one had written.

The same system had similar effects among Moldovan authors who tried to create literature in the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. Here, too, one could not count on literary influences similar to those in Czechoslovakia, or even the free exchange of ideas in rather hermetic circles of literary experts and fans gathered around a literary periodical. Self-criticism, persecution, arrests and, finally, the death of many writers in the purges of the late 1930s provide a picture of the diversity of writing conditions in Central Europe between the wars.

Thus, while the post-Great War economies of the Trimarium countries tried to overcome the problems caused by the disintegration of the former empires, the most interesting phenomena in literature faced different problems. To raise awareness of cultural and social values in one part of the region, it was necessary to influence elites in society, which was done with varying degrees of success. In the part of Europe under Soviet rule, this mission faced an existential difficulty: it was no longer just a matter of the consequences of departing from civilizational norms, but a painful struggle with the effects of such a process.



History

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DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.01



Between Depression, Stagnation and Development: The Social and Economic Situation of the Second Republic in the First Years of Independence (Until 1926) Selected Issues

Abstract

After a century and a half of partition, Poland was reborn in the autumn of 1918, though its geopolitical and economic situation remained precarious. On the one hand, there were armed conflicts during which the new borders of the Republic were being shaped, and on the other hand, the economy of the young state was plagued by an economic depression that undermined the foundations of its existence. It took several years to recover from the crises. The main difficulty that successive governments had to face was the need to integrate the three different fiscal and economic systems and policies that had been inherited from the partitioning states: the German Empire, Austria-Hungary and Czarist Russia. It is noteworthy that in the early 1920s two courses of recovery from economic depression were contemplated. The first (“the German course”) was based on the introduction of a new currency with extensive support for the economy with international loans. The second, called “the Austrian course,”

Suggested citation: Meus K. (2023). Between Depression, Stagnation and Development: the Social and Economic Situation Of The Second Republic in the First Years of Independence (Until 1926). Selected Issues. *Trimarium. The History and Literature of Central and Eastern European Countries*, 2(2), 11–36

DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.01

Submitted: 16.07.2023 / Accepted: 21.07.2023

relied solely on bolstering the economy with foreign loans. In the end, the Poles, under the leadership of Prime Minister and Treasury Minister Władysław Grabski, chose a third path: their own. It consisted of, in particular, a rapid collection of property tax, a sweeping currency reform, increasing the profitability of state monopolies, and implementing audits of public spending. All of these measures, which underwent regular modifications, yielded reasonably favorable socio-economic results. Their consequence was a long, arduous but steady recovery of Poland from the post-war economic slump.

Keywords

the Second Republic, Bank of Poland, economy, economic depression, interwar period

The first months of Poland's independence were a time of tremendous chaos, not only in political terms, but also (and perhaps most importantly) in socio-economic terms. The demise of the partitioning states, and with it the police and law enforcement, resulted in an escalation of petty crime. Its victims were mainly civilians, most often Jews. The inefficiency of the newly established police force structures of the Polish state emboldened armed gangs that most often recruited from former soldiers of armies fighting on the fronts of the Great War (Mroccka, 1990, pp. 165–171; Pająk, 2012, pp. 238–246; Przeniosło, 2007, pp. 116–128; Przeniosło, 2010, pp. 211–245; Meus, 2012, pp. 376–389; Meus, 2021, pp. 38–39). Paradoxically, those who were robbed and escaped the assault alive and unharmed considered themselves lucky. The attackers were not deterred even by police stations. It was not uncommon for assaults to take place even in their vicinity (National Archive in Cracow, hereinafter: ANK, no. 29/268/129, no pagination; ANK, no. 29/268/130). Worse still, the audacity of bandits also led to assaults on police forces. Such a situation occurred, for example, in Bronowice Wielkie, which had been part of Cracow since 1909, where an armed attack on the local gendarmerie station was reported in January 1919. The tense social atmosphere was exacerbated by

a raging economic depression causing the country to suffer from inflation (and later hyperinflation), declining industrial production, a deficit in raw materials and a shortage of credit and working capital. The generally dire economic conditions contributed to the pauperization of the most vulnerable segments of the population. To make matters worse, epidemics of deadly diseases such as Spanish flu, spotted typhus and dysentery, commonly known as or “dirty hands disease,” were on the rise in Poland (Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine in Lviv/Центральний Державний Історичний Архів України у Львові/Centralnyj Derzhavnyj Istorycznyj Archiv Ukrayiny u Lwowi, hereafter: CDIAL, collect. 567, catal. 1, case 115, f. 3).

The peak of the postwar economic crisis came in 1923. The young country, exhausted by the destruction of the First World War and the border wars with Bolshevik Russia, the Western Ukrainian People’s Republic and Czechoslovakia, had to struggle against economic depression, as well as mounting internal unrest, both social and political. An accurate diagnosis of the roots of Poland’s critical economic situation in the early 1920s was offered by the authors of the *Report of the Supreme Chamber of Control on Activities Performed in 1924*, who, as keen observers of the social and economic life of the time, reported that it was “the vast scale of public life, inadequate to the income, which was practiced in the first years of our independence, that led to the weakening of the State Treasury and posed the threat of financial disaster” (Archives of New Records in Warsaw, hereinafter: ААН, Supreme Chamber of Control, no. НК III-19, p. 4). The vast majority of Polish specialists in economics and economic law agreed with the opinion on the state’s deplorable financial condition. One of them, Władysław Leopold Jaworski, associated with the Cracow legal community (a distinguished professor at the Jagiellonian University and a member of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences), in the pages of the widely read conservative daily *Czas* dated October 3, 1923, published a column under the telling title *What Should We Do?* where he argued that:

The country’s tough financial situation and the difficult foreign situation are stirring up unrest in society. The question that comes to the mind of every thinking citizen is what should we do? In such moments, it is

our duty to give each other encouragement and share every positive constructive thought... I consider the sanitation of finances to be the most important and urgent matter. Our internal as well as external situation depends on it. All efforts should focus on this problem, to solve it first and foremost (Jaworski. W. L., *Czas*, 1923, no. 221, p. 1).

The onset of the 1920s saw numerous strikes in Poland, which were the aftermath of people's dissatisfaction with the policies of the Polish state, and especially with the "tough financial situation in the country" that Jaworski referred to. Deserting workplaces became the main weapon of socialist groups. The strikes spanned different cities and different occupational sectors. For example, in 1921 the Lublin province was dominated by strikes by train drivers and railroad workers. The latter had already been demanding for several months that their salaries be raised by 100% and that they be granted a so-called "price-spike allowance" of 600 Polish marks due to skyrocketing prices. Strikes in the Lublin region recurred on a regular basis for the next two years, until 1923. Suffice it to mention that as late as October of that year, the strike spread to Chełm, Lublin and Siedlce. Its main instigators were train drivers affiliated with the Trainmen's Trade Union (Wójcik, 1962, pp. 183–184). In 1923, strikes also broke out in Lesser Poland. In the Borysław-Drohobycz oil basin, so-called "summary courts" were even established for demonstrators under arrest in order to bring the strike situation under control. In turn, in Tarnów, on November 8, seven workers participating in a demonstration organized that day in the streets of the city were killed by soldiers (*Naprzód*, 1923, 260, pp. 1, 4).

A breaking point in the social turmoil caused by economic depression, as well as political tensions, took place in Cracow, a city that was not without problems witnessed in other parts of the Republic. The former Polish capital had been racked by strikes since 1919 when, as Polish historian Czesław Brzoza observed, "the inflation that occurred in the post-war years led to a steady decline in real wages" (qtd. in Brzoza, 1997, p. 92). Rising poverty among working groups fed social discontent. In the first year of independence, Cracow residents could count on only 40% of scheduled food supplies. Goods arriving in the city were sold at maximum, not to say, prohibitive prices. The limited

supply of food, as well as the high prices, were the cause of famine in the city. In the spring of 1920, a mass demonstration of women demanding bread and meat took place in front of the magistrate's building (Brzoza, 1997, p. 91). On top of this, almost every city in southern Poland had been experiencing a shortage of fuel, mainly coal, since 1918, which made it impossible for schools, offices and factories to function properly. For example, in Lviv in 1918, electric streetcars were notoriously halted due to outages at the city's power plant (CDIAL, collect. 717, catal. 1, case 44, pp. 63-65). In the winter of 1918, an order for coal of more than 13,000 tons per month was recorded in Lviv. The demand for more than 7150 tons of coal per month, necessary for the proper functioning of the city, was calculated in Cracow during the same period. A total of 195 Galician towns and villages encompassed by statistics preserved at the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine in Lviv showed a monthly coal demand of 50,530 tons in February 1918 (CDIAL, collect. 717, catal. 1, case 44, f. 40-43). And while the rough figures refer to the declining period of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the problems of coal supply did not improve much after November 1918. Priority was given to industrial plants of strategic importance. These included printing houses, since the printing of notices and announcements guaranteed proper communication between the authorities and citizens. In large cities, every now and then, various professional groups came forward with demands to better their fate. Strikes and demonstrations ensued. For example, in 1919, Cracow printers refused to work which led to a temporary impasse in the publishing and press sector in Cracow. As already mentioned, the turning point in the city came in the autumn of 1923, although some smaller strikes and speeches were recorded earlier in the summer of that year when workers from railroad workshops supported by train drivers refused to work (Brzoza, 1997, pp. 92, 97). An eruption of social discontent took place at the end of October 1923, when the strike was again spearheaded by state railroad workers, who were joined by workers from other professions such as postal employees. Almost 40,000 people participated. The situation in Cracow, as well as in other cities, escalated. On November 5, the strike swept the entire country. Cracow came to a standstill. Public transportation did not run, telephones and post offices did not work,

stores and market stalls were closed, and electric lamps did not turn on in the evening because the city's power plant workers failed to start work. The regional authorities called for a cessation of strikes. Participation in public gatherings was banned starting the following day. The decision of Cracow Governor Kazimierz Galecki had precisely the opposite effect. Violence escalated on November 6, 1923. Bloody riots involving Cracow workers on one hand and the police and army on the other broke out (Kalicka, 1978). During the day-long riots and regular battles that unfolded in the streets of Cracow (in the area of Dunajewskiego and Basztowa Streets where the Workers' House was located and in the vicinity of the railroad station), 18 civilians and 14 soldiers were killed. More than 140 servicemen and policemen were taken to Cracow hospitals due to wounds. Material losses in connection with the "Cracow uprising" totaled horrendous amounts. Only the lost or destroyed military equipment was valued at 9.5 billion Polish marks (Brzoza, 1997, p. 99). At this point, it should be noted that the tragedy that played out on the streets of Cracow was the fallout not only of the living and economic situation of Cracow's workers, but also of dissatisfaction with the results of the parliamentary elections that were held in the fall of 1922. The winner was the Christian Union of National Unity (37.9% of the seats won), i.e., a right-wing grouping that defeated the Polish Socialist Party, which was the main political force of the labor movement (Brzoza, 1997, pp. 94-95), with a score of 26.4%. The epilogue of the "Cracow Uprising of 1923" - as Felicja Kalicka, echoed by Andrzej Chwalba, called the November incidents - had nationwide repercussions. Most importantly, the position of the Polish government led (only since May) by Wincenty Witos was shaken. It survived for a few more weeks, only to crumble in December 1923. The mission of forming a new government was entrusted to the recent Treasury Minister Władysław Grabski, who became - not without difficulty - the statesman of the Polish economy, as will be discussed in more detail later in this text.

Concluding the subject of Cracow, and in particular the "uprising" of 1923, the finale took place the following year. Fifty-eight people who were charged by the prosecutor's office with participation in the "rebellion" and in "riots" that led to "public violence" were indicted. Those facing charges included two deputies, namely Jan

Stańczyk and Zygmunt Klemensiewicz. In the end, six people were convicted by a final court verdict. However, the crime of “rebellion and riot” was reclassified as theft. The remaining defendants were released from custody. The court’s verdict provoked extreme opinions ranging from elation and satisfaction on the left of the political scene to discontent and dismay on the right (Brzoza, 1997, p. 100).

Moving toward the conclusion of this part of the discussion, it should be indicated that the economic depression that gripped the territories of the reborn Poland covered the entire country, not just the vital urban centers where large industry and commerce were concentrated. The crisis also, and perhaps especially, affected small-town and rural communities. This is evidenced by research conducted in recent years, which shows the post-war decline on a micro-regional and even local scale. In many cases, with the end of the Great War and entry into the 1920s, we can observe the demise of enterprises and economic and financial organizations that had originated in the times of the partitions. Usually, their bankruptcy was caused by wartime destruction (in Galicia), as well as rampant inflation and a decline in the circulation of money and low profitability of production. As an example, I would like to mention the case of the village of Ujanowice, located in the Limanowa district of the then Cracow province, where fierce battles between the Russian and Austro-Hungarian armies were fought in 1914 (the so-called Limanowa Battle). Still during the First World War (in December 1917) a dairy company was launched in Ujanowice to produce dairy products for the regional market. Unfortunately, the poor financial condition of local breeders and farmers did not encourage investment and cooperative activity. Ultimately, the project of a Dairy Cooperative was postponed *ad acta*, in anticipation of better economic circumstances. These did not appear until 1927, nine years after Poland regained its independence. That year, on July 31, a founding group met and constituted a Dairy Cooperative with headquarters in Ujanowice (AAN, group: Cooperative Council in Warsaw, no. 2/213/19605, no pagination; Archives of St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Ujanowice, Liber Memorabilium, vol. I, manuscript, p. 148). Although this example refers to a single village in Lesser Poland, it illustrates the problems faced in the first postwar years by thousands of similar localities

within the borders of the Second Republic: cities, towns and villages where economic depression dismantled the previous economic mechanisms that had been based on the regional and local cooperative movement, which had actually determined the development of these areas prior to the outbreak of the Great War.

Remedy

The state's response to the economic troubles in the first years of independence was sluggish, on account of highly inauspicious geopolitical conditions. However, the central authorities could not ignore the increasingly dire economic situation and escalating social tensions in the country. The attempt to mend the economy took place in several areas. The repair of state finances was considered the key to success and rightly so. Efforts were made to do this by sealing public spending and properly monitoring it. With this aim in mind, as early as February 1919, by a decision of the head of state, Józef Piłsudski, the Supreme Chamber of State Control (NIKР) was established: an organization dedicated to the control of public spending (Journal of the Law of the Polish State of 1919, no. 14, item 183, pp. 271–275). The work of the state control institution was further clarified by the law of June 3, 1921, which allowed Chamber officials to monitor the state's income and expenditures, as well as its assets. One way to do this was by supervising the finances of "local government bodies and institutions, establishments, foundations, associations and companies operating with the financial participation of the State Treasury or under its guarantee" (Journal of Laws 1921, no. 51, item 314, p. 886). NIKР district officials, during a period of especially severe economic depression, carried out extensive inspection work to identify all forms of mismanagement. In the first instance, a review of contracts signed by the various ministries was carried out, with a focus on the legitimacy of the funds spent. The auditors' attention was mainly turned to contracts that the ministries with the largest funds had entered into. Those were the Ministry of Military Affairs, the Ministry of the Treasury, the Ministry of Public Works, and the Ministry of Railways. All agencies and entities subordinate to said ministries were meticulously scrutinized. One such spectacular inspection campaign

was carried out in Cracow in the second half of 1923. Cracow officials audited the finances of the State Carriage and Harness Factory in Cracow, which was subordinate to the Central Board of Military Manufactures, the office then responsible for the armaments industry, which was cost-intensive yet crucial to maintaining independence. Let me mention that in 1923 alone, the budget of this entity was 83 billion Polish marks, or more than 23 million zlotys. Moreover, the state planned to borrow 5 trillion marks for military purchases. All this made this sector of public spending highly vulnerable to fraud and lack of budgetary discipline (AAN, no. NIK III-19, pp. 126–128).

The way to implement Władysław Grabski's plans for reforming the economy of the Republic, and recovering it from the deep post-war recession, was through budget austerity, as well as, and perhaps most importantly, through the introduction of financial discipline to maintain a balanced budget. The government planned to achieve the latter by several means. In order to eliminate the budget deficit, the state was to increase ordinary and extraordinary revenues, the government was to borrow internally and from abroad, and budget expenditures were to be tightened (Landau, 1959b, p. 1185). The first decisions of the new government were the adjustment of taxes and the effective collection of the so-called "property tax" passed by the Sejm as early as August 1923, the proceeds of which were calculated at about one billion gold francs (Journal of Laws. 1923, no. 94, item 746, p. 1086; Journal of Laws 1923, no. 127, item 1044, p. 1535). The tax was to be collected over a three-year period (from 1924 to 1926) in six semiannual one-time payments. The law required all individuals residing in the territory of Poland to pay it, as well as anyone owning real estate or share and working capital associated with an industrial enterprise or farm within the borders of the Republic. The law allowed an exemption from the new tax for selected institutions (e.g., cultural and religious organizations), agricultural estates granted to soldiers of the Polish Army, and farms belonging to settlers in the "eastern borderlands." Polish state loans were also exempted from the levy (Journal of Laws 1923, No. 94, item 746, p. 1086). The next step was the passing by the Sejm on January 11, 1924 of a law "On the repair of the state treasury and currency reform." The president's prerogative included the issuance of regulations with the force of law (on the basis

of resolutions of the Council of Ministers), which was to expedite the implementation of repair programs (Journal of Laws 1924, no. 4, item 28, p. 43). Thus, the government was able to decide on the sale of state assets autonomously. Especially significant, if not the most important clause of the January law, was the “establishment and introduction of a new monetary system, based on zloty monetarism” (Journal of Laws 1924, no. 4, item 28, p. 43). It was decided to establish the relationship of the Polish mark, previously in force in the country, to the new monetary unit. The issue of currency was finally resolved on April 14, 1924 (Journal of Laws 1924, no. 34, item 351, p. 510, §2). President Stanislaw Wojciechowski, using the powers granted to him by the law of January 11, 1924, introduced the zloty as the sole legal tender in the country as of July 1 on the territory of the Republic (Journal of Laws 1924, no. 34, item 351, p. 510, §§3–5). Thus, the zloty replaced the Polish mark, which had been compulsory currency in Poland since December 1918 (Journal of Laws 1918, no. 19, item 56, p. 144, Article 4). It is worth noting here that although payments with the Polish mark were officially obligatory from the moment the Polish state was constituted, in fact other currencies were used in many regions of Poland for the following months and years. The fact that the Polish mark would be used for a longer time in the Second Republic was decided by the decree of Treasury Minister Władysław Grabski of December 24, 1919, on the establishment of the exchange rate of the Polish mark to the Austrian crowns, which remained the means of payment in Galicia and Cieszyn Silesia. This decree set the exchange rate between the two currencies at 100 crowns equivalent to 70 million marks. Consequently, residents of the former Austrian partition and parts of Austrian Silesia could now freely exchange Austro-Hungarian currency for the Polish mark (Journal of Laws 1919, no. 96, item 513). Even later, in 1920, German marks, which were used for payment in Greater Poland and Pomerania, were withdrawn from circulation. At the same time, Russian rubles from the tsarist period were withdrawn from circulation with a conversion rate of 216 Polish marks to 100 rubles. The last standardization of the currency took place in the region of Central Lithuania where the Polish mark became a means of payment in 1923, and only for a short time (Leszczyńska, 1997, pp. 316–317). Interestingly, work on

the introduction of a new Polish currency was launched already in early 1919, i.e., at the dawn of the reborn Polish statehood. For reasons of politics and prestige, it was hoped to quickly bid farewell to the Polish mark, which was introduced by the Germans in 1917, and issued by the Polish National Loan Fund: an institution established by a decision of German Governor General Hans Hartwig von Beseler (Komierzyńska-Orlińska, 2018, p. 61). To this end, on February 5, 1919, the head of state Józef Piłsudski issued a decree that was signed by Prime Minister Ignacy Paderewski, establishing a Polish currency called “łech” (Journal of the Law of the Polish State, 1919, no. 14, item 174). During the discussion that swept through the Sejm and the press, other names were considered for the Polish monetary unit. Some of the suggestions included: “piast,” “pol” and “polona.” Eventually, a discussion on the subject came before the Polish Parliament on February 28, 1919. As a result, the zloty was returned to its traditional and historical name (Stenographic Report of the 9th Session of the Legislative Sejm of February 28, 1919, pp. 385–387).

Thanks to the monetary reform, the Polish currency was stabilized, which improved the state’s financial condition in the long term. Paradoxically, however, in the short term (1924–1925), it weakened the position of Polish exporters, who took advantage of the fragile Polish currency (Leszczyńska, 1997, p. 312). The eminent Polish historian Marian Tyrowicz, a native of Lviv, accurately commented on the importance of Grabski’s currency reform, in his memoirs of 1918–1939:

The inflation of the Polish mark, that disastrous legacy of the occupation government in Warsaw, actually created an abnormal social phenomenon both in the life of my city [Lviv – K.M.] and in the whole country... This horrible life, when even the prices of streetcar tickets or a box of matches skyrocketed by a thousand marks overnight, came to an end in 1924 thanks to Władysław Grabski’s salutary currency reform and the birth of the Polish zloty (qtd. in Tyrowicz, 1991, p. 184).

The introduction of the Polish zloty required the reform of the issuing bank. Until then, the function of the central bank responsible for Poland’s monetary policy had been carried out by the post-German Polish National Loan Fund, mentioned earlier, which issued

the Polish mark. Now its role was to be taken over by the Bank of Poland S.A., whose establishment had been announced by the law of December 7, 1918 (Journal of Laws 1918, no. 19, item 56, p. 144, art. 1). Less than six years after the issuance of that act, on April 28, 1924, the doors of the promised and long-awaited Bank of Poland were opened. Setting up the Bank was entrusted to a group of prominent banking and credit cooperative specialists. The founding team included Stanisław Karpiński – former Minister of the Treasury in the government of Ignacy Paderewski, former director of the Polish National Loan Fund and, finally, president of the Union of Banks in Poland; Bishop Stanisław Adamski – founder of the cooperative movement in Greater Poland, creator of the Union of Cooperative Societies and then superintendent of the Bank of the Union of Co-operative Societies; Zygmunt Chrzanowski – participant in the Polish delegation during the Versailles Peace Conference where he was responsible for economic affairs; Jan Kanty Steczkowski – co-founder of the Lviv Parcel Bank, former director of the Galician War Credit Facility and director of the Polish National Bank. The last member of the organizing committee of the Polish Bank S.A. was Franciszek Stefczyk – creator and first director of the National Central Fund for Agricultural Cooperatives in Lviv, which operated during the Galician period, a great promoter of the cooperative movement, mainly in rural areas (Morawski, 1998, p. 44). The newly-established central bank was created on the principles of a private joint-stock bank, which was expected to make it immune from local political upheavals, as well as increase its prestige in the international arena. The latter became the key to gaining access to foreign loans, which was to be instrumental in the recovery of Poland's economic condition (Grabski, 1927, pp. 23–24). Transparency in the functioning of the National Bank reflected in its organization (joint stock company) fulfilled the demands of the Genoa Conference, which, inspired by the Council of Entente States headed by Great Britain and France, was held in April 1922 in Italy (Morawski, 1998, p. 44). The goal of the meeting of European leaders was to map out directions for the economic reconstruction of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, including mainly post-war Germany over which there hung the specter of economic disaster (Kumaniecki, 1990, p. 140). The issues discussed in Genoa included those of international trade, transport

and transit, and precisely the stabilization of national currencies. The remedy for the latter problem was sought, among other things, in the establishment of a central reconstruction bank and its branches in all the countries concerned (Józef Piłsudski Institute in America, no. 701/2/61, p. 461).

Bank Polski S.A. launched on April 28, 1924, less than two weeks after its founding meeting. Shareholders included 176,000 entities and individuals. Every fourth share sold (250 thousand bonds) went to private hands, mainly soldiers and representatives of the so-called free professions. Thirty-six percent of the shares were bought by industrial companies, and 14% by commercial banks. Notably, the state treasury held only 1% of the shares, which fulfilled the recommendations of the aforementioned Genoa Conference on the independence of the national bank from the government (Morawski, 1998, pp. 44–45). The first president of the Bank of Poland was Grabski's trusted associate, Stanisław Karpinski, whose task was to make sure that the institution remained autonomous (Grabski, 1927, p. 18). Undeniably, the establishment of the central bank and the currency reform contributed to the recovery of the Republic's economy. Sadly, the prosperity did not last long, as another economic crisis was already on the horizon in 1925. Its cause was the so-called "second inflation" triggered by a sharp decline in the value of the zloty against the U.S. dollar. The price of the U.S. dollar rose from the parity level of 5.18 zlotys to 6 zlotys on the stock market (Leszczynska, 1997, p. 318). Several factors contributed to the rising inflation. Chief among them were the growing budget deficit (related, among other things, to rising railroad and army maintenance expenditures), the tariff war with Germany, and crop failures in agriculture. In addition, the crisis was exacerbated by psychological anxiety stemming from the public's experience of previous years, which resulted in massive buying of foreign currency. In order to save the condition of the zloty, the Bank of Poland began to intervene in the stock market and depleted its own foreign exchange reserves. The failure of the Bank's board of directors to agree to intervene played a role in the resignation of Prime Minister and Treasury Minister Władysław Grabski. The currency was stabilized in the second half of 1926, that is, after Józef Piłsudski took power following a military coup.

This was achieved with the help of several tools. First of all, appropriate legal regulations were introduced where the exchange rate of the zloty to the dollar was adopted at the stock exchange level rather than at fixed parity. As a result, it was possible to apply for foreign loans (mainly from the United States of America), which were intended to secure the stability of the Polish currency. After heeding the opinion of foreign specialists working under the leadership of Edwin Kemmerer – a professor from Princeton University, who monitored the recovery program in Poland (Leszczyńska, 1997, p. 319) – the so-called “stabilization plan” was adopted in October 1927, providing guarantees for foreign loans in the amount of 62 million us dollars and 2 million pounds sterling. Before that, however, it was necessary to meet some basic conditions that opened up the possibility of repairing the country’s finances. For this purpose, a treasury reserve of 75 million zlotys was established at the Bank of Poland. The issuance of money was left in the exclusive competence of the Bank, which deprived the government of this possibility (Journal of Laws 1927, no. 88, item 789, pp. 1235–1240). Moreover, the silver content of the five-penny coin was reduced, and in the two-penny coin silver was removed altogether by introducing nickel into its minting (Leszczyńska, 1997, p. 319). Still in 1926, the Treasury Ministry instituted temporary rationing of foreign exchange trading. The right to export foreign exchange outside Poland was restricted, and an order to sell “hard” currency – export currency – was imposed (Journal of Laws. 1927, no. 97, item 858, pp. 955–962; Journal of Laws. 1927, no. 97, item 858, p. 1358). These measures led to an increase in the circulation of the zloty. The problem of inflation was resolved, although the road to this goal was bumpy and winding. The large state investments carried out in the 1930s such as the construction of the Central Industrial District and the introduction of sizable amounts of money into the economy did not cause a domino effect. Inflation remained at a fairly stable level until the outbreak of World War II (Leszczyńska, 1997, pp. 320–321).

The fiscal policy of the Polish state, as already mentioned, was heavily dependent on foreign policy. The German Reich, more commonly known as the German Republic or Weimar Republic, played a prominent role in this. This dependence was due to the pegging of the

Polish mark to the German mark, which, of course, was a corollary of Imperial Germany's policy toward Poles during World War I. The said interdependence was also rooted in the post-partition period, as the most developed Polish provinces like Greater Poland were still tightly linked to the German economic (mainly trade) bloodstream. In 1925, the Polish government, after years of strained relations with Berlin, stepped up negotiations with the authorities of the German Republic for a bilateral trade agreement, similar to those that Poland had previously signed with France, Denmark and the Netherlands (Grabski, 1927, p. 171). An impending expiration of the so-called Upper Silesia Convention of 1922, under which Poles were allowed to import goods from Upper Silesia into Germany duty-free, forced these talks. Additionally, a provision of the Treaty of Versailles granting Poland a most-favored-nation clause in trade with its western neighbor ceased to apply in mid-1925. Bilateral economic relations had to be regulated anew. The German authorities, conscious of the dependence of Polish trade on relations with Berlin, began to lay down conditions that were unacceptable from the point of view of Polish government circles. In order to maintain import quotas to the Weimar Republic, Germany issued political ultimatums, demanding, for example, certain privileges for the large German minority living in Poland. The bilateral talks failed, with the outcome that the resentment, which had been smoldering for several years, turned into a full-scale trade war that lasted nearly a decade (until 1934), which has been referred to in historiography as the "Polish-German Customs War." Its ramifications for the de facto resurgent Polish economy were incredibly disruptive, especially when it came to the export of hard coal mined in Upper Silesia (Koniecko, 2021, pp. 84–86). The gravity of this conflict was vividly described in the memoirs by Władysław Grabski, the prime minister and treasury minister at the time, who had an excellent insight into its realities:

When contemplating the general situation of Poland and Germany, I realized that Poland, half of whose imports and exports were to Germany, would undergo, in the event of a tariff war, a stronger shock than Germany for which the exchange ratio with Poland was 10% of that with other countries. But I also understood that it was important

for our security and economic independence that we change precisely this ratio of excessive economic dependence on Germany and enter into closer relations with other countries (qtd. in Grabski, 1927, pp. 172-173).

Grabski's diagnosis was no secret. In general, Polish intellectual and political elites were aware of the imbalance in trade and economic relations with the German Republic. Entrepreneurs, politicians and economists who were mindful of these dependencies sought to change this disadvantageous set-up at all costs. Attempts were made to develop and strengthen economic ties with other countries in the region, using, among other things, personal connections and historical traditions. Hence, as industrialists, merchants and politicians originating from Galicia maintained contact with the Republic of Austria, this country played a not insignificant role. Despite the fact that many members of the intelligentsia in southern Poland were "shaking off their Austrianness", this did not exclude the interest of some individuals in the former Danube metropolis [Vienna - K.M.] (qtd. in Tyrowicz, 1991, p. 201). Marian Tyrowicz's opinion was well-founded, for after 1918 a sizable group of Austrian officials still had Polish roots, which facilitated good relations between Vienna and Warsaw. The strength of Polish-Austrian, as well as Polish-Romanian and Polish-Hungarian ties as a Central European counterweight to German hegemony was pointed out by Marcelli Szarota, a chargé d'affaires to the government of the Republic of Austria from 1919 to 1921 (Alabrudzińska, 2021, p. 8). Many interesting economic initiatives were attempted in relations with Austria. One of such projects was the concept of establishing an Austro-Polish Bank bound to Austrian capital. Representatives of the "old" Polish political class and entrepreneurs associated with the southeastern provinces became involved in its creation. The originator of the new bank was Leon Biliński, once the treasury minister of the Danube monarchy (Biliński, 1925, pp. 371-385). The history of this concept dates back to the early 1920s. The idea of setting up the Austro-Polish Bank was to fill the void left by the liquidated Austro-Hungarian Bank, which was one of the most important banking institutions in Galicia before 1918. Despite the strong commitment of many influential figures, Poland's progressing economic depression stood in the way of these

ambitious plans (Austrian State Archive in Vienna/Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Archiv der Republik, no. AT-OeSTA/AdR BKA I/BPD 323, no pagination; Austrian State Archive in Vienna/Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv, no. AT-OeSTA/AVA Justiz JM Allgemein Sig. 2 A 2420.14: Austro-Polnische Bank (II 51 Vz 276), no pagination). Nevertheless, the Republic of Austria remained one of the focuses of developing economic cooperation, both at the macro and micro level. The resources of Polish archives contain many examples of orders from Austria, and Vienna in particular, that ensured the continuity of production and employment in Poland. To provide an example, let me cite the history of the First Małopolska Wood Products Factory BÓR in Jaroszwice in the Wadowice district, whose owner Franciszek Foltyn indicated in an industrial cadastre drawn up in October 1920 that he exported 75% of his products to Vienna (ANK, no. 29/207/81, no pagination). There were numerous similar examples, especially since Austria's position as a trading partner rose with the onset of the Polish-German tariff war, with Austria - along with Italy - becoming one of the most important importers of Polish coal (Leszczyńska, 1997, p. 313).

Romania emerged as an important trade partner of Poland in the 1920s. Transit of Polish goods through the territory of its south-eastern neighbor allowed access to countries and regions of the Mediterranean through Black Sea ports. Fully using this route, Poland could bypass transit through the German ports of Hamburg and Bremen (State Archives in Poznań, hereinafter: APP, collect: Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Poznań, no. 1452, p. 130). The port of Trieste, Italy, could have been an alternative to both of these, although sea freight costs in that Adriatic harbor were very high and uncompetitive. Thus, despite the relatively low cost of transport by land between Poland and Italy, the profitability of expediting goods via Trieste was not very high. Thus, transit through the territory of Romania, which was politically close to Poland, was growing in importance. Attempts were also made via Romania to find markets in the south-east of Poland, e.g. in Bulgaria (spirits, hops, and agricultural machinery), Greece (wood and machinery products), Egypt (coal, kerosene, and sugar), and even in Persia (cotton, wool, and agricultural machinery) (APP, collect.: Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Poznań, no. 1452,

pp. 130–133). An opinion expressed by a delegation of the Poznań Chamber of Industry and Commerce in a paper entitled *The issue of transit of Polish goods through Romania*, which was delivered during the convention of Romanian and Polish chambers of industry and commerce in Lviv on September 5, 1930, attests to the potential for exporting Polish products through Romania:

The road through Romania and Romanian ports is a natural route leading from Poland to the ports of the Levant and vice-versa. It would be a mistake to think that only the southern and eastern stretches of our country are interested in transit through Romania, while the gravitational pull of other areas of Poland is different. One should bear in mind that the goods of Western Polish industry [implicitly Greater Poland – K.M.], traveling the road to Romania, account for the longest mileage on PKP tracks [Polish State Railways – K. M.] to Śniatyń and Załucz, while when diverting these exports via Trieste from western Poland, they pass immediately at Zebrzydowice from the P.K.P. railroad line to foreign railroads (State Archives in Poznań, collect: Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Poznań, no. 1452, p. 130).

The participants of the Eastern Fair, held annually since 1921 in Lviv, emphasized the significance of the eastern direction (the Soviet Union), as well as the southeastern direction (the Eastern Balkan region) of exports. They showcased and promoted the most outstanding achievements of the Polish economy, which was supposed to boost trade with Soviet Russia, Romania and the Middle East in general. With the benefit of hindsight, it should be said that the Eastern Fair was a successful venture and became a permanent fixture on the European exhibition calendar. It appeared in foreign-language press titles and trade magazines, alongside exhibitions held in Paris, Florence, Zagreb, Trieste and Munich. The fair was very popular in Austria, especially in Vienna where it was possible to apply for participation through the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (*Die Arbeit*, no. 1555, December 16, 1921, pp. 3; *Oesterreich-ungarische Maschinenwelt*, no. 54, July 7, 1922, p. 5; *Tages Post*, no. 189, August 20, 1921, p. 6; *Der Export nach Polen*, *Wiener Morgenzeitung*, no. 1992, August 31, 1924, pp. 13–14; *Pharmazeutische Post*, no. 33, August 18, 1921, p. 266).

In the second half of the 1920s, apart from Austria, Italy and the Kingdom of Romania, Great Britain began to play an important role in the trade of the Second Republic, which was influenced by the miners' strikes that swept through the British Isles, ultimately resulting in greater interest in Polish coal (Leszczyńska, 1997, p. 313).

A significant share of trade in the 1920s and later fell to the oil industry. Oil extraction and the production of petroleum products were – for good reason – viewed as a key sector of Polish industry, a sector that became immensely attractive to foreign investors. French capital led the way in this area. The unchallenged position of the French sprang from dependencies that were an immediate consequence of the Polish–French trade and political agreements from 1922. Economic relations were supported by the *Comité des Pétroles Française de Pologne*, founded in Paris in 1920. Bilateral government agreements were concluded for a period of ten years. In 1928, the French expanded their presence in the Polish oil industry by buying up Austrian shares. By 1930, the share of French capital in the Polish oil industry had reached 50.3% (Majewski, 2009, pp. 132–134). Trade in oil commodities also took place with American, British, Swiss and Czechoslovakian markets. In 1932, the Polish authorities, in order to have more control over foreign trade in rock oil and petroleum products, formed a cartel organization operating under the name of *Polski Eksport Naftowy* (Polish Petroleum Export), based in Lviv. The most important Polish oil companies such as “Gazolina” S.A., “Gazy Ziemne” S.A., “Polmin” Państwowa Fabryka Olejów Mineralnych (State Mineral Oil Factory), “Nafta” S.A., Galician Carpathian Oil Joint-Stock Society and many others (CDIAL, collect. 284, catal. 1, case 45, f. 1–3; CDIAL, collect. 284, catal. 1, case 106: f. 1–2; cf. *Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland*, no. 30, item 306).

Summary

After a century and a half of partition, Poland was reborn in the autumn of 1918; however, the geopolitical as well as economic situation of the country remained problematic. On the one hand, armed conflicts were ongoing while the new borders of the Republic were being forged, and on the other hand, the economy of the young state

was hit by an economic depression eroding the foundations of its existence. It took several years to climb out of the crises. To begin with, the difficulty that successive governments had to face was the need to merge the three different fiscal and economic systems and policies that had been bequeathed from the partitioning states: the German Empire, Austria-Hungary and Czarist Russia. I will only point out that this was finally accomplished in the mid-1930s, when in 1934 – after many years of consultation – by an ordinance of Polish President Ignacy Mościcki dated June 27, 1934, a uniform trade law code was introduced for the lands within the borders of Poland, which in principle remained in force until 2001 (CDIAL, collect. 702, catal. 1, case 17, f. 11, 23; Journal of Laws. 1934, no. 57, item 502, pp. 921–975; *Kupiec Polski...* XVII, no. 12, pp. 4–6). In conclusion, we should reiterate that two courses of recovery from economic crisis were under consideration in the early 1920s. The first (“the German course”) hinged on the introduction of a new currency with substantial backing from international loans. The second, called “the Austrian course,” rested exclusively on bolstering the economy with foreign loans. In the end, the Poles, led by Władysław Grabski, chose a third path. It entailed, among other things, quick collection of a property tax, thorough currency reforms, increasing revenue generation of state-owned monopolies and instituting spending checks for public finances (Grabski, 1927, pp. 30–33). The implementation of the latter task fell under the responsibility of the newly created Supreme Chamber of State Control. All of these steps, subjected to regular adjustments, produced fairly favorable socio-economic results. Their consequence was Poland’s long, arduous but steady recovery from the postwar economic stagnation.

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List of abbreviations

- AAN – Archives of New Records in Warsaw
ANK – National Archive in Cracow
APP – State Archives in Poznań
CDIAL – Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine in Lviv
Dz.Pr.P.P – Journal of the Law of the Polish State
Dz.U. – Journal of Laws
NIKP – Supreme Chamber of State Control

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DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.02



Strengths and Weaknesses of the Economy of the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938)

Abstract

The paper focuses on the strengths and weaknesses of the interwar Czechoslovakian economy. These included the readiness for the transition to an independent economy, the different economic levels of different parts of the new state, the elimination of transport “handicaps” of the new state by peace treaties, foreign trade policy, interwar economic development and the economic place of Czechoslovakia in Europe and the world. Although Czechoslovakia did not replace the importance of Vienna in terms of stock exchange and insurance, or Berlin’s position in terms of economics and transport, and failed to establish itself permanently in the Balkans, it proved its economic viability during its historically defined existence and did not become a destabilising factor in Central European or European economies.

Keywords

Czechoslovakia, interwar period, industry, foreign trade

Suggested citation: Jakubec I. (2023). Strengths and Weaknesses of the Economy of the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938). *Trimarium. The History and Literature of Central and Eastern European Countries*, 2(2), 37–64.

DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.02

Submitted: 03.04.2023 / Accepted: 17.04.2023

The literature on the economic history of interwar Czechoslovakia is very rich. The last time the issue was discussed was in connection with the centenary of the founding of the state in 1918. Here we must mention the collective monograph *Czechoslovakia: History of the State (Československo: Dějiny státu, 2018)*¹ and the *Encyclopedia of Czech Law History (Encyklopedie českých právních dějin, Plzeň–Ostrava 2015–2023)*, which contains several concepts from the economic sphere.² Older works have not lost their value either.³ The author has used published and unpublished archival documents from Czech (National Archives in Prague, Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic in Prague) and foreign (Staatsarchiv Hamburg, The Kew State Archives) archives and periodical and contemporary literature. Let us look at the strengths and weaknesses of the interwar Czechoslovak economy, which were, however, very closely interconnected, as the following discussion shows.

1. The economic base of the former monarchy

The new state “inherited” 26% of its population (13 612 424 citizens) (1921) and 21% of its territory (140 394 sq km) from the former monarchy with about 60–70% of its industrial capacity and 27% of its agricultural production. The Czech lands (Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia) formed the basis of Czechoslovakia’s economic potential (Kubů and Pátek, 2000; Lacina, 1996), and the Czech lands clearly belonged to the economic core of the monarchy. This fact is certainly one of its strengths, but it also contains weaknesses. The industry of the Bohemian lands was conceived for the monarchy, i.e., about

1 Dejmek, J. et al. (2018). *Československo. Dějiny státu*. Praha: Libri.

2 Schelle, K.–Tauchen, J. (eds.) (2015–2023). *Encyklopedie českých právních dějin*, 22 vol., Praha–Ostrava: Aleš Čeněk.

3 Kárník, Z. (2018). *České země v éře První republiky*, 2. ed. 3 vol.. Praha: Libri; Kubů, E. – Pátek, J. (eds.) (2000). *Mýtus a realita hospodářské vyspělosti mezi válečného Československa*, Praha: Karolinum, p. 11; Lacina, V. (1990). *Formování československé ekonomiky 1918–1923*. Praha: Academie; Průcha, V. et al. (2004–2009). *Hospodářské a sociální dějiny Československa 1918–1992*. 2 vol. Brno: Doplněk; Hallon, L. (1995). *Industrializácia Slovenska 1918–1938: (rozvoj alebo úpadok?)*. Bratislava: Veda; Teichová, A. (1988). *Wirtschaftsgeschichte der Tschechoslowakei 1918–1980*. Wien: Böhlau.

52 million inhabitants, and now at least one-third of the production had to be exported abroad, even though the goods were actually flowing to the same customers.

The importance of the Bohemian lands for the monarchy can also be demonstrated by the share of direct and indirect taxes of Cisleithania (Austria). In the case of direct taxes, it was one-third, and in the case of indirect taxes, it was almost two-thirds. In addition, most of the large industrial enterprises had their formal headquarters in Vienna, where they paid one-fifth of their taxes.

Table 1

Regional development of tax revenues 1900–1913 (in %)

| Direct taxes | 1900 | 1913 | Indirect taxes | 1900 | 1913 |
|----------------------|------------------|------|-----------------------|------|------|
| | Alpine countries | 48.9 | | 52.6 | 20.4 |
| Czech lands | 35.5 | 32.9 | 63.0 | 59.5 | |
| Bukovina and Galicia | 10.4 | 9.2 | 13.9 | 16.7 | |

Source: Sandgruber, R. (1978). *Wirtschaftswachstum, Energie und Verkehr in Österreich 1840–1913*. In Kellenbenz, H. (Hg.). *Wirtschaftliches Wachstum, Energie und Verkehr vom Mittelalter bis ins 19. Jahrhundert*. Bericht über die 6. Arbeitstagung der Gesellschaft für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte. Stuttgart-New York: Gustav Fischer, Tab. 2, p. 82.

In 1927, based on the calculations by Hungarian statistician F. Fellner, the Czechoslovak statistician F. Bíbl (Bíbl, 1927; Jindra, 1998) estimated that Czech lands accounted for 41.2% of the gross national wealth of Cisleithania before 1914, Slovakia and Subcarpathian Rus for 16.3% of Transleithania, and the later-created independent Czechoslovak Republic for 32.1% of the gross national wealth of the whole monarchy (excluding Bosnia and Herzegovina)⁴.

⁴ The value of real estate (land, mines, smelters and buildings), movable property and means of transport, excluding foreign debts or claims.

A more accurate visualisation of the position of the Czech lands within the Cisleithanian Commonwealth is given by D.F. Good, who reports the Czech lands having a 44.9% share of the national income of Cisleithania in 1911–1913, with an average of 676 crowns per capita (Good, 1986;), which exceeded the Cisleithanian level of 569 crowns per capita.

2. Readiness for the 1918 coup and the transition to an independent economy

Among the strengths were the readiness of politicians, economists and other officials in particular to take over political and economic power, personified by the Draft Political Law and the Draft Economic Law (“Návrh zákona politického” and “Návrh zákona hospodářského”) of September 1918⁵. In the summer of 1918, covert efforts were initiated to develop the political and economic framework of the future state. The Draft Political Law envisaged the establishment of central ministries and institutions that essentially replicated the Austrian administration. The rather extensive Draft Economic Law, with a total of 86 paragraphs, was based on the real war situation and envisioned a tied economy for some time after the war. Independent financial management and a separate currency and the establishment of a central bank (“cedulová banka”) formed the core of the proposal. The proposal was essentially a sort of “timetable” for the socio-economic transformation of part of the former monarchy into a separate entity. Most likely for this reason, the transition was relatively smooth.

The legislative stability of the new state is evidenced by the fact that the existing legal order was adopted by the so-called reception norm (Act No 11/1918 Coll.). Since Austrian (Cisleithanian) law remained in force in the Czech lands, Hungarian law in Slovakia and Subcarpathian Rus and German law in the Hlučín region (acquired from Germany in 1920), it was necessary to unify legislation,

5 O náš hospodářský program. *Obzor národohospodářský*, 1926, (31), p. 1–38; Laci-
na, V., Formování, p. 62; Jakubec, I. (2011). Ekonomické parametry českosloven-
ské Ústavní listiny. In: Čechurová, J. – Šlehofer, L. et al. *Ústava 1920. Vyrcholení*
konstituování československého státu, Praha: Leges, pp. 170–179.

including that governing the economy. Therefore, a special ministry was established to unify laws and the organisation of administration. Newly created laws would apply to the full republic.

The customs and monetary separation from the former monarchy were an expression of economic independence. On 20 February 1919, Czechoslovakia was declared an independent customs territory (Act No 97/1919 Coll.) and five days later monetary separation was proclaimed (Act No 84/1919 Coll.). As part of the monetary separation, half of the currency was to be minted and returned to the owner, and the other half was to be withdrawn as a forced state loan at 1% interest. However, less than a third (29%) of the currency was retained, and in some areas even less. The Czechoslovak koruna, also known in some cases as the crown, (czk) became the new unit of currency, with a ratio of 1:1 to the old koruna (Kubů and Pátek, 2000).

The subsequent deflationary policy of Finance Minister A. Rašín and the British loan stabilized the crown for the long term (16 Swiss centimes). On the other hand, the deflation had a negative impact on Czechoslovak exports. The post-war economic crisis of 1922–1923, coupled with the conversion to a peacetime economy, slowed down the economic recovery. The decline in industrial production in 1922 was 10.4% in Czechoslovakia, but industry in Slovakia was affected even more, with a decline of about 30% (Kárník, 2000). By 1924 however, industrial production and trade had already surpassed the pre-war level, and agriculture did so a year later. Stabilization of the banking sector was brought about by the seven banking laws of 1924 (No. 235–241/1924 Coll.).

3. The different economic levels between the different parts of the new state and their share of the economic results

The new state had to deal with the varying (not only) economic levels of the different parts of the new state. At the time of the establishment of the republic, the Czech lands could rightly be described as industrial-agrarian, Slovakia as agrarian and under-industrialised, and Subcarpathian Rus as an explicitly agrarian region. It must be added, however, that Slovakia (former Upper Hungary), with its

isolated metallurgical and mining areas, formed the economic core of Hungary. Thus, the new state consisted of economically differently developed areas.

As late as the 1921 census of Czechoslovakia, the proportion of the population dependent (including family members) on agriculture (39.6%) still outweighed the proportion dependent on industry and trade (33.4%). This proportion changed slightly in favour of those dependent on the secondary job sector only in 1930. The Czech lands maintained their industrialisation led by the monarchy throughout the interwar period, while the economic importance of Slovakia and Subcarpathian Rus increased only slowly. After the establishment of the republic, Slovakia found itself in fierce competition with Czech enterprises and only from the second half of the 1920s and during the 1930s did it experience another wave of industrialisation, mainly connected with preparations for the defence of the republic (construction of strategic railways and military industry enterprises). The table below shows the structure by country.

Table 2
Structure of the population of Czechoslovakia (including family members) by sector in %

| | Year | Primary sector | Secondary sector | Tertiary sector | Total |
|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Czechoslovakia | 1921 | 39.6 | 33.4 | 27 | 100.0 |
| | 1930 | 34.6 | 34.9 | 30.5 | 100.0 |
| Czech lands | 1921 | 31.6 | 39.6 | 28.8 | 100.0 |
| | 1930 | 25.6 | 41.5 | 32.9 | 100.0 |

| | Year | Primary sector | Secondary sector | Tertiary sector | Total |
|--------------------------|------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Slovakia | 1921 | 60.6 | 17.4 | 22.0 | 100.0 |
| | 1930 | 56.8 | 19.1 | 24.1 | 100.0 |
| Subcarpathian Rus | 1921 | 67.6 | 10.4 | 22.0 | 100.0 |
| | 1930 | 66.3 | 11.9 | 21.8 | 100.0 |

Source: *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Českoslovakischen Republik* (1938). Prag: Státní úřad statistický, p. 15.

4. Elimination of transport “handicaps” of the new state by peace treaties

The peace treaties guaranteed Czechoslovakia not only political but also economic and transport independence (internationalisation of the Elbe, Danube and Oder rivers; representation in the International Commission for the Elbe, Danube and Oder rivers; cession of part of the fleet with navigation facilities on these rivers; the right to establish a free zone in Hamburg and Szczecin; the right to register naval ships; passage of Czechoslovak trains to Trieste with the monarchy-era tariff; freedom of transit, etc.)⁶. However, only part of the Czechoslovak claim in German ports was realized. The lease zones were not agreed upon until 1929, with a term of 99 years, therefore lasting until 2028⁷. In Hamburg, only the inland

6 No. 217/1921, 507/1921, 102/1922 Sb. z. a n.

7 Ujednání o nájemním pásmu československém v přístavě hamburském (Rozhodnutí). *Zahraniční politika*, 1929, vol. II, pp. 1542–1543.

zone (not the maritime zone) was realized, and only the transfer from smaller naval vessels to the Elbe barges or railways was carried out (Jakubec, 2016). The most important Czechoslovak company on the Elbe became the Czechoslovak Navigation Joint Stock Company of Elbe (“Československá plavební akciová společnost labská”). Sensitive commodities, including arms production, were routed through Hamburg. In the early 1930s, about 20% of Czechoslovak exports on the Elbe were routed through the Czechoslovak tenant zone in Hamburg and between 11.3–17% in imports⁸. Most goods were routed through other parts of the Freeport. In Szczecin, a separate zone was not built and the Czechoslovak Navigation Joint Stock Company of the Oder only concluded a lease agreement for the use of a part of the port (Jakubec, 2016). The recovery of transport conditions in Central Europe did not progress very quickly, however⁹. In addition, throughout the interwar period, the main load directions were reoriented from the north-south direction to the west-east direction. Approximately 360 km of new lines and about 450 km of main roads were built in the interwar period¹⁰.

5. Czechoslovakia was born a debtor

The newly created state was forced to assume a proportionate part of the debt responsibility of the former monarchy. Under the Treaty of Sainte-Germain and the Treaty of Trianon, Czechoslovakia assumed part of the pre-war state debts of Austria and Hungary (secured and unsecured) and part of their payment obligations. Voluntarily, Czechoslovakia also assumed part of the monarchy's war debts. The Reparation Commission set the share of the pre-war

8 Data for other years are not available. Staatsarchiv Hamburg, 371–811 Deputation für Handel, Schifffahrt und Gewerbe II, S I H 1.9.5., inv. no. 2 and 4; NA, fund MPOŽ, cart. 2489, no. 51784/31, Czechoslovak port zone in Hamburg – statistical reports.

9 AMZV ČR, IV. section, cart. 205, folder 1, no. 13417/20, Mèmoire relatif à la crise des transports en Europe centrale et sa solution z 29. listopadu 1920, Praha 4. 12. 1920.

10 NA, fund MŽ, cart. 810, no. 30771/29, Železniční investiční činnost stavební v zemi Slovenské v letech 1934–1937; Míša, K., Dálková silnice Brno – Žilina. *Silniční obzor*, 1938, 4 (17), pp. 67–72.

unsecured Austrian debt at 41.7%, and the share of the unsecured Hungarian debt at approximately 16–17%, i.e., 29.7% of the monarchy's unsecured debt in total, 33.9% in real terms (CZK 5.59 billion). Of the secured Austrian and Hungarian debts, Czechoslovakia took over 47.5% (CZK 2.18 billion). It also included war loans and supplies (CZK 5.63 billion).

These liabilities, totalling CZK 13.40 billion in the new currency (excluding interest), constituted a substantial part of the national debt. This amount was eventually halved by the Hague Reparations Commission to CZK 6.342 billion. In addition, the costs of the Czechoslovak legions (armaments, supplies, repatriation) of about CZK 8 billion and the so-called liberation fee (about CZK 5 billion) must be added. Thus, the total amounted to about CZK 26 billion, after a reduction of about CZK 20 billion¹¹. From 1930, according to the Hague Commission, the Czechoslovak Republic was to pay reparations of CZK 10 million (Procházka, 1930). After the Hoover Moratorium of 1931 and the Lausanne Conference, reparation payments were cut except for the costs of the Czechoslovak Legion and the so-called liberation fee.

6. Economic policy and its foreign policy implications

Economic policy in interwar Czechoslovakia was influenced mainly by two main groups. Initially, the economic interest group around the most essential Czechoslovak bank (“Živnostenská banka”), gained a decisive position, being politically linked to the numerically small but significantly strong national democracy, and backed by the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Trades, business organisations and professional economic institutions (e.g. the Central Union of Czechoslovak Industrialists, the Union of Czechoslovak Banks and the Chamber of Commerce and Trades in Prague). Notable representatives include J. Preiss, the long-time chief director of the bank, and the Minister of Finances, A. Rašín.

¹¹ Podrobněji Červený, P. (2002). Osud rakousko-uherských státních dluhů a závazků po roce 1918. *Ekonomická revue*, 3(5), pp. 15–16; *Deset let Československé republiky* (1928), vol. 2, Praha: Státní úřad statistický, pp. 119–121.

The second group was centred around the Agrarian Party and agrarian economic circles (the Agrarian Bank – “Agrární banka”). This group gained importance from the mid-twenties onwards in connection with the implementation of land reform, as evidenced by the election results (Lacina, 1994). Although Czechoslovakia was an industrial-agrarian state, its economic policy from the mid-1920s onwards was influenced by the Agrarian Party with its long-time Prime Minister A. Švehla, which led to a preference for agricultural or agro-industrial interests over industrial ones, including in foreign trade relations. This “agrarian” economic policy undoubtedly affected trade relations with neighbouring Poland and Hungary and did not help relations with the Balkan agrarian and agro-industrial states.

In Central Europe, Czechoslovakia failed to realise a natural exchange of its industrial production for agrarian products with its close (Poland, Hungary) and more distant Balkan neighbours. Apart from economic reasons, relations were also limited by political considerations or efforts to revise peace treaties. Even attempts to intensify economic cooperation in the mid-1930s within the framework of the Little Agreement (“Malá dohoda”) failed. The Little Agreement was economically dismantled by Germany. Czechoslovakia lost its “struggle” for the Balkans (Jančík, 1990).

In the first post-war years, agreement capital flowed into Czechoslovakia, but its importance was not proportional to its political ties. Both the government and economic circles were interested in it, with the aim of involving this capital in the fate of the republic and helping the overall modernisation of industry and other areas. Among the most important were the French shareholding in the Škoda plants (“Škodovy závody” – Pilsen) and the Mining and Metallurgical Company (“Báňská a hutní společnost” – Prague), the British shareholding in the Anglo-Czechoslovak Bank for Trade and Industry (“Anglo-československá banka pro obchod a průmysl” – Prague), as well as in the consolidation of the Czechoslovak currency and economy in 1922 (Czechoslovakia), and loans to a number of cities (Prague, Bratislava, Brno, Karlovy Vary). As of 31 December 1937, British direct capital holdings accounted for 30.8%, French 21.4%, Austrian 31.1%, Dutch 8.8%, German 7.2%, Belgian 7.1%, Swiss 4.5%, American 3.5%,

Italian 2.2%, Swedish 0.9% and Hungarian 0.5% of foreign holdings (Teichová, 1994).

However, Germany became the foreign economic partner from the mid-1920s onwards (as it was before 1918), which did not correspond to Czechoslovakia's foreign policy and military-strategic ties. The explanation lies in geographical proximity, regional specialization, existing economic ties, the transit of Czechoslovak foreign trade via German railways, waterways and seaports, and mutual economic ties¹². Germany only considered using its transport and economic superiority in the context of the "preparations" for Munich¹³.

The consolidation of the economy after the war was to be aided by the so-called nostrification. Law No. 12/1920 Coll., announced in the above-mentioned Draft Economic Law, reflected the fact that the key positions in the economy of the new state remained in the hands of the German and Austrian capital even after the establishment of the state. Furthermore, the most important companies and banks, whose operations were located in the territory of the Czechoslovak Republic, had their formal administrative headquarters in Vienna and Budapest. The Nostrification Act empowered the relevant ministers (of industry, trade and commerce, finance, and railways) to call on enterprises to transfer their headquarters to the Republic. Joint stock companies and limited liability companies were subject to nostrification. In reality, nostrification could only be implemented after the conclusion of the agreement with Austria at the end of August 1920 and with Hungary even seven years later¹⁴. In total, 235 companies were nostrified, of which 231 are known in detail (Čižinský, 2016). The capital of these companies represented

12 Überlegungen zum deutsch-tschechoslowakischen Verhältnis, Gebtsattel, Prag, 30. Oktober 1918. In *Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte aus Prag. Innenpolitik und Minderheitsprobleme in der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik.* (1983). Teil I. München-Wien: Oldenbourg, Dokument Nr. A8, pp. 563–564.

13 Aufzeichnung des Leiters der Wirtschaftspolitischen Abteilung, Wiehl, Berlin 3. 9. 1938. *Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik 1918–1945.* (1950), series D (1937–1945), Bd. II, Baden-Baden: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. Dok. Nr. 427, pp. 550–553.

14 Kolize, řevnivost a pragmatismus: československo-rakouské hospodářské vztahy 1918–1938. (1999). Praha: Karolinum; Tóth, A. (2015). *Maďarsko ve dvacátých letech 20. století: „bethlenovská“ konsolidace nového státu a československo-maďarské hospodářsko-politické vztahy.* Praha: Oeconomica.

about one-third of the industrial and commercial capital. At the same time, these enterprises paid one-fifth of their taxes in their seats outside the Republic. Nostrification was also carried out in the banking and insurance sectors. Details are given in the table below.

Table 3

Nostrification of Joint Stock Companies (1928)

| Head-quarters | Relocating head-quarters | Share capital of relocated companies | Dividing head-quarters | Share capital of divided companies | Total number of nostrified companies | Total share capital |
|---------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Austria | 118 | 983.0 | 44 | 456.6 | 162 | 1 437.6 |
| Hungary | 62 | 463.8 | 7 | 47.0 | 69 | 510.8 |
| Total | 180 | 1 556.8 | 51 | 501.6 | 231 | 1 948.4 |

Source: *Deset let Československé republiky (1928)*, vol. 2. Praha: Státní úřad statistický, p. 147.

It should also be mentioned that the nostrification process was also accompanied by the repatriation (transfer from abroad) of the capital of companies located in Vienna and Budapest. At that time, Czech banks bought a large part of the shares of Czechoslovak companies and subsequently sold them to their clients.

7. Foreign Trade (“Made in Czechoslovakia”)

Due to the capacity of Czechoslovak industry and the lack of raw materials, foreign trade played an important role in the Czechoslovak economy. Important raw materials included wool, cotton, and iron ore. Some foods and basic goods were also imported, as Czechoslovakia only had enough wood, coal and linseed.

Among the weaknesses of Czechoslovak goods sales was their structure or too wide production range and distribution. Apart from engineering products (arms exports) and equipment for sugar factories and electrical engineering, key industries such as textiles, footwear, glass, jewellery from Jablonec and Nisou, porcelain, musical instruments, wooden toys, i.e., generally light industry, which in case of economic fluctuations experienced the greatest losses as surplus goods. Moreover, the light export industry was located in areas with a majority German population.

Inspecting the structure of Czechoslovak exports by commodity (Brussels Convention), a reduction by two-thirds in food and beverages in the period 1920–1937 can be seen along with a substantial increase in the share of raw materials and semi-finished products, but with several fluctuations and a small increase in finished products.

Table 4

Commodity structure of Czechoslovak exports in 1920–1937 in %

| Commodity | 1920 | 1924 | 1929 | 1933 | 1937 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|
| Live animals | 0.0 | 0.3 | 0.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Food and drink | 22.0 | 18.7 | 11.4 | 7.8 | 8.2 |
| Raw materials and semi-finished products | 12.4 | 21.8 | 16.8 | 22.9 | 19.8 |
| Finished products | 65.6 | 59.2 | 71.5 | 69.1 | 71.8 |
| Unwrought gold and silver | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.2 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: *Zahraniční obchod Republiky československé v roce 1937* (1938). vol. I. Obchod speciální (část první). Československá statistika, vol. 154, Praha: Státní úřad statistický, p. 10*.

The structure of Czechoslovak imports in the years 1920–1937 was characterised by a significant increase in the share of imports of raw materials and semi-finished products to less than 60%. After fluctuations, the share of finished products stabilised below 30%. The share of foodstuffs fell to almost half.

Table 5

Commodity structure of Czechoslovak import in 1920–1937 in %

| Commodity | 1920 | 1924 | 1929 | 1933 | 1937 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|
| Live animals | 0.6 | 5.2 | 4.8 | 1.8 | 1.9 |
| Food and drink | 18.2 | 25.1 | 14.6 | 19.2 | 11.0 |
| Raw materials and semi-finished products | 45.1 | 48.1 | 49.0 | 49.9 | 57.5 |
| Finished products | 36.1 | 21.6 | 31.5 | 28.6 | 29.6 |
| Unwrought gold and silver | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.5 | 0.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: *Zahraniční obchod Republiky československé v roce 1937 (1938)*. vol. 1. Obchod speciální (část první). Československá statistika, vol. 154, Praha: Státní úřad statistický, p. 10*.

The territorial orientation of Czechoslovak exports and imports shows a relatively interesting development. Throughout the interwar period, Europe remained in the lead, although in the case of exports, there was a roughly 20% decline (from 95.53% in 1921 to 74.11% in 1937) and in the case of imports, after a significant fluctuation in 1928, a return to the level of the early 1920s (69.13% in 1937). After the crisis, the increase in exports from the American continent (North and South)

is surprising (from 3.58% in 1921 to 14.27% in 1937). After the crisis, imports from the Americas also strengthened by 15.27%. Overall, Asia became stronger, as did Africa.

The problem for Czechoslovak foreign trade was re-exportation. The clues are both official statistics and contemporary statements, including memoirs. Before 1929, for example, the trade destination Hamburg (i.e., Freihafen Hamburg) accounted for as much of the turnover of goods as Germany itself, and goods necessarily had to go to other destinations (Kubů and Jakubec, 1992). Intermediaries calculated several to tens of per cent margins¹⁵ without specifying the destination to which the goods were going or under which brand name (Kubů and Jakubec, 1992). The acceleration of the elimination of intermediaries was realised during the Great Depression, when direct contacts were made with buyers, mostly at ports.

Re-importation was also an issue for Czechoslovakia. However, it was mostly identifiable in crops that did not come from those countries (cocoa, tea, coffee, spices, rice, tobacco, cotton, jute, rubber, etc.). Positive trends leading to its reduction were successful during the Great Depression.

Table 6

Value of re-exported goods as a percentage of the value of total imports from these countries

| Country | 1924 | 1934 |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| Italy | 53.0 | 1.2 |
| Germany | 43.2 | 1.9 |
| Netherlands | 43.1 | 9.7 |

15 U formy Melichar-Umrath dokonce 30–50%. Novotný, J.–Šouša, J. (1989). Úsilí českých výrobců zemědělských strojů o proniknutí na brazilský trh ve dvacátých letech (Akce firmy Melichar-Umrath). In: *Latinská Amerika – dějiny a současnost*, vol. 2, Praha, p. 192.

| Country | 1924 | 1934 |
|---------------|------|------|
| Portugal | 36.7 | 0.2 |
| Great Britain | 10.7 | 8.0 |
| Austria | 7.3 | 0.5 |
| Switzerland | 6.0 | 3.5 |
| France | 1.4 | 0.9 |

Source: Jakubec, I., Kubů, E. (1994). Veränderung der territorialen Orientierung des tschechoslowakischen Aussenhandels zwischen den Weltkriegen. In Teichová, A.–Mosser, A. –Pátek, J. (Hrsg.). *Der Markt im Mitteleuropa der Zwischenkriegszeit*, Prag: Karolinum, p. 282.

About one-third of Czechoslovak foreign trade was carried out in the successor states, the other third in Germany¹⁶, including the seaports of Hamburg and Bremen. Great Britain accounted for 4% of Czechoslovak exports and 6% of imports in the late 1930s, while exports and imports from France accounted for about 9% and 6% respectively.

During the Great Depression, the weight of traditional markets in Central and Southeastern Europe, including Germany, declined. While Germany's share of Czechoslovak foreign trade fell from more than 22% (1929) to less than 15% (1937), the share of Western European industrial countries, Scandinavia and especially overseas countries (USA, Brazil, Argentina, Egypt and India) increased. Trade with the advanced Western European economies encouraged the production of quality competitive products and reduced dependence

16 Hospodářské vztahy sledovalo britské ministerstvo zahraničí. Srv. např. The National Archives Kew, FO 371/21759, Political Central Germany, c 4569/3500/18, Protocol extending German-Czechoslovak Clearing Agreement, 10th November 1937, to Austria; c 5764/3500/18, German-Czechoslovak Clearing Agreement, c 5882/3500/18, German-Czechoslovak negotiations regarding exchange of goods; c 6561/3500/18, German-Czechoslovak commercial treaty; c 10412/3500/18 German-Czechoslovak commercial relations; C 10431/3500/18 German-Czechoslovak relations.

on the clearing system. Clearing was advantageous for Germany, Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Turkey, Latvia, and Estonia. Its share in Czechoslovak imports and exports reached a peak in 1934 (91% imports, 82% exports). By 1936 its share had fallen to 65% (imports) and 57% (exports) (Kubů and Pátek, 2000). The disadvantageous clearing system for Czechoslovakia motivated the search for other, albeit distant, outlets, especially with free foreign exchange. More detailed data on foreign trade are given in the tables below.

Table 7

Share of selected countries in Czechoslovakia's exports in 1920–1937 in %

| | DE | AT | HU | RO | PL | YU | IT | FR | GB | USA |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| 1920 | 12.08 | 35.10 | 9.11 | 2.66 | 5.17 | 3.92 | 4.72 | 8.61 | 2.95 | 1.98 |
| 1921 | 11.21 | 28.69 | 11.23 | 4.31 | 5.21 | 7.35 | 3.37 | 4.82 | 7.70 | 2.82 |
| 1922 | 18.84 | 21.95 | 8.78 | 2.89 | 3.34 | 4.33 | 3.67 | 4.80 | 7.44 | 5.15 |
| 1923 | 25.42 | 20.99 | 5.68 | 3.22 | 2.85 | 4.36 | 4.10 | 2.41 | 9.70 | 4.43 |
| 1924 | 24.23 | 20.68 | 6.66 | 4.67 | 3.28 | 4.87 | 5.77 | 1.71 | 9.31 | 4.22 |
| 1925 | 28.29 | 17.28 | 6.26 | 4.51 | 3.50 | 4.36 | 4.81 | 1.43 | 8.16 | 4.02 |
| 1926 | 26.67 | 16.26 | 6.88 | 4.67 | 2.04 | 5.40 | 4.75 | 1.42 | 8.63 | 4.73 |
| 1927 | 28.40 | 15.2 | 8.1 | 4.5 | 3.3 | 4.6 | 3.7 | 1.2 | 7.6 | 5.0 |
| 1928 | 26.89 | 14.7 | 6.9 | 4.1 | 4.1 | 4.5 | 3.8 | 1.3 | 7.0 | 5.5 |
| 1929 | 22.90 | 15.0 | 6.4 | 3.8 | 4.4 | 5.6 | 3.8 | 1.6 | 6.9 | 7.2 |

| | DE | AT | HU | RO | PL | YU | IT | FR | GB | USA |
|-------------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|
| 1930 | 20.4 | 14.0 | 5.8 | 3.4 | 3.7 | 8.7 | 3.8 | 2.3 | 7.9 | 5.6 |
| 1931 | 19.0 | 13.7 | 2.2 | 2.6 | 3.0 | 6.3 | 3.4 | 3.6 | 10.3 | 6.1 |
| 1932 | 19.6 | 13.9 | 2.7 | 4.1 | 2.5 | 5.5 | 3.4 | 5.0 | 5.5 | 6.8 |
| 1933 | 19.8 | 12.2 | 3.2 | 3.7 | 2.8 | 3.3 | 3.2 | 5.6 | 6.1 | 7.2 |
| 1934 | 22.2 | 10.6 | 2.1 | 3.7 | 2.0 | 3.5 | 3.2 | 4.1 | 6.4 | 6.8 |
| 1935 | 15.4 | 9.5 | 1.8 | 4.8 | 3.3 | 4.0 | 2.9 | 4.0 | 6.9 | 7.7 |
| 1936 | 15.3 | 8.9 | 2.0 | 4.7 | 2.1 | 5.3 | 1.4 | 4.3 | 9.0 | 9.1 |
| 1937 | 15.0 | 7.3 | 1.9 | 5.4 | 2.6 | 5.0 | 3.4 | 3.8 | 8.7 | 9.3 |

Source: Československá statistika (1920–1938) (1920–1938). Series III, Praha: Státní úřad statistický.

Table 8

Share of selected countries in Czechoslovakia's imports in 1920–1937 in %

| | DE | AT | HU | RO | PL | YU | IT | FR | GB | USA |
|-------------|-------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1920 | 23.96 | 13.01 | 2.80 | 1.32 | 1.71 | 1.45 | 4.29 | 4.09 | 4.32 | 17.58 |
| 1921 | 26.13 | 8.84 | 4.12 | 2.15 | 1.71 | 1.64 | 3.27 | 2.85 | 5.98 | 20.27 |
| 1922 | 27.85 | 7.77 | 5.39 | 3.39 | 2.56 | 2.11 | 2.33 | 3.50 | 5.14 | 18.01 |
| 1923 | 43.91 | 6.52 | 3.45 | 1.82 | 3.68 | 2.72 | 7.58 | 3.46 | 3.29 | 6.99 |

| | DE | AT | HU | RO | PL | YU | IT | FR | GB | USA |
|-------------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1924 | 40.59 | 7.84 | 5.55 | 2.95 | 4.56 | 2.63 | 9.22 | 3.38 | 2.83 | 5.61 |
| 1925 | 40.53 | 7.36 | 6.36 | 2.09 | 7.03 | 2.85 | 6.75 | 3.93 | 3.71 | 6.35 |
| 1926 | 36.89 | 7.40 | 6.73 | 3.15 | 7.18 | 3.82 | 4.65 | 4.43 | 3.96 | 5.01 |
| 1927 | 36.40 | 7.1 | 5.4 | 3.7 | 5.9 | 3.3 | 3.6 | 4.4 | 4.5 | 6.9 |
| 1928 | 38.70 | 7.5 | 4.4 | 2.8 | 6.6 | 2.3 | 3.3 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 6.0 |
| 1929 | 38.40 | 7.8 | 4.8 | 2.4 | 6.5 | 1.7 | 3.6 | 3.8 | 4.1 | 5.5 |
| 1930 | 38.3 | 7.7 | 5.9 | 3.6 | 5.6 | 2.8 | 3.3 | 3.6 | 3.7 | 5.0 |
| 1931 | 40.6 | 7.2 | 1.1 | 4.8 | 5.3 | 3.3 | 3.9 | 3.8 | 3.7 | 4.1 |
| 1932 | 35.2 | 5.6 | 1.5 | 4.1 | 4.6 | 4.8 | 3.7 | 3.9 | 4.1 | 11.4 |
| 1933 | 28.9 | 4.9 | 2.7 | 2.9 | 3.1 | 3.8 | 4.9 | 6.2 | 4.6 | 7.6 |
| 1934 | 2.67 | 5.1 | 2.0 | 2.9 | 3.7 | 3.1 | 4.1 | 6.4 | 5.2 | 5.5 |
| 1935 | 22.8 | 4.6 | 2.0 | 3.9 | 3.7 | 5.4 | 3.6 | 5.6 | 5.4 | 5.9 |
| 1936 | 23.2 | 4.5 | 1.8 | 4.6 | 2.8 | 4.4 | 1.2 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 6.1 |
| 1937 | 17.3 | 4.2 | 1.5 | 4.8 | 2.5 | 3.7 | 2.4 | 5.3 | 6.3 | 8.7 |

Source: *Československá statistika (1920–1938) (1920–1938)*. Series III, Praha: Státní úřad statistický.

Czechoslovakia succeeded in establishing itself on European and world markets and in joining the international division of labour. While in the 1920s about 20% of the national income went through

foreign trade, before 1929 it was already about 30% (Kubů and Pátek, 2000; Skřivan, 2007). This was not exceptional, as other European countries such as Switzerland, Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands were similarly involved. However, many Czechoslovak industries were directly linked to foreign sales.

Czechoslovak foreign trade, through exports to less demanding markets of consumer and engineering goods, raw materials (lignite, wood) and semi-finished products, and imports of raw materials (ore, cotton, linen) and technology-intensive goods, exhibited features of both advanced and less advanced economies (Kubů and Pátek, 2000).

8. The “Golden” Twenties and the Great Depression

Although the German population was not enthusiastic about the changes in state law after 1918¹⁷, a common ground was found between Czech and German businessmen in the first half of the year. In 1928, the German Deutscher Hauptverband der Industrie in der Tschechoslowakei became part of the Central Union of Czechoslovak Industrialists (Boyer, 1999). The situation began to change only with the rise of A. Hitler, his propaganda and the economic crisis.

In order to understand some of the government’s actions after World War I (nostrification, repatriation of capital, land reform, etc.), it is necessary to bear in mind the capital dominance of Czechoslovak Germans (and Hungarians in Slovakia) in the industrial sector. National economist Jiří Hejda estimated the share of industry in the hands of Czechs and Slovaks in 1927 at 40%, adding: “For whether the industry is Czech or German: it must first and foremost be Czechoslovak.” („Neboť at je průmysl český nebo německý: v prvé řadě musí být československý.”) (Hejda, 1927, p. 118)¹⁸. That is, work for the republic regardless of ethnicity. In “Czech” (Czechoslovak) hands, according to J. Hejda, was the production of aeroplanes,

17 Zástupci německých stran vstoupili do vlády až v roce 1926 a poslední dva němečtí ministři opustili vládu v březnu 1938 (F. Spina a E. Zajicek).

18 See also: Průcha V. a kol. (2004). *Hospodářské a sociální dějiny Československa 1918–1992*. Vol 1: období 1918–1945, Brno: Doplněk, p. 114; Mitchell, B. R. (1981). *European Historical Statistics 1750–1975*. Second Revised edition, London: Macmillan, pp. 819–826.

most of the production of weapons and cars, agricultural machinery, explosives and pharmaceuticals, the production of bricks and ceramics, shoes, food products, beer production, dairy products.

The development of industry was influenced by several elements inherited from the monarchy – the structure, the technical level, the low level of specialisation and the consequences of war production. Small batch or piece production was a characteristic feature of medium and small enterprises. The conversion to peacetime production was hampered and slowed by shortages of raw materials, fuel and low labour discipline, which persisted from the war as a sign of resistance.

The literature refers to the brief period after the post-war crisis of 1924–1929 as the “golden” twenties. The overall growth rate of Czechoslovakia’s gross domestic product in the 1920s was slightly above the European average (2.6%)¹⁹. The most important sectors of Czechoslovak industry included textiles, metallurgy, engineering, food (sugar, distilling, brewing), energy, chemicals, glass, footwear, clothing and wood. However, the different sectors developed differently. The fastest-growing sectors were footwear, chemicals, electricity, cement and paper.

The Great Depression of 1929–1933 and its course in Czechoslovakia, although corresponding to that of other countries, was characterised by several specific features. First of all, it began belatedly in the spring of 1930, when the investment wave was catching up, but it lasted longer and was very deep. The decline in production was as much as 40%. In 1931, the credit and currency crises joined in. Among the most affected industries were metallurgy, export-oriented light industry (sugar, textiles, porcelain, glass, wood) and the metal industry (engineering and other branches). The electricity, chemical and some food industries were less affected. In the border areas with a predominantly German population and in Slovakia, the decline in industrial production was relatively greater.

The consequences of the crisis were ambivalent. On one hand, production was curtailed, the credit and monetary system was disrupted, and foreign trade was affected; on the other hand, the

19 *Statistická ročenka Protektorátu Čechy a Morava 1942* (1942). Praha, p. 240.

crisis regulated supply and demand, accelerated the reduction of production costs and structural changes in production and promoted new technical solutions. Even the crisis did not stop electrification and investment (military-strategic) actions in transport infrastructure. Among other things, the construction of Czechoslovak fortifications and the building of strategic roads and railways contributed to the recovery in the second half of the 1930s. In agriculture, the crisis led to a decline in prices and incomes.

Before the crisis, the Czechoslovak economy already showed a high degree of cartelization, which was accelerated during the crisis by state intervention (syndicalization of non-cartelised industries). Czechoslovak cartels also participated in major international cartels. While participation in the cartel was limited in terms of volume, territory or otherwise, it also expressed respect for Czechoslovak industrial potential and access to licences and new technologies. The iron and steel industry became the most concentrated industry in Czechoslovakia and internationally.

During the Great Depression, the role of the export industry of a consumer nature was weakened and, on the contrary, the heavy industry (metallurgy, engineering, chemistry) was strengthened, reinforced by preparations for defence, followed by the energy, textile, paper and printing industries. The proportion of heavy industry compared with light industry rose from 36.7:63.3 in 1924 to 45.1:54.9 in 1937, as shown in the table below.

Table 9

Structure of industrial production by sector in 1924–1937 in %

| Industry | 1924 | 1929 | 1937 |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Mining industry | 12.6 | 11.0 | 10.5 |
| Generation of electricity | 1.5 | 2.0 | 2.9 |
| Metallurgy and engineering | 17.9 | 23.0 | 25.3 |

| | | | |
|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Chemistry | 4.7 | 5.0 | 6.4 |
| Heavy industry total | 36.7 | 41.0 | 45.1 |
| Textiles | 23.9 | 21.0 | 21.5 |
| Light industry total | 63.3 | 59.0 | 54.9 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Source: Kubů, E.–Pátek, J. (eds.) (2000). *Mýtus a realita hospodářské vyspělosti Československa mezi světovými válkami*. Praha: Karolinum, p. 98; Teichova, A. (1972). *A Structural and Institutional Change in the Czechoslovak Economy 1918–1938*. Papers in East European Economics, 1972, no. 6; Teichová, A. (1988). *Wirtschaftsgeschichte der Tschechoslowakei 1918–1980*. Wien: Böhlau, p. 37; Pátek, J. (1995). *Možnosti a hranice rozvoje ekonomicky v meziválečném Československu a úloha hospodářského managementu*. *Soudobé dějiny*, 2–3(2), p. 206.

Despite some progress, especially in the 1930s (building the second military arms base of the state), economic differences between the Czech lands and Slovakia and Subcarpathian Russia persisted. In Slovakia, food, metal and wood industries prevailed. During the interwar period, the importance of industry continued to grow, and in 1937 its share of national income in Czechoslovakia reached CZK 23.7 billion, or about 35% (Kubů and Pátek, 2000).

9. Czechoslovakia's economic place in Europe and the world

Czechoslovakia appeared to be an industrial state in comparison with the countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe, but not in comparison with the advanced economies. According to C. Clark's calculations, the national income in 1925–1934 averaged USD 2.815 million (similar to the Netherlands, and Australia, with \$455 per capita and being on par with Austria and Greece.[39]) Czechoslovakia was therefore at the forefront of the economically moderately developed countries or the edge of the industrial core of Europe.

In terms of per capita national income, Czechoslovakia ranked 17th in the world. However, we must remember in this context that the Czech lands accounted for most of the national income. According to the value of industrial production per capita, Czechoslovakia ranked 12th in the world, and even 10th in the world (1.7%). More detailed information about Czechoslovakia's position in Europe and the world is provided by the data on the mining of stone and lignite, the production of iron ingots and alloys, the production of steel and artificial silk, published in the Yearbooks of the League of Nations.

Table 10

Overview of selected indicators comparing Czechoslovakia with the European and world scale

| | 1928 | # in Europe /
World | 1937 | # in Europe /
World |
|---|--------------|------------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| Hard coal mining | 14 568 000 t | 6. /11. | 16 951 000 t | 6./9. |
| Lignite mining | 20 444 000 t | 2. /2. | 18 042 000 t | 2./2. |
| Manufacture of
ferrous ingots
and iron alloys | 1 569 000 t | 7. /9. | 1 675 000 t | 6./9. |
| Steel production | 1 973 000 t | 7. /9. | 2 315 000 t | 6./8. |
| Production of
artificial silk | 1 705 t | 9. /11. | 4 242 t | 9./13. |

Source: *Annuaire Statistique de la Société des Nations 1937/38 / Statistical Year-Book 1937/38 (1938)*. Genève/ Geneva: Société des Nations/ League of Nations. Service d'Études Économiques/ Economic Intelligence Service.

* * *

Due to its scope, this text focuses only on selected areas of the inter-war economy and its limits. Much attention was paid to industry, which formed the basis of the Czechoslovak economy, and to foreign trade, a crucial part of the economy. At the same time, the paper was unable to address other strengths and weaknesses of the Czechoslovak economy (quality and reliability of products, general and vocational education, science and research, unfinished modification of the Czechoslovak transport network, insufficient measures to mitigate the effects of the crisis in the German-majority border areas, cooperation within the framework of the Little Agreement, etc.). Agriculture and land reform, the banking sector, and others were also left out of the interpretation.

Czechoslovakia did not replace the importance of Vienna in terms of the stock exchange and insurance or Berlin's position in terms of economics and transportation and failed to establish a lasting presence in the Balkans. At the same time, it can be stated that Czechoslovakia demonstrated its economic viability during its historically defined existence, but did not become a destabiliser of the Central European or European economies.

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DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.03



Eastern Galicia in the Polish Economic System Between the Two World Wars

Abstract

The article reviews the economic development of Eastern Galicia between the two World Wars. The organization and main branches of the economy are analyzed. The study method was based on the principles of historical science, logic, scientific objectivity in the evaluation of the past and a critical approach towards the available sources and historiography.

As a result of the warfare in 1914–1921, Eastern Galicia suffered great destruction. After the war, it had to rebuild its economy and adapt to the needs of the new state. The region's entrepreneurs almost lost contact with companies from other parts of the former Austria-Hungary: trade with the East decreased. The policy of the central government limited the economic opportunities of Eastern Galicia.

The region's economy was dominated by agriculture. For the majority of Ukrainian farmers who lacked land, a land reform was the most important issue. However, the unwillingness of the Polish authorities to solve the agrarian problems of Ukrainians led to conflicts. The only possible way for Galician farmers to use economic opportunities was through cooperation, which was successfully developing.

Suggested citation: Masyk R. (2023). Eastern Galicia in the Polish Economic System Between the Two World Wars. *Trimarium. The History and Literature of Central and Eastern European Countries*, 2(2), 65–84.

DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.03

Submitted: 05.01.2023 / Accepted: 19.01.2023

However, Eastern Galicia was not only an agrarian region of the inter-war Poland. It was a hub for important branches of the country's industry. Significant war damage and the instability of Polish finances until the mid-1920s hindered its development, though. Only in 1928 did the industry reach its prewar levels. A year later, the global economic crisis leveled the previous achievements.

Before the war, the most important industries were dominated by entrepreneurs from Austria and Germany. After the revival of Poland, it was impossible to leave this state of affairs as it was. For example, in the oil industry, French capital replaced German and Austrian capital. The development of industry in eastern Galicia was also hampered by the lack of a clear state policy and the lack of a real organization of individual industries.

Keywords

Eastern Galicia, pre-wwii Poland, agriculture, oil industry, timber industry.

In historical scholarship, there are several definitions for the south-eastern voivodeships of Poland between the World Wars (Lviv, Stanislav, and Ternopil). In Polish historiography, the term "Eastern Lesser Poland" ("Małopolska Wschodnia") is used, while Ukrainian historiography uses "Eastern Galicia". This term also refers to the present-day Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Ternopil provinces (Dudiak, 2000, p. 286). In this paper, for convenience, I will use the term Eastern Galicia to refer to the territory of the Stanislav, Ternopil, and eastern part (excluding the nine western counties) of the Lviv province.¹

In Eastern Galicia, Ukrainians have always been numerically predominant. According to estimates by Lviv historian Oleh Dudiak, 71% of the region's population was Ukrainian in 1849, 62% in 1910, 61%

¹ The territory covered by the competence of the Lviv Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

in 1921, and 59% in 1931 (Dudiak, 2000, pp. 291–292). Meanwhile, the Poles were distinguished not by their numbers, but their political and social influence (Hud, 2006, p. 309).

The vast majority of the population in Eastern Galicia lived in villages. The villagers were mostly Ukrainian. In the cities, Ukrainians were mostly outnumbered by Poles and Jews. This state of affairs remained unchanged until the mid-1940s, which determined the economic and political situation in the region (Dudiak, 2013, p. 532).

Until the outbreak of World War I, Eastern Galicia remained a province of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy. The economy of the region was based on agriculture. Only since the second half of the nineteenth century were some industries actively developing here. The Austrian authorities perceived Eastern Galicia as a resource region. There was almost no manufacturing industry here, oil fields were exploited and forests were cut down. At the end of the nineteenth century, foreigners, mainly Austrians and Germans, began to take over the leading industries (Molchanov and Yanyshyn, 2011, pp. 668–669; Reient, Molchanov and Shevchenko, 2011, pp. 20–21, 26–28).

The economy of Eastern Galicia was integrated into the economic system of the Habsburg monarchy. Entrepreneurs of the region focused on Austria, Bohemia, and other regions of this country. Branches of major Austrian banks and other credit institutions were established in Galicia. However, it retained some economic autonomy. After 1850, a separate Chamber of Commerce and Industry was operating there (Masyk, 2015, p. 207). The capital city of Lviv was a powerful center of economic organizations in the region. In 1883, the Galician Regional Bank (Bank Krajowy dla Królestwa Galicji i Lodomerii wraz z Wielkim Księstwem Krakowskim) was founded there, along with a number of other important credit institutions (Landau, 1998, pp. 13–58; Morawski, 1996, pp. 14–17, 22). Taking into account the peculiarities of the province, special economic and financial law was introduced in certain sectors of the economy.

During the First World War, Eastern Galicia suffered significant destruction. The Polish-Ukrainian war even added to that. Despite the efforts of the government bodies of Austria-Hungary, the West

Ukrainian People's Republic, and the revived Poland, the region's economy was not fully restored (Kargol, 2012; Masyk, 2018).

Peculiarities of the economic development of Eastern Galicia in Poland between the World Wars

The hostilities of 1914–1921 and the results of the postwar situation had a significant impact on the economy of Eastern Galicia. Before the war, western markets were the main ones, however, afterwards, they became less accessible to entrepreneurs in the region. Businesses almost completely lost the opportunity to trade with the East, as relations with the USSR were not regulated at all.

Entrepreneurs in Eastern Galicia found it difficult to adapt to the new center (Warsaw) and the new markets. They continued to look for raw materials and goods from suppliers familiar to them before the war (in other regions of Austria-Hungary and Germany), rather than in other Polish regions.

The authorities and entrepreneurs tried to preserve the region's role as a "bridge" between the West and the East (Pobyt, 1924, p. 250). A very clear example of such economic initiatives was the organization of the East Fair in Lviv in 1921–1939. The Fair was a successful demonstration of the Polish manufacturers' ability to export goods, but they could not fulfill their main task of revitalizing the eastern trade, especially with the USSR. Western firms were well represented at the East Fairs, but there were almost no products from the East (Bezsmertnyi, 2014; Pasitska, 2017).

Having lost the eastern markets, it was difficult for Galician entrepreneurs to reorient themselves to the western ones. As transportation of goods became more expensive, local businesses often sought privileges for the transportation of their products intended for export to the western borders of the state. At the same time, the Polish government favored exports by companies from the west and center of the country (Konferencja, 1923; O wzmożenie, 1923, O pomoc, 1926).

The government of the Second Polish Republic consistently adhered to a policy of centralization. In all spheres of economic life, it preferred institutions from Warsaw or near the capital. This

certainly harmed regional economic centers, including Lviv, and hence entrepreneurship in the provinces.

In inter-war Poland, Lviv remained one of the centers of economic life. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry (*Izba Przemysłowo-Handlowa*) continued to operate there. It represented the interests of the industrial and commercial circles of Eastern Galicia and at the same time advised the government bodies on how to address socioeconomic issues related to the region (Masyk, 2015). However, in the 1930s, the Polish government was less and less likely to listen to the advice of provincial economic communities and sought to overcome the economic crisis through a policy of centralization (Masyk, 2015, pp. 210–211).

Centralization is evident in many areas of economic life. It particularly affected the well-developed banking system of Eastern Galicia. Lviv ceased to be the center of many financial institutions. In 1924, the Galician Regional Bank moved from Lviv to Warsaw when the Bank of the Regional Economy (*Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego*) was established. Warsaw also became a new center for other financial institutions that had previously operated successfully in Galicia. This meant an outflow of significant capital from the region. At the same time, it failed to secure the region's credit interests (Landau, 1998, pp. 91–93; Morawski, 1996, p. 55).

Sometimes the government's efforts to centralize economic life reached the point of absurdity. A good example here is government orders for goods and works. The government mostly ordered them from companies operating in Warsaw or near the capital. The local authorities of Lviv ordered various works or goods there at more expensive prices, for example, printing forms for their documentation (Masyk, 2017c, pp. 184–187).

The economic environment of Eastern Galicia tried to counteract the policy of centralization. The peak was the creation of the Economic Council of Eastern Lesser Poland (*Rada Gospodarcza Małopolski Wschodniej*) in Lviv in 1937 on the initiative of voivode, Alfred Biłyk. It did not operate long, but saw its task as strengthening the role of Eastern Galicia in the economic life of the Second Polish Republic, and Lviv as one of the economic centers of the state (DALO, f. 1, op. 18, spr. 843).

Attempts to demonstrate the importance of Eastern Galicia for Poland's economy intensified in the mid-1930s, when the government, sensing economic growth, began to implement measures aimed at equalizing the differences in the structure of the economy in different regions of the country. It was planned to actively develop industry in those regions where it was scarce and the vast majority of the population was engaged in agriculture. For the territories east of the Vistula, investments in industrial construction had to increase. In fact, the state was divided into two parts: western ("Poland-A"), where a more or less developed industry already existed, and eastern ("Poland-B"), where it was planned to intensify its development.

Soviet and contemporary Ukrainian historiography used this division to politicize the economic policy of the governments of Poland between the two World Wars. At the same time, the borders of "Poland-A" and "Poland-B" were significantly moved to the east. "Poland-A" refers to the areas where the Polish population predominated, while "Poland-B" refers to those parts of the Second Polish Republic where Ukrainians and Belarusians mainly lived (Rublov, 2011, p. 275).

Initiatives of the Polish government to harmonize the industrial development of the state's regions would eventually see positive outcomes in time. The plans, however, were canceled by World War II.

The agriculture of the Polish authorities

Most of the population in Eastern Galicia were farmers. For the majority of Ukrainian farmers who lacked land, land reform was the most important issue.

The region had many large farms, which were mostly owned by Poles. Already from the beginning of the 20th century, the Galician administration of Austria-Hungary had been parceling out the farm-lands in order to increase Polish ownership in Eastern Galicia and preserve the role of Poles as leaders in the economy (Hud, 2006, p. 311).

After the Great War, tensions in agriculture between Polish landowners and Ukrainian farmers were not resolved. Parceling continued to be used as a way to increase Polish land ownership (Vasiuta, 2010, p. 154). Polish politicians spread the "Land for Poles

only” slogan. Ukrainian farmers were “offended” by the land reform that began in 1919. For Galicia, the land ownership limits were higher than in other regions of Poland. This meant that there was less land available for parceling, and landowners were effectively protected by the government. The parceled land was often given not to local farmers, who were acutely affected by its shortage, but to military and civilian settlers (Hud, 2018, pp. 316–330; Shevchyk, 2010, pp. 208–209).

In the first postwar years, the Polish government had no other way to implement land reform in Eastern Galicia. The national memory of both Poles and Ukrainians was still stained by the recent war. Therefore, the slogan of Polish politicians, “Polish land for Poles”, remained relevant after Poland regained independence. The policy of parceling was also influenced by economic reasons. Eastern Galicia was heavily destroyed as a result of warfare. After the war, the region sunk into an economic crisis for many years. In the first years after World War I, the Polish government had no other way to implement land reform in Eastern Galicia. The reasons for this should be sought not only in the war, but also in the refusal of farmers, including Ukrainians, to supply food to the cities. That is why the government had to create a support base for itself in this part of the region. To this end, in my opinion, the policy of parceling here differed from other regions of interwar Poland (Baran, 1998, pp. 146–148; Rublov, 2011, p. 275).

However, with the stabilization of the economy of the Second Polish Republic in the 1920s, we can no longer take economic factors into account when analyzing the government’s agricultural policy. Since it has not changed, despite appeals from Ukrainian politicians and economists, we conclude that political motives prevailed in agrarian policy. The slogan “Polish land for Poles” was applied until the demise of the Second Polish Republic and attempts to make concessions to Ukrainians were unsuccessful (Baran, 1998, pp. 148–151; Hud, 2006, pp. 326–328).

All of this contributed to tensions between Poles and Ukrainians, which culminated in 1930 during the pacification. In response, the Ukrainians destroyed many estates of landowners and settlers, and in the 1930s, Ukrainian farmers organized a series of demonstrations

against the government's agrarian policy. The unwillingness of the Poles to solve the agrarian problems of the Ukrainians led to conflicts, including armed ones, between the two peoples (Hud, 2018, pp. 336–341).

Cooperation

Due to overpopulation, farmers, particularly Ukrainians, were unable to fully utilize their economic potential. The only way out was cooperation, which was used in Eastern Galicia in the form of cooperatives. Cooperation consisted of involving peasants in the market, spreading the latest technologies and European management methods among them. This led to the internal unification of the Ukrainian agriculture, and thus became an important condition for the rise of its economic culture and social standard of living (Vasiuta, 2010, p. 105; Babenko, Haliuk and Helei, 1995, p. 215).

Cooperatives in Galicia had been developing already in the 1870s, promoted by the local intelligentsia. However, they failed to gain the farmers' desired level of trust to cooperatives. The economic role of such institutions for Ukrainian farmers increased significantly in the interwar period. Its development was facilitated by the legislation of the Second Polish Republic (Babenko et al, 1995, pp. 297–298; Visyn, 2017, pp. 229–230; Rubliov, 2011, pp. 280–281).

Ukrainian cooperatives flourished after the stabilization of state finances in the half of the 1920s. They were skillfully organized and developed, which allowed Ukrainian cooperatives, especially in the food industry and trade, to compete with large firms of interwar Poland (Babenko et al., 1995, p. 299, Visyn, 2017, pp. 237–238).

Until around 1930, the central government did not interfere with the initiatives of Ukrainian cooperatives. At that time, the cooperatives had more problems with local authorities and Polish companies, with whom they competed for markets. Let me offer a few examples. In 1926, the "Pratsia" cooperative in Ranevychi, Drohobych district, decided to build a store. For a long time, the commune did not want to lease or sell the land. Only the intervention of the voivodeship did authorities allow the cooperative to realize its plan (DALO, f. 1, op. 3, spr. 343, ark. 1–19).

Similarly, in 1931, a case was resolved when, in the Sokal district, some rural communes refused to allow cooperative shops to work in the summer until nine o'clock in the evening, although this was prescribed by law. The case was resolved only when the Audit Union of Ukrainian Cooperatives appealed to the voivodeship authorities (DALO, f. 1, op. 25, spr. 1171, ark. 55–56).

The economic crisis at the turn of the 1930s coincided with the Polish state's repression of Ukrainian cooperation (Vasiuta, 2010, p. 104; Babenko et al, 1995, p. 302, 305; Visyn, 2017, pp. 238–239). Under the slogan of pacification, police and cavalry units specifically targeted Ukrainian cooperatives in some areas of Eastern Galicia. This was stopped only when the leadership of Ukrainian cooperatives appealed to international organizations. During the repressions from the Polish authorities, almost half of the warehouses of the Ukrainian cooperatives were destroyed. However, after pacification and the economic crisis, when Polish cooperation lost significantly, Ukrainian cooperation became the economic face of the nation (Babenko et al., 1995, pp. 306–307).

Industry

The industry of Eastern Galicia could not overcome the consequences of the First World War for a long time. Post-war inflation and the instability of the Polish currency did not favor investment in industry (Kovalchak, 1988, p. 193). It was only in 1928 that it reached the level of 1913. At the same time, the development of Galician industry was negatively affected by the distance from markets. For this reason, most industries and crafts were unable to compete with enterprises in western Poland. And at the turn of the 1930s, the global economic crisis undermined all efforts to revive the industry of Eastern Galicia. Even the industries that had been growing in the mid-1920s (leather and potash) declined. They managed to reach the pre-crisis level only in the late 1930s (Kovalchak, 1965, p. 12; Klachuk, 2017, pp. 219–220). In 1938, 534 enterprises in Eastern Galicia employed 43,900 workers (Kovalchak, 1965, p. 9).

Since most of the population of Eastern Galicia was engaged in agriculture, there were good opportunities to develop industries related to the processing of agricultural raw materials. However,

food processing companies were mostly small and aimed to meet the demand of the immediate neighborhood for their products. Larger factories and plants were built mainly in and near Lviv (Rucker's cannery, brewery, the Merkurij bakery, etc.). The development of the food industry was hampered by state monopolies – alcohol, tobacco and salt (Kovalchak, 1965, pp. 13–14; Klapchuk, 2017, p. 218).

Although the majority of the population of Eastern Galicia was engaged in agriculture, the region was one of the centers of some of the heavy industries important to the Polish economy. However, as the Lviv voivode Alfred Bilyk rightly noted in 1937, the Polish authorities did not use its industrial capabilities (DALO, f. 1, op. 18, spr. 843, ark. 11–14). Natural resources provided opportunities to develop industries related to the extraction and processing of raw materials. However, in the interwar period, industrial production of lignite and ozokerite declined, and the production of building materials was poorly developed (Kovalchak, 1965, p. 14; Klachuk, 2017, p. 206, 209). The Polish government has focused on supporting the region's oil industry by attracting foreign investment. Along with the oil industry, after the discovery of rich gas fields in Eastern Galicia, it developed the gas industry and the production of gasoline (Klapchuk, 2017, pp. 201–202). In interwar Poland, the potash industry in the region was used to its advantage. At that time, the Kalush and Stebnivka enterprises were built, which belonged to the TESP joint-stock company (Kovalchak, 1988, pp. 198–199).

Oil industry

Eastern Galicia was the center of the oil industry. The Boryslav field remained the largest in the Second Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. On the one hand, trade in oil products with other countries was important for maintaining the trade balance. On the other hand, interwar Poland had to provide itself with fuel in case of a new war (Masyk, 2017a, pp. 790–791).

Since the late nineteenth century, the oil industry was one of the most important sectors of the Galician economy. It reached its peak in 1909, when it produced more than 2 million tons of crude oil. By 1913, the annual extraction of this resource had decreased to

almost 1.1 million tons (Franaszek, 1992; 2014). During World War I, the oil industry suffered direct damage in Boryslav and Drohobych. In 1915, the Russian army set fire to many oil wells and oil tanks (Masyk, 2018, p. 294).

At the end of the hostilities, most oil refineries were owned by large foreign capital groups. Those firms dictated the prices of mineral resources, which were produced mostly by local entrepreneurs, and gradually began to buy up wells from them. Over time, this led to the formation of a large group of refiners who tried to dictate oil policy to the governments of the Second Polish Republic. Meanwhile, small mining companies and small oil refineries remained in the hands of the Poles. The authorities only asset then was the largest state-owned oil refinery in Drohobych (Państwowa Fabryka Olejów Mineralnych "Polmin"). For Poland, it was a form of defense against the attempts of foreign capital to fully take over the industry (Masyk, 2022, p. 74).

Guided by the economic and financial situation in the country, the government gave the initiative to foreigners to develop the oil industry. Former Austrian and German firms were taken over by the French, who dominated the oil industry in Eastern Galicia in the interwar period (Morawski, 2016, pp. 41–42; Klapchuk, 2017, p. 196).

At that time, several groups of companies with different interests were formed in the industry, and confrontation was taking place between Polish and foreign firms. In the interests of the entire oil industry, they needed to be united to prevent unwanted competition.

The only platform for any negotiations of the entire industry remained the National Oil Company (Krajowe Towarzystwo Naftowe). It was created in 1877, and during the years of Austrian rule, this institution managed to unite most oil companies. However, the National Oil Company failed to adequately protect the financial interests of all entrepreneurs in the interwar period (Kachlik, 1995, pp. 165–168).

Attempts to unite all groups of the oil industry were unsuccessful for a long time. Enterprises that only produced crude oil ("pure producers") and small oil refineries founded by Poles, on the initiative of Władysław Szajnok, united in late 1919 and early 1920 into the Union of Polish Oil Industrialists (Związek Polskich Przemysłowców Naftowych) (Masyk, 2022, p. 78).

In 1919, the Polish government began to create the first cartels of large oil refineries, which, in addition to firms founded by foreigners, included the state-owned plant in Drohobych. By 1932, several such organizations were operating, but without practical cooperation with the enterprises created by Poles, they could not avoid competition in the oil market (Masyk, 2022, pp. 80–83).

It was only in 1932 that cooperation between “pure producers” and large oil refineries was established. For this purpose, the Syndicate of Crude Oil Producers (Syndykat Producentów Ropy) and Polish Oil Export (Polski Eksport Naftowy) were created. This helped to stabilize the state of affairs in the oil industry (Masyk, 2022, pp. 83–85).

An even bigger problem for the industry was the significant decline in crude oil production: from 831,700 tons in 1919 to almost 507,000 tons in 1938. At the same time, the richest Boryslav field in interwar Poland was being depleted the fastest. Positive results in crude oil production at other fields in Galicia could not cover the losses. The amount of crude oil produced in Poland was significantly less than the production capacity of the country’s refineries, which could process 1,100,000 tons of oil products annually. As a result, the cost of refining crude oil increased (Masyk, 2017a, p. 791). All of this was happening at a time when crude oil production was increasing in the world, undermining the export capabilities of the Polish industry. In fact, it was cheaper to stop producing crude oil, but then other threats arose for Poland: the collapse of the important industry, the growth of social movements, and, most importantly, the absence of oil products in the event of war (Masyk, 2017a, pp. 796–798).

Other circumstances also undermined the development of the industry. The right of land owners to use all its subsoil was not completely abolished. As a result, oil producers were forced to pay them large sums per gross production, sometimes up to a quarter of their output. Additionally, the tax policy of the Second Polish Republic did not favor the oil industry. On the one hand, the government declared the need to develop this important industry, but on the other hand, it imposed high taxes on it (Masyk, 2017a, pp. 799–801).

Oil refineries in Poland were mostly located near the fields, close to Boryslav, Drohobych, etc. There was only one large plant in Lviv,

and a few more on the border of the Krakow and Silesian provinces. About 58% of all oil refineries in Poland were located in Eastern Galicia. Private refineries, which were mostly in the hands of foreigners, produced almost 3/4 of oil products, 1/4 of which were produced by the state-owned oil refinery in Drohobych (Masyk, 2017b, p. 238).

Although the domestic market was growing, it was not fully sufficient for oil producers. That was why they were forced to boost exports. The situation in foreign markets was not favorable. They pursued a policy of economic self-sufficiency, often imposing bans on imports and contingents. At the same time, prices for petroleum products fell significantly due to overproduction, and Polish raw materials remained among the most expensive. The price was passed on to the domestic consumer. To do this, we kept domestic prices for petroleum products at a level higher than the world market. In fact, Polish citizens themselves subsidized exports. It was impossible to do otherwise, because the oil industry in Poland would have collapsed (Masyk, 2017b, p. 244).

The wood industry

Before the outbreak of World War I, Eastern Galicia was one of the most heavily forested regions of Austria-Hungary. This region became one of the centers of the empire's wood industry. However, the final products were not made of wood here. Local sawmills only processed the wood and transported it to the western provinces of the empire. The reason for this state of affairs was that the wood industry of Eastern Galicia was not in the hands of local entrepreneurs (Sprawozdanie, 1925, p. 128).

From 1914 to 1920, the wood industry worked only for the needs of the army and the reconstruction of the region. After the peace was achieved, the industry had to adapt to new political and thus economic circumstances. It had to be organized in a new way. During the war, the wood industry of the region lost contact with many enterprises that used to make final products from local wood, and it was difficult to quickly establish such production on site. It was necessary to regain the old markets to which wood was supplied and, if possible, to gain new ones (Sprawozdanie, 1925, pp. 128-129).

The authorities, needing a lot of wood in the postwar period, forced industrialists to sell it for nothing, requisitioned it for their own needs, set high railroad tariffs and duties, and they artificially hindered exports. Meanwhile, woodworking companies tried to take advantage of the good situation in foreign markets and export their products as much as possible. In 1919, special institutions were established for this purpose. The first such organization in Galicia was the Timber Society (Towarzystwo Drzewne). Despite local successes, due to the lack of support from the authorities, its activities did not have significant success (Sprawozdanie, 1925, pp. 130–131).

The situation with wood exports improved in the late 1920s. This was when the Syndicate of Wood Stakeholders (Syndykat Interesentów Drzewnych) was established under the patronage of the Industrial and Commercial Chamber in Lviv. The organization supported wood export from Eastern Galicia. At the same time, wood for the reconstruction of the country after the war started to be purchased at market prices, and in 1921, abolished the regulation of its exports. Since then, exports of local wood to Western Europe increased. In addition to the traditional demand in Germany (which was the most important importer of Polish wood), the product was increasingly bought by France, Belgium, Holland, and England. Gradually, wood export to overseas countries began, such as the United States, Palestine, etc. Polish manufacturers were adapting to the requirements of new markets. Polish exports of wood began to increase both in quantity and in assortment (Sprawozdanie, 1925, pp. 132–133).

From 1921 to the beginning of World War II, several periods can be distinguished for Polish wood exports. The first of them lasted until the end of 1924, when it was influenced by the fiscal policy of the Polish state. To stabilize the currency, the government introduced export fees and obliged exporters to return a portion of the foreign currency earned from exports. Because of this, the wood industry began to experience a lack of cash, and production costs increased (Sprawozdanie, 1925, pp. 134–142).

The second period lasted from 1925, when the customs war with Germany began (it lasted until 1935), and until 1929, when the world economic crisis started. At the same time, the German market significantly narrowed for Polish timber exporters. Producers

were forced to completely reorient themselves to the needs of other importing countries. At the same time, they lost a lot, given the difference between these needs and the preferences of the Germans. The State Forests (*Lasy Państwowe*) tried to use the situation in their favor. There was still a demand for raw wood in Germany. The management of the State Forests, with the support of the government, began selling it directly to German traders, bypassing Polish entrepreneurs. This caused a new conflict between the state and the wood industry, which was resolved only in 1932. (*Sprawozdanie*, 1926, pp. 39–42; 1927, pp. 98–104; 1929, pp. 111–116; 1930a, pp. 52–56).

The third period lasted during the world economic crisis (1929–1933). At that time, export opportunities were significantly reduced. Importing countries tried to limit imports to protect their trade balance. The USSR's expansion into European markets through dumping intensified the competition (*Sprawozdanie*, 1930b, pp. 61–63; 1931, pp. 115–121; 1932, pp. 144–151; 1933, pp. 138–147).

The fourth period for the Polish wood industry began in 1933 and lasted until the outbreak of World War II. Since then, the situation in the industry gradually improved. This period was marked by the normalization of relations in forestry. The timber industry, together with government authorities, began working on deforestation plans in 1936. These measures had a positive impact on both forest protection and the timber industry. The plans were designed to protect forests from reckless deforestation and at the same time provide materials for the timber industry. These measures significantly reduced the smuggling of timber abroad and reduced the ability of the State Forests to export, bypassing local industry and trade (*Sprawozdanie*, 1934, pp. 123–131; 1935, pp. 114–121; 1936, pp. 99–105; 1937, pp. 120–128; 1938, pp. 122–129).

In the interwar period, the wood industry in Eastern Galicia had to change several times in order to remain in foreign markets. Despite the constant changes in sales markets, the instability of the Polish and global economies, and the lack of constant government support, the industry has managed to adapt to such realities and successfully compete in the global timber markets. This was achieved thanks to the good internal organization of wood industry entrepreneurs.

Conclusions

After the First World War and the Ukrainian-Polish clashes, Eastern Galicia suffered significantly. Long after the war, it took a long time to restore its economy and adapt it to the needs of the new state. The remoteness from markets and the centralization policy of the Polish government had a negative impact on the economic development of the region.

The majority of the population of Eastern Galicia in the interwar period continued to be employed in agriculture. Ukrainians predominated among the farmers of the region. The policy of the Polish authorities only deepened the interethnic confrontation between Ukrainians and Poles in the Galician countryside.

Cooperation became the economic “face” of Galician Ukrainians. This was primarily facilitated by liberal legislation. Ukrainian cooperatives were well organized and known throughout Europe.

However, Eastern Galicia should not be seen just as an agrarian region of the inter-war Poland. It has become a center for some important industries, primarily oil and timber. However, the governments of the Second Polish Republic did not fully utilize the industrial potential of the region. It was only in the second half of the 1930s that the Polish government began planning to strengthen the industry of Eastern Galicia, but World War II prevented this from happening.

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DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.04



The Economic Failures of Bessarabia in the Proximity of the Soviet State (1921–1940)

Summary

Until 1918, Bessarabia was a guberniya of Russia and had the development specific of a periphery. On the one hand, this resulted in the lack of an economic dynamic in the region, and on the other hand, it ensured a climate of stability and a moderate growth in certain branches of the light industry. The neighbouring areas, on the left bank of the Dniester River, with the exception of the port city of Odessa, were even more autarchical than Bessarabia. The Union of March 1918 brought Bessarabia in an entirely new economic situation. Compared to the other Romanian provinces (Banat, Bukovina, Western Moldavia, Greater Wallachia and Transylvania) it was the least industrialised and developed. Furthermore, the Eastern “wall”-border – with the emerging Bolshevik state – led to the loss of access to the Eastern market for the agricultural products and food industry of Bessarabia. There only existed some contraband channels which functioned intermittently. The climate in Bessarabia was not favourable to investments, in the context of constant rumours of a possible Soviet invasion.

Suggested citation: Tăriță M. (2023). The Economic Failures of Bessarabia. In the Proximity of the Soviet State (1921–1940). *Trimarium. The History and Literature of Central and Eastern European Countries*, 2(2), 85–103.

DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.04

Submitted: 03.01.2023 / Accepted: 27.01.2023

Bessarabian economists worked to find solutions in the new conditions. They mainly insisted on the export of grapes, wines, nuts, dried fruit, furs, etc. One of the priority destinations was the Polish market. As a result of the different views of the Polish and Romanian political classes, the market share of Bessarabian products went down after 1926. Regarding imports, there was a competition between Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia. The Bessarabian market was used as a testing ground for different marketing strategies, mostly for agricultural technology, footwear, ceramic, perfumes, fertilisers, fish, etc. In the second half of the 1920s, Poland and the port of Danzing (Gdańsk), Czechoslovakia and Austria were the largest importers. The main destinations of Bessarabian export were Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Great Britain. The present work outlines the appraisals and perspectives reflected in the Bessarabian economics journals in the interwar period.

Keywords

Bessarabia, Greater Romania, trade, Soviet Union, Poland

In the 19th century, from 1812 to March 1918, Bessarabia, the former Eastern Moldavia, was incorporated in Tsarist Russia, both as part of greater administrative units (on both banks of Dniester) and as a guberniya from 1872. In the summer and autumn of 1917, based on principles of building political power originally advocated by the radical socialists of Aleksandr Kerenski, local nuclei of power form in Bessarabia. After the Bolshevik coup d'état, it will follow its course towards autonomy (with the proclamation of the Moldavian Democratic Republic), and subsequently towards independence. As a result of anarchist trends, which also involved seizing power by military action by the Bolshevik detachments, in early January 1918, units of the Romanian army entered Bessarabia for ensuring order. In the following period, the situation improved to a certain extent also in the context of the occupation of the left bank of the Dniester and of the city of Odessa by the Austro-Hungarian and German troops.

On 27th March / 8th April 1918, in Chişinău, the local legislature – formed in the autumn of 1917 on the basis of representative delegations – voted for the conditional union with Romania. Bessarabia would enjoy autonomy and continue to have a local legislature. This vote was preceded by the meeting between the Romanian Prime Minister Alexandru Marghiloman and the banking circles in Chişinău, which gave their consent for the integration with Romania.

On 28th November 1918, a part of the deputies of the legislative body in Chişinău met and dissolved this legislature and thus the idea of a conditional union was abandoned. Since then Bessarabia was *de jure* a part of Greater Romania. Formally, this was enshrined in the system of treaties of Paris-Versailles. However what interests us in the present work is the expectations of the Bessarabian inhabitants at the beginning of this period of relative quiet, the main economic problems, the actions taken or not taken to resolve them and the real state of the province at the end of the period (1939–1940). The topic was not addressed in an unbiased manner after 1990, as most views are presented and assessed within the framework of the Romanian historiography – Soviet historiography dichotomy. The traumatic experience after 28th June 1940 became a barrier to an objective analysis and presentation of the events in the interwar period. Some of the most important works that approach the general framework of the developments in Bessarabia in the interwar period are the one authored by Ion Agrigoroaiei and Gheorghe Palade (1993) and an approach of these evolutions within the European context proposed by Svetlana Suveică (2010). In what follows, we shall use as sources the economic plans and analyses of the contributors to the journal “Economic Bessarabia”, as well as some factual references in Polish archival records, particularly the reports of the Consulate of the Polish Republic in Chisinau.

The plans for the economic development of Bessarabia

Since the autumn of 1918, the local administrative bodies inherited from the czarist period were gradually abolished. Interim committees were created and the foundation was laid for a process of transition which lasted several years (Suveică, 2010, pp. 223–225). Concerning

the primary institution of the province, the Council of the Realm, this was dissolved (in November 1918). Afterwards, the central public authorities began to exercise strict control over the economic life of the province. The minister delegated by the government in Bessarabia signed numerous ordinances. These were issued in the name of “public order and safety”. In fact, many economic activities, including the barley trade, the provision of services, the copper trade and others, were taken control of. For example, on 23rd March 1919, Pantelimon Halippa signed ordinance no 17 which required a large number of public venues to obtain a licence to operate from the new authorities. These included hotels, inns, breweries, confectioneries, bakeries, restaurants, cafeterias, dairies, pie shops, pretzel shops, millet beer shops and “any other venues for public consumption” (Ordinance no 17, 1919, p. 106). The type of policy applied was neither liberal, nor protectionist, but reflected the tendency to control the services and some types of trade.

On the international scene, in 1919, although to the east of the Dniester River military clashes between different succeeding armed forces continued, in Chisinau there was a climate of hope. There were objective analyses of the economic situation and the solutions for development which had to be applied. After the end of the czarist period, the industry was less developed. According to estimates, the existing industry only covered, the eighth or tenth part of the industrial needs of the population (Giurgea, 1919, p. 7). A first step would have been the development of the agricultural industry, which would have led to the spread of agricultural technology, and the goods produced could have replaced similar imports, particularly cheeses, vegetable derivatives and textiles (Giurgea, 1919). Several years later, after an agricultural reform was underway throughout Romania (1921) and the new Constitution was adopted (1923), the economic goals remained unchanged.

In 1923, a year after serious problems were encountered in placing the Bessarabian production on the market, the Bessarabian economists held much lower expectations in this regard. There was hope of a real improvement of the port of Reni (located to the south of Bessarabia on the Danube), where the building of adequate warehouses and silos, as well as the development of the quays of the

Reni River were much needed. All of these also stemmed from “the deplorable state of transport in Bessarabia”. It was necessary to set up a shipping company on the Pruth River at least as soon as possible. Farmers needed financial support to acquire agricultural machines and tools. Another imperative was to organise more industrial enterprises which would have benefited from the raw materials available in the area, such as fruit and marmalade, canned fish, sugar, cloths and vegetable oils (Antonescu, 1923, p. 22). No significant changes in the province were recorded in the following decade.

In 1929 a petition was drawn up in which the need for the administrative-economic unity of Bessarabia was indirectly argued:

Bessarabia can neither survive nor can it develop if it remains in its current state. Its economy is hedged in by the new economic conditions in which Bessarabia cannot find its place. Bringing Besarabia on a wide path of progress, which would be useful for itself as well as for Romania as a whole, can only be achieved by a sole representative body, which embodies the economic interests of the entire province. Only in cooperation with this, the government can align the interests of Bessarabia with those of the Romanian Old Kingdom and the other provinces and only such a body could draw the real intellectual forces of the Bessarabian population, in the absence of which the work of economic construction is not conceivable (Petition, 1929, p. 6).

This petition was not granted by the government. An incentive for future plans and the return of optimism was provided by the increase in Soviet-Romanian contacts in 1934. In fact, on the Soviet side, there was sheer pragmatism – the need to export metals in Central Europe, as the routes through Poland were no longer sufficient. Thus, the Soviets turned their attention to the routes of Romanian Railways. The most prominent traders in Bessarabia believed then that the problem of navigation on the Dniester River can be resolved at last. It was thought that approval for navigation along the Dniester Bank near the Romanian border could be obtained from the Soviet side. As Polish diplomats, who showed interest in the subject, observed, the Bessarabian counties along the Dniester River had poor shipping routes, which made it impossible to market the surplus of agricultural

production and textiles. Opening up the river for navigation would have allowed the shipping of goods to the small port of the Black Sea – Bugaz. The latter would be enlarged. At the same time, opening up the Dniester would have allowed the shipping of wood from Poland (Poncet de Sandon, 1935). However, shortly after the optimistic expectations, the Bessarabian decision-makers understood that the central public authorities negotiated very carefully and, in effect, had very modest demands from the Soviet side.

Some level of optimism returned in the province in 1939. A five-year economic development plan was drawn up then in Bucharest and therein, finally, the need to build roads in Bessarabia was taken into account. In the leading article of “Economic Bessarabia” (nr. 7), it was stated that:

And this is the way things were for instance regarding roads, which our province continued to demand for 20 years, but which it will likely obtain only under the new regime. Because the upstarts of the new regime disputed the importance of those roads, for as the province seemed to them to be economically backward, it would not need roads! They could not understand that building roads always facilitated the economic development of a region rich in raw materials and production which are however poorly exploited because of the lack of shipping routes ([n.a.], 1939, pp. 3-4).

The strain on international relations put by authoritarian regimes resulted from the offensive of Nazi Germany against Poland, on 1st September 1939. Consequently, all economic relations in Central and Eastern Europe deteriorated, and most businesses were faced with a lack of raw materials or the loss of the traditional markets. The Bessarabian goals mentioned above were again relegated to the shadow of history. Given that the Bessarabian industry did not have the support of the central public authorities even prior to that date and only had the status of a local industry, it survived in the early stages.

It continued to fight on its own against all current challenges, managing nonetheless to win a modest, yet stable place in the economy of the

province, becoming a key element thereof. The metal industry, especially the farm machinery industry, the oil industry, the textiles industry, the milling industry, the sugar industry became a crucial element in the local economy and without them the growth of this economy can no longer be conceived ([n.a.], 1940, p. 3).

The extremely difficult situation called for certain measures by the central public authorities. These included one concerning the tax levied on the industry sector – in order for the “so-called markups” to no longer exist – and, regarding transport, one requiring Romanian Railways to slash the current fares until the necessary railway tracks were built. The issue of the diagonal railway tracks has not been resolved up to this date in Bessarabia. The somewhat autonomous destiny of the province which, while not having its autonomy granted by the central authorities, tried to resolve its economic problems by its own efforts, ended on 28th June 1940. Following the Soviet ultimatum of 26th June 1940, the Romanian civil administration and military units were mostly withdrawn. The inhabitants of the province would go through a process of Sovietisation, then war, afterwards it would form part of a frontier Soviet Republic for several decades.

Transport

The state of transport in Bessarabia was seen as terrible both by exporters in the province as well as by foreign diplomats who gave their attention to the subject. The fleet of locomotives from the czarist period was far from being used to its full capacity. In different railway stations in Bessarabia, there was talk of “train car graveyards”. The port of Reni became a major export hub. In 1922, 22,000 wagonloads of cereals were exported through the port, which represented 85% of all wagonloads shipped from Bessarabia. On exports through this port the central government charged duties amounting to 154 million lei. At the same time, the port of Reni was actually “forsaken by the good will of the government” (Antonescu, 1923, p. 11). The very capital of the province began to lose its position as the centre of trade. The southern part of Bessarabia, especially Tighina, began to carry on trade with Galati and the traders in the northern part of Bessarabia

turned their attention to Iasi and Cernauti (Antonescu, 1923, p. 14). In our opinion, an objective reason was that Chisinau was not linked by rail to the north of the province via Orhei-Balti, with a possible terminus at Hotin on the Dniester. The railway ran from Chisinau to Ungheni, from which (across the Pruth River) one could reach Iasi, this actually being a relevant destination for Russian trade in the period up to the Revolution. On the other hand, there was no trade with the Soviet Union. Another great chance for Chisinau would have been, under different circumstances, its rail link to the port of Odessa. But this would not play an important role even later, either under Soviet domination or after gaining independence in 1991. Another explanation would be, in our opinion, the lack of involvement of the provincial political elite which chose to pursue a career in the capital. As a columnist noted in 1934 about some of the politicians who achieved the Great Union of 1918, “very few followed the path of austerity and honour” (Funariu, 1934, p. 2).

The Bessarabians affiliated with the central public administration – who also had press forums to make their views known – described the situation in bright colours. To illustrate such a view, one less related to the content of our article, we quote below a fragment from an article which came out in 1926:

While all these hardships were being faced, what was nevertheless achieved in a short period of time were remarkable feats of Romanian action. Thus:

The great Romanian Railways artery was regulated as it was directed towards the centre of the Old Kingdom and important rail links were built with the other trading, industrial and economic centres of Greater Romania.

The serf was turned into a free owner of land, acquiring the right to his labour, the right to life free of a landlord’s control, and new horizons were opened up to him [...].

The local elite was recruited to the administration, justice, finance sector, etc., as they knew the local situation and the soul of the locals and subordinate advisers and clerks were assigned to them for the purpose of harmonization and unification (Stelian, 1926, p. 42).

This approach of the Bessarabian reality became dominant in historiography after 1991. However, in the period under analysis, this reality was perceived and experienced differently by the locals. At the onset of the Great Depression, in 1929, there were citizens' initiatives aimed at safeguarding the economic interests of Bessarabia. One of them, which was already mentioned, was embodied in the so-called 'Petition for the organisation of local administration in Bessarabia', addressed to the president of the Council of Ministers of Romania.

Also in the context of that period, the centrifugal tendency in the local economy of the province was explicitly confirmed in a column from which we quote:

And that policy pursued by the previous governments, which severed the living body of Bessarabia, by joining politically some counties of our province to Cernauti, others to Iasi and others to Galati, etc., demonstrated to the whole world the lack of rights of Bessarabia, and removed from it every practical intention even by those who supported it wholeheartedly ([n.a.], 1929, p. 3).

Polish merchants held a complementary view on the functionality of Romanian transport. In a visit to Chisinau in November 1930, the president of the Polish-Romanian Chamber of Commerce in Warsaw, Mickiewicz noted: "Romanian transport is extremely slow, even slower than that in more distant countries. It was found that because of the long distance, in many wagons grapes become coated with mould. Bessarabian transport is much faster than in the Old Kingdom, and this is because of the shorter distance, however on the whole Romanian transport leaves a lot to be desired" (Tăriță, 2020, p. 219). As a measure to improve efficiency, Mickiewicz proposed that wagons going directly to Warsaw were customs cleared at the border, at the Sniatîn-Zaluce customs office. In Warsaw the clearing process would have taken 24 hours longer. Thus Mickiewicz admitted indirectly that some problems related to bureaucracy in the capital of Poland.

Transport fees in Bessarabia remained excessive to the end of the interwar period. In the summer of 1936, the board of directors of Romanian Railways doubled the fees on the fruit transport. This

measure had negative consequences for fruit growing in Bessarabia, especially in Tighina ([n.a.], 1937a, pp. 4-5). In a column from 1939, it was specified that, "over a distance of 40km industrialists in Balti pay more for sunflower seeds than industrialists in Bucharest who bring the seeds from Bessarabia. Or the milling industry: it suffers from excessive tax procedures and the high transport fees" ([n.a.], 1939, p. 7).

Although the problem was raised numerous times, it was not resolved. It cannot be ruled out that certain politicians in the central government lobbied for producers in other regions of Romania, but these issues could be highlighted in a comparative economic study.

Bessarabian import and export

At the beginning of the interwar period the economic operators in Bessarabia lost, one by one, the outlet market they had access to previously. There were different reasons for this. To the east of the Dniester River trade was no longer possible because of the establishment of the Bolshevik regime which disputed the right of Bessarabia to lie within the borders of Romania. Even if such a consensus had existed, the bridges over the Dniester were half destroyed. The loss of other marks was caused by the failure to meet the obligations assumed.

In 1922 the nut harvest was poorer than in the previous year, 30% of the nuts being rotten. Until then, these were exported to the United States. The selling price was too high and the government tax on 1kg of nuts increased 8 times (Antonescu, 1923, p. 11). The plum harvest was worse too, and the fluctuation in prices decreased sales considerably. On the other hand, there was strong competition from countries like Serbia and Bulgaria. The foreign demand was also low, and the traditional markets of Poland and Germany could not be used because these two countries were confronted with the devaluation of the national currency (Antonescu, 1923, p. 10).

All this time, there was hope that it would be possible to resume exports to Poland, because of the high levels of Bessarabian exports to the cities of Gdańsk, Warsaw and Lubomir until the war. The situation can be seen in the table below.

Table 1

Cereals exported from Bessarabia to Poland under Russian occupation until 1914 (in wagonloads)

| Export stations | Quantities in wagonloads | | | | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|-----|--------|------|-------|--------|-------|
| | Wheat | Rye | Barley | Oats | Maize | Others | Total |
| Danzig | 98 | 23 | 231 | 4 | 208 | 14 | 578 |
| Warsaw | 901 | 171 | 236 | 36 | 243 | 25 | 1612 |
| Lubomir | 7 | 10 | 25 | 1 | 63 | 2 | 108 |
| Other stations | 175 | 82 | 147 | 24 | 318 | 42 | 788 |
| Total | 1181 | 286 | 639 | 65 | 832 | 83 | 3086 |

Source: Giurgea (1922), no. 1, p. 26.

More than 70% of the wheat (901 wagonloads) and more than half of the cereals had Warsaw as their destination. It is possible that in the 1920s, when Poland modernized its railroads, the rail transport in Bessarabia used wide-gauge lines, which made direct communication difficult. On the other hand, once Soviet Russia (subsequently USSR) was kept in economic isolation, Romania and, implicitly, Bessarabia had the opportunity to penetrate large markets for agricultural products in Central Europe, something which actually never happened. Domestic political instability also played an important role in this respect.

In the second half of the 1920s, Bessarabian producers used as a temporary solution road transport over long distances and animal-drawn vehicles locally. These options were determined by the high fees promoted in Romanian Railways by the minister for transport. As a countermeasure, the Council of Ministers also increased fees for road transport (Вита, 1929, p. 16).

While for Bessarabia the Polish market represented a key export destination, for Romania as a whole, Poland was not one of its major trading partners. At the same time, there was an unfavourable trend that could be attributed to an imbalance between import

and export. Poland exported more than it imported from Romania. This trend which was constant between the years 1922 and 1928 is shown in the table below.

Table 2

Trade between Poland and Romania between 1922 and 1928 (in millions of zloty)

| Year | Millions of Polish zloty | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--------|
| | Import | Export |
| 1922 | 3.5 | 72.3 |
| 1923 | 5.9 | 136.1 |
| 1924 | 20.6 | 78.6 |
| 1925 | 23.8 | 66.2 |
| 1926 | 13.5 | 71.9 |
| 1927 | 70.1 | 82.3 |
| 1928 (1st part) | 22.0 | 27.1 |

Source: Archive of New Acts in Warsaw, Fund 487, file 30, pp. 205–209.

In 1927 Poland had a 27% share of the total imports from central Bessarabia. It mainly competed against Czechoslovakia. The most important categories of goods were ironware and metals, pottery and china, textiles and their by-products, pharmaceutical products, cars, glassware, paints, and oil cloths.

Table 3

Categories of goods imported between 1927 and 1928 by Poland and Czechoslovakia through Chisinau customs

| Imported product | Quantity (kg) in 1927 | | Quantity (kg) in 1928 | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | Poland | Czechoslovakia | Poland | Czechoslovakia |
| Ironware and metals | 289.272 | 600.000 | 465.297 | 275.811 |
| Pottery and china | 100.000 | 22.623 | 227.692 | 29.081 |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| Textiles and by-products | 43.000 | 70.801 | 102.588 | 5.817 |
| Cotton fabrics | 13.059 | 15.546 | 19.832 | 13.395 |
| Pharmaceutical products | 35.000 | --- | 20.191 | --- |
| Cars and vehicles | 20.000 | 20.181 | 10.070 | 111.863 |
| Glassware | 162.946 | --- | 12.088 | 16.200 |
| Paints | 23.881 | --- | 22.857 | ---- |
| Oilcloths | 20.300 | 6.337 | 13.210 | 15.530 |
| Onion | --- | --- | 10.030 | --- |

Source: Synadino, 1928, pp. a9-a10.

The port of Danzig ranked second in the trade between Poland and Bessarabia. Information concerning imports through this port city mainly refers to one category of goods – herring. In 1928, 1,094,312 kg of herring were shipped to Bessarabia through Chisinau customs. Austria ranked fourth after Czechoslovakia, and mostly coal was imported from Austria (in 1928), after the import of coal from Poland was given priority until 1927.

The main goods exported through Chisinau customs in 1928, for example, were: lamb skins (which took first place in terms of value), maize, salted intestines, mouse skins, grapes, wheat bran, rabbit skins, nuts, clothes, fox skins, oilcakes, sheep skins, fruit and ferret skins. The main destinations for export were Germany, with 54% of the total (especially maize) and Poland, with 25%, followed by Czechoslovakia, England and Austria (Synadino, 1928, pp. a13–a16).

The data above show the lack of two staple products from Bessarabian exports in 1928 – wheat and wines. The reasons were also mentioned in the section on transport, the rail transport fees being too high to be borne by local producers. In historiography, the decrease in wheat production and export is explained by the consequences of the agricultural reform (Suveică, 2010, p. 188).

A significant moment for the difference in perspective is represented by Mickiewicz's response, in November 1930, to the question

concerning the obstacles put by Polish authorities to Bessarabian merchants. The former pointed out that “all merchants” complaints result essentially from their own fault. This comes from the inability to meet the generally accepted export conditions’. The head of the Polish consulate in Chisinau, Marian Uzdowski, concluded less tactfully that “all rumours concerning alleged difficulties... arise from misunderstanding and, more specifically, the failure to understand the requirements of the Polish market” (Tăriță, 2020, p. 219).

The high technological standards for the quality of wines were also applied by Poland to producers from Hungary, Italy, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, countries which were interested in cornering a segment of the Polish market. To this end, technical and commercial studies were conducted on the specific features of the Polish market. The author of the analysis in question found that, “in this respect, regretfully, the necessary guides are lacking in our country” (Bahtalovschi, 1932, p. 5).

Towards the end of the interwar period, there was a certain resignation concerning the peripheral geographical location of Bessarabia, which led to its economic marginalisation:

Removed from its main ports, further removed from its western borders, through which our trade with Europe is carried on, Bessarabia is condemned to give very low prices in valorizing its products through export; and on the contrary, it is condemned to pay very high prices on imports. This is the greatest evil of Bessarabian economy, which our province has suffered from for decades ([n.a.], 1937a, p. 4).

The problem of wines

One of the products connected to Bessarabia up to this day, almost stereotypically, is wines. The data concerning imports and exports to which we referred above show that this is an important local product, being at the same time one in a long list of such products. In the view of some authors of the age, Bessarabia was the most important province “producing high quality maize and wheat in Romania”. With regard to wines, Bessarabia made a name for itself in the czarist period, when these were promoted on the Russian market together with wines produced in Crimea’.

At the beginning of the interwar period, a specific situation was created for wine-growing in Bessarabia. The right of harvesting was rented out. As indicated in a specialist journal in 1919, wine-growing and wine-making were not organised according to the current requirements:

Often the wine-grower does not know how and when to sell his products and thus they end up in the hands of exploiters become capitalists, and the wine-grower's work and skills remain unpaid. This happens so often, that many wine-growers gave up their trade, – although this sector of the economy can generate a higher income, with less work and capital, compared to other sectors [...].

Wine-making is in a worse situation: as transport is impossible, wine is not consumed elsewhere and in this spring and summer there is a risk of the wine spoiling, as it has little alcohol and also little acidity... (Secara, 1919, p. 6).

Shortly afterwards, in 1921, signing the Polish-Romanian bilateral agreements created additional obstacles for Bessarabian exports. Restrictions were introduced on “the export of wines, nuts and plums, which threatened the interests of Bessarabian merchants” (Świerbiński, 1929, p. 59). After “the golden age” of Bessarabian export to Poland, as it was appraised by the Polish counsel Antoni Swierbiński, the loss caused by restrictions would have amounted to around 200 lei.

Bessarabian wine merchants tried to organise themselves and in the same year 1921, they held a first specialty congress. The aim of these congresses which continued to take place in the following years was to improve the quality of Bessarabian wines. But the problems stemmed not only from Polish restrictions, but also from the domestic bureaucratic procedures which had to be followed in order for the goods to be eligible for export.

In 1929 the decline in Bessarabian wine-growing, compared to the prewar period, became obvious. One of the most important centres in Bessarabia, Cetatea Albă-Șvaba (a town of German settlers), produced 1 million pint pots less, also as a result of the dramatic decrease in the surface of the wine-growing area.

Because of the impossibility of exporting wines, because of the competition from the domestic wine market in the Old Kingdom and Transylvania, in 1922 the prices became downright ridiculous. Starting from 29 lei per pint pot, the price reached 34–35 per pint pot at the most. Compared to these modest prices, labour, copper sulphate, lime, American vine, credits, became instead more and more expensive (Antonescu, 1923, p. 9).

The harmful consequences of this situation also affected the wine-growers in the counties of Tighina and Orhei.

1924 was however a great year for the export of Bessarabian grapes to Poland. The Polish counsellor noted that “this year the export of grapes to Poland surpassed the most ambitious dreams of local merchants, and it is estimated that exporters realized high profits”.

Because in Bessarabian businesses and households there were big quantities of wine left which could not be exported nor sold in the domestic market, there emerged a contraband across the Dniester River. The Polish consul Świerzbiński mentioned in a report the following:

Russia. A great quantity of wines is smuggled there. Before the very eyes of the authorities and with their full knowledge. And although we have no trade relations with Russia, an intense cross-border trade is carried on, which does not appear in official statistics, but which helps Bessarabian wineries to survive (Tăriță, 2020, p. 215).

According to statistical data, towards the end of the interwar period, specifically in 1937, Bessarabia could export 1,500–2,000 wagonloads of wine annually (Agrigoroaie, Palade, 1993, p. 87). Also at the end of the interwar period, self-critical voices began to be heard, which put the failure to export wines down to local problems.

In our country we have wines which sell for 500–1000 ley per deciliter (Cotnari, Târnavale, etc.). We can make pasteurised musts, our wines are admirably suited for being carbonated etc. But given the current level of wine-making and the lack of a national spirit, all our efforts to plan a more intense export of our wines would meet with our lack of

organisation and skills in valorizing an asset which requires the use of a scientific method in its exploitation.

The great bane of our wine-growing is that it is not recognised as a science, an art and ultimately, an industry par excellence, but as a craft which anyone can practise... But if occasionally we find wines of outstanding quality, there are different varieties and relatively small amounts while an intense wine trade is only possible if there is an adequate amount of standardised wines available [n.a.], 1937b, p. 11).

Conclusions

At the beginning of the interwar period, the economic circles in Bessarabia – the status of which changed from a marginal guberniya of Russia to a province of Romania – had optimistic expectations about its economic and commercial development. Some of the problems facing local producers during the interwar period included the lack of diagonal rail transport, which would link the north of the province to the south, and the lack of navigation on the Dniester River. Although de facto, there was an advantage in Russia's closed political regime and the absence of competition from agricultural and agroindustrial goods from Ukraine, Bessarabia could not take advantage of this context. On the one hand, there was no local administrative-economic centralization (which was actually requested by a petition in 1929), and on the other hand, the rail transport fees were raised. Furthermore, there were restrictions, concerning import conditions imposed by states like Poland (on wines), which discouraged Bessarabian producers. The problems which the province was confronted with persisted throughout the period, until the Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1939, following which it went into a dramatic decline. Renewing relation with USSR, in 1934, was not conducive to resuming navigation, at least along the bank of the Dniester River, as Bessarabian merchants had hoped. It had been resumed, it would have allowed the shipping of surplus goods along the river from all Bessarabian counties, which had poor transport links to the rest of the country. The economic marginalisation of Bessarabia also led to its segmentation, the northern counties being more closely linked to Bukovina, the central ones – to Iasi, and the southern ones to Galati.

Some critical voices from the local economic elite protested that the low level of export of Besarabian goods, especially wines (which were often smuggled into the USSR), was caused by the lack of standardisation and the insignificant amounts of top quality products, with a non-homogeneous distribution across the country. For Bessarabia, the interwar period was one of high expectations and, at the same, one of impossibility to assert itself economically in the domestic and international market, with some rare special moments which can be considered exceptions.

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Literature

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DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.05



Identity at the Crossroads of Cultures: The Case of the Bilingual Writer Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas

Abstract

The aim of the scientific article “Identity at the Crossroads of Cultures: The Case of the Bilingual Writer Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas” is to analyse, based on empirical and theoretical research methods, the phenomenon of dual identity in the context of the development of nation-states in the first-half of the 20th century, which is determined by historical, cultural and community-related circumstances. The life of the bilingual Lithuanian-Polish, Polish-Lithuanian writer, cultural, public and political figure Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas (Jozef Albin Herbaczewski), the drama and consequences of his identity choices in the context of the very difficult period of Lithuanian-Polish relations is the specific case chosen for such an analysis.

The Union of Lublin, signed in July 1569, created a unique political entity in Europe at that time – the united Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The original model of the union provided that Lithuanians and Poles would live in the union on equal terms.

Suggested citation: Vaitkevičiūtė E. (2023). Identity at the Crossroads of Cultures: The Case of the Bilingual Writer Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas. *Trimarium. The History and Literature of Central and Eastern European Countries*, 2(2), 107–142.

DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.05

Submitted: 07.11.2022 / Accepted: 17.02.2023

Despite its troubles, this political entity gave Europe its first written constitution and, in the long term, was partly responsible for the formation of a specific cultural and social position known as “Gente Lituanus, natione Polonus” (“Lithuanian by descent, Polish by nationality”). It became common to have a kind of dual identity – Lithuanian-Polish, Polish-Lithuanian.

However, a few centuries later, the above-mentioned position inherited from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth turned into a problem: perhaps because the political model was only partially successful, the situation changed with the start of the active formation of nation-states. Tensions over borders, territories and geopolitical ambitions led to the need for a clear individual choice. A clearly expressed national identity, including the use of the specific language (Lithuanian or Polish), became an essential indicator of this. Meanwhile, partly due to the influence of the old heritage of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from a socio-cultural point of view, there was still a relatively large number of mixed Lithuanian-Polish and Polish-Lithuanian families in Lithuania and Poland.

One of the more exceptional cases in this context is that of two brothers, Boleslovas and Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas, who were born in the same family of a Polish father and a Lithuanian mother in the second half of the 19th century, but who chose different identities.

Boleslovas Herbačiauskas (Bolesław Herbaczewski) chose a Polish identity. Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas had a more Lithuanian identity. This bilingual Lithuanian-Polish, Polish-Lithuanian writer, cultural figure, promoter of the Lithuanian National Revival, the first lecturer in Lithuanian in the history of the Jagiellonian University in Poland, translator and publicist was one of the brightest and most colourful personalities in Kraków and interwar Kaunas of the early 20th century. His biography, the specifics of his activities, his polemics with his contemporaries, and the challenges he faced in his efforts to merge and preserve both Lithuanian and Polish identities in the context of the tense relations between Lithuania and Poland provide the researcher with a rewarding opportunity to shed

light on the extremely complex and multidimensional era of the development of and relations between the Lithuanian and Polish states through the history of one person and his dramatic choices.

Keywords

Herbačiauskas, Polish-Lithuanian relations, the state

For the people of Lithuania and Poland, the choice of dual identity has specific and deep historical roots. The Union of Lublin that was signed in July 1569 created what was a unique political entity in Europe at that time – the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Its original model provided for Lithuanians and Poles to live in the established union with equal rights.

Despite some of the problems it had, this political entity gave Europe its first written constitution and eventually led to the formation of a specific cultural and social construct known as *Gente lituanus natione polonus* (Latin: “Lithuanian ethnicity, Polish nationality”). Having this sort of dual identity – Lithuanian-Polish, Polish-Lithuanian – become the norm.

However, a few centuries later, the aforementioned construct inherited from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth turned into a problem – perhaps because the political model only worked in part, the situation changed when nation-states began to actively form. As tensions rose over borders, territories and geopolitical ambitions, the need for a clearly expressed choice of individuals emerged. A clearly expressed national identity, including the use of a specific language (Lithuanian or Polish), became its essential indicator. Meanwhile, partly due to the influence of the old heritage of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in terms of the sociocultural aspect, there was still a considerable number of mixed Lithuanian-Polish / Polish-Lithuanian families in Lithuania and Poland, whose members considered themselves both Poles and Lithuanians at the same time, following the example of the Romanticism poet Adam Mickiewicz.

One of the most exceptional cases in this context is that of two brothers who were born into the same family of a Polish father and

a Lithuanian mother in the late 19th century, but who chose two different identities, with one of the brothers preferring the Lithuanian name Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas, and the other going by the Polish name Boleslaw Szczesny Herbaczewski.¹ Boleslaw considered himself a Pole, while Juozapas considered himself a Lithuanian.

Although he knew the Lithuanian language, Boleslaw Herbaczewski (1875–1943) considered himself Polish; however, his brother Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas (Józef Albin Herbaczewski in Polish; 1876–1944) had a dual identity. When asked about his identity, Juozapas Albinas often explained that he inherited Polish culture from his father and Lithuanian blood from his mother, but that he belonged to both nationalities. It is interesting to note that Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas did not change or adapt his identity his entire life, regardless of the pressure he felt from both Lithuania and Poland. According to Polish historians, he was a Lithuanian who “considered Poland his second homeland” (Bardach, 1988, p. 210) and was “a Mickiewicz type of Lithuanian” (Solak, 1991, p. 460). According to Irena Fedorowicz (2017), Lithuanian opinions about this, likely the most interesting and colourful, but at the same time probably also the most controversial figure in the cultural, political and social scene in the first half of the 20th century,² were much more harsh. For example, ethnographer and journalist Mečislovas Davainis-Silvestraitis (Silvestraitis, as cited by Fedorowicz, 2017) called Herbačiauskas a “fake Lithuanian”, and Professor Mykolas Biržiška (Biržiška, as cited by Fedorowicz, 2017) called him “half dog, half goat, and godless”.³ According to Marcin Bajko (2017), Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas’s greatest tragedy was that “he was too little Lithuanian for the Lithuanians and too Lithuanian for the Poles. For the latter, he was always just a Lithuanian writing in Polish.”⁴ He sees

1 The ambiguity of identity is also indicated by the spelling of the surname: *Herbačiauskas* in Lithuania was the same person as *Herbaczewski*, *Józef Albin* in Poland.

2 I.Fedorowicz. Nieznane konteksty korespondencji Józefa Albina Herbaczewskiego i Julii Wichert-Kajriuksztisowej z 1939 r., https://repozytorium.uwb.edu.pl/jspui/bitstream/11320/10345/1/I_Fedorowicz_Nieznane_konteksty_korespondencji.pdf Accessed: 02.10.2022.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

Herbačiauskas “as a person between the hammer of ‘Lithuanianness’ and the anvil of ‘Polishness’, and he loved both the hammer and the anvil at the same time.⁵ He himself was made from the hammer of Lithuania, which at that time was creating its national identity based on ‘anti-Polishness’.⁶ The anvil was Poland, did not even exist on the map at that time – indifferent or disregarding the national aspirations of Lithuanians... Sometimes himself being on the side of the hammer, and sometimes on the side of the anvil.”⁷

According to Vladas Sirutavičius (1996), Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas traced his family to Belarus, and the documents (14 November 1822) proving the nobility of the Herbačiauskases, or more

5 For comparison, an excerpt from the autobiography of Mykolas Römeris, a prominent Lithuanian politician and lawyer who was a representative of the Lithuanian-Polish nobility: “I did not yet clearly understand that my skin was peculiar – not purely Polish and not purely Lithuanian, but a special combination, in which there are signs of both ‘Polishness’ and ‘Lithuanianness’ – the old skin of Adam Mickiewicz, a special creature of the history of our homeland – skin in which the soul is also special – not Lithuanian, but not Polish either.... Our tragedy – that of the so-called Lithuanian Poles... is that we do not have our own name, that our soul is a special conception of two national souls.” (Cited from: Maksimaitis M. (1996). *Mykolo Romerio autobiografija. I. Ictuvių atgimimo istorijos studijos*: Vilnius (Vol. 13), p. 190)

6 I would not agree with this statement of Marcin Bajko; basically, there were good reasons for the defensive position of Lithuania in the period mentioned by this researcher. In my opinion, in order to understand today what opinions and attitudes Herbačiauskas was trying to fight against, and precisely why he was trying to explain Lithuanian affairs and the situation between the two states to Polish readers in as much detail as possible in his books, it is necessary to take into account the prevailing mood in the Polish press and society at that particular time. For example, in his book *Polityka Wschodnia Piłsudskiego*, Bogusław Miedziński (1986) asserted: “The most important historical correction would be that the term ‘Lithuania’, which was given to the rapidly growing territories at that time that were supported by two generations of the House of Gediminid, is an agreed term. [...] The Lithuanian ethnic factor occupied a small area of that state on its northwestern border. [...] The state union of those lands with the Kingdom of Poland was, strictly speaking, a union of ethnographic Polish lands with ethnographic Russian lands; Lithuanian by origin, but newly Russian in terms of the adopted culture and language, was only a dynasty, which quickly adopted the Polish language and culture.” (Miedziński, B. (1986). *Polityka Wschodnia Piłsudskiego*. – Sygn. 2577, p. 18 (typescript), Biblioteka PAN w Warszawie.)

7 Bajko M. (2017). *Bardziej polski niż sami Polacy. O młodopolskiej twórczości Józefa Albin Herbaczewskiego*, https://repozytorium.uwb.edu.pl/jspui/bitstream/11320/10335/1/M_Bajko_Bardziej_polski_niz_sami_Polacy.pdf Accessed: 11.10.2022.

precisely – the Horbačiauskases – who moved from Gudija to the vicinity of Prienai, are stored at the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences (Sirutavičius, 1996). In 1894, Herbačiauskas was expelled from the Marijampolė gymnasium because banned Lithuanian press was found in his possession. According to Professor Mykolas Biržiška (1953), the reason for the writer being expelled was that a calendar in Polish characters was found in his father's possession, i.e., a publication that was illegal in Lithuania during the ban on all publications printed in the Latin alphabet, but Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas took the blame for his father.

To avoid the persecution of the tsar's gendarmes (the possession of prohibited publications could lead to fines, imprisonment or even exile to Siberia), he withdrew to Poland. As he said himself about this period in an interview with Lithuanian journalist Juozas Keliuotis (1932), who was the editor of the *Naujoji Romuva* magazine (1931–1940):

I attended gymnasium at the expense of the government, because I was a good pupil[...]. But I didn't finish gymnasium. I was expelled from sixth grade for having illegal books [...]. They did a search. Found banned books. They issued a burn notice and handed me over to the custody of the [Russian tsar's] gendarmes. [...] The gendarmes demanded that I leave Marijampolė. I headed to Warsaw. There I was an assistant accountant at a sweet factory. But I didn't want to settle for that. I secretly crossed the border in Silesia. I got on a train and went to Kraków. I immediately went to the police there and told them who I was. Austria-Hungary was taking in in Russian [Empire] political refugees. That's why they didn't object to me settling in Kraków.⁸

In Kraków, Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas was initially an audit student at the Jagiellonian University Faculty of Philosophy. With the massive strengthening of national movements in Europe, as well as the intensification of Lithuanian national activities in Lithuania and abroad, the Rūta Lithuanian society was established in Kraków on 27 February 1904 at the initiative of Herbačiauskas and other

8 Conversation with J.A. Herbačiauskas. *Naujoji Romuva*. 1932. (12) pp. 265–267.

Lithuanian youth who were studying in this city. Herbačiauskas became chairman of its board. The most important outcome of the society's activities was *Gabija* (1907), the first almanac of Lithuanian literature, which was compiled by Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas. According to his memoirs (1932),

I organised *Gabija* to honour Bishop Baranauskas. I wanted to publish a whole series of Lithuanian books, with the printing costs being covered by... Lithuanian magnates. Unfortunately, they did not want to contribute to the development of Lithuanian culture and I had to look for funds elsewhere. I published *Gabija* and *Erškėčių vainikas* mainly to the credit of the [Jagiellonian] University printing house.⁹

Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas participated in the Slavic Club of Kraków – Professor Marian Zdziechowski noticed the talented student from Lithuania and invited him to take part in their activities. Herbačiauskas and Professor Zdziechowski met under rather interesting circumstances, though ones that were not unusual for Herbačiauskas. It happened in 1900 at the Slavic Club, where a meeting was being held to discuss the problems of Lithuania. Later, Herbačiauskas will recall:

...I asked for the floor and scolded the speaker terribly for the fact that based on the authority of Prof. A. Brückner, he had taken the liberty of promulgating a frivolous opinion of my countrymen, which he only knew from rumours and foolish conjectures. I gave the longest speech about Lithuania and Lithuanians and caused a scandal [...]. When I finished, Prof. Zdziechowski came up to me, all red in the face (from excitement or indignation, I don't know), and invited me to lunch the next day.¹⁰

And thus began his close friendship with Professor Zdziechowski, which lasted for 38 years. In 1905, Herbačiauskas also became

9 Conversation with J.A. Herbačiauskas. *Naujoji Romuva*. 1932. (12) pp. 265–267.

10 *Lithuania. Dzieje, naród, kultura* (1998). Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego (UJ), pp. 11–12.

very involved in the activities of Zielony Balonik (Polish: “Green Balloon”), a literary cabaret founded by members of Young Poland. As Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński (1964) wrote,

...after the first few evenings, his prose ‘number’ became a traditional item on the programme. Herbačiauskas would go out on stage and deliver long speeches in his sing-song Lithuanian accent, where you could just feel that he cared about something very, very much; but what it was, the listener’s mind could not grasp [...]. Since the Zielony Balonik period, he became one of the most popular figures in Kraków. Everyone accepted him as their own [...]. He lived with us all like with brothers. It was impossible to imagine Kraków without his big head of hair; without his ascot and double-breasted jacket (Boy-Żeleński, 1964, pp. 417–422).

Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas’s first book, *Odrodzenie Litwy wobec idei polskiej* (Polish: “Rebirth of Lithuania Against the Polish Idea”), was published in Kraków in 1905. He enthusiastically welcomed the Lithuanian national movement, delighted with the emergence of *Aušra*, the first Lithuanian newspaper, and fervently supported Lithuanian aspirations. He wrote (1905) that it was time for the Poles to understand and realise the legitimacy and validity of Lithuanian aspirations for self-dependence,

that they are dealing not with some ‘sick vision’, but with a highly spontaneous nation that ardently loves danger, has been hardened in the fight against obstacles, and persistently implements its goals and intentions (Herbačiauskas, 2001, p. 20).

With the ardour and emotions characteristic of his early works, he stood up to defend the Lithuanian position, clearly identifying himself with the Lithuanian nation and feeling himself to be a kind of herald of their national revival aspirations in Poland.¹¹

11 During this period, there were not very many potential heralds of this sort – according to 1912 data, there were 12 Lithuanian students studying in Kraków: four in medicine, three in natural sciences, one in philosophy, one in agronomy, one in art, and another two studying externally.

He urged the Poles to change their futile tactics towards the Lithuanians to lead them “by the leash of Polish politics”, and to give up empty national ambitions, pretending that their nation had taught the Lithuanians this or that. It is likely that this attempt of Herbačiauskas’s to present the Lithuanian revival to Poland’s cultural society can also be explained by the search for arguments acceptable to the Polish audience, with the aim of contributing to the discussions that had begun in Poland and Lithuania around that time about the future prospects of the development of Poland and Lithuania. In Lithuania at that time, new goals were beginning to crystallise, matured by the powerful national revival movement. The latter developed the idea of a national Lithuanian state. Thus, the vision of an independent state appeared in Lithuania and Poland at a similar time and was successfully realised within a dozen or so years. However, let’s say if in 1918, Poland could be partly considered the so-called *Polonia restituta*, a kind of reconstruction of the old Poland in a modern form, including claims made to certain lands, then calling the Lithuania of 1918 *Lituania restituta* would not be appropriate at all. This fundamental difference in views on the future development of the former parts of the united political union (Lithuania and Poland) was partly the result of both the stormy debates between Poles and Lithuanians in the early 20th century, as well as, unfortunately, the strained relations with Poland in the first half of the 20th century.

Neither Herbačiauskas’s first book nor his efforts to present Lithuanian culture in Poland went unnoticed: he was sharply criticised by Zygmunt Gloger (1907), who reproached him for having so many words, which – according to him – mocked elementary knowledge of Polish history, in a book that spoke about the “Polish idea and was written by a talented author who has a good command of the Polish language and the pen, and who is not actually Lithuanian, but *Polish...*” (Gloger, 1907, pp. 33, 672).

In his next book, a drama entitled *Potępienie* (Polish: “Condemnation”; 1906) that was written in Polish, Herbačiauskas made it a point to write that this work of his

belongs to Polish literature only formally, i.e. because it is written and printed in Polish. But with its secret content, and especially with its essential spiritual tone, it belongs to Lithuanian literature (Herbaczewski, 1906).

The drama itself was not particularly exceptional – it was a combination of the elements of fantasy space and mysticism often promoted by the members of Young Poland, originating from the awakening interest in medieval mysticism during that period and enriched with the image of the main hero (Polish: Olgierd; Lithuanian: Algirdas), a rebel connected to the exotic and mysterious Lithuania. It is likely that Herbačiauskas wanted to express his ethnic uniqueness through the image of this hero – this conclusion is also implied by the autobiographical elements found in the drama. As stated in the epilogue, he wrote it in order to reveal and express the deepest spiritual essence of the Lithuanian people and the origins of the spirit of the Lithuanian nation (Herbaczewski, 1906, p. 143).

Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas debuted *Erškėčių vainikas* (Lithuanian: “Briar Wreath”) in 1908 – this was his first book written in Lithuanian, and today is deservedly considered one of the first manifestations of modernism in Lithuanian literature (Vienuolis, 1908).

Another one of Herbačiauskas’s books came out in 1911, but in Polish again – *I nie wódź nas na pokuszenie...* (Polish: “And Lead Us Not into Temptation...”). Taken from the Lord’s Prayer, the title was probably not chosen by chance – around that time, there was a fairly major turning point in Herbačiauskas’s worldview (due to some painful personal experiences), turning the famous Zielony Balonik cabaret swearer who was against any religious values into a passionate Christian until the end of his life. Maybe because of its particularly colourful descriptions of current events in the Polish art world, or maybe because of its sharp-tongued internal criticism of the modernist world, this book opened the way for Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas to recognition in Poland and became one of his two most popular books among Polish readers. According to Krystyna Saryusz-Zaleska (1911, pp. 262–263), who reviewed the book:

Some of [its] sentences may cause controversy, but the refreshing spirit that emanates from this book must resonate in every virtuous, Christian heart [...]. The book has a lot of potential to succeed as a young and significant voice about the young, the reaction of a literate, thus competent [person] to literature [...]. This book should and must do a lot of good!

In 1911 or 1912, a special Lithuanian language course was established at Jagiellonian University and Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas was officially employed – probably with the recommendations of Professors J. Rozwadowski and M. Zdziechowski. Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas was *the first Lithuanian language lecturer in the history of Jagiellonian University* – this fact cemented him in the history of the university, both as a teacher and writer and also as a university employee, who, with his Lithuanian language lectures, officially gave meaning to the change of cultural and historical concepts at Jagiellonian University. He taught intermittently starting in the 1912 autumn semester until 30 June 1923. During this period, he published five more books (four in Polish and one in Lithuanian); in 1919, one might say – to his misfortune, he got deeply and directly involved in what was then the extremely complicated political relations between the Poles and the Lithuanians.

In 1912, Herbačiauskas finally managed to fulfil an old dream that he had already mentioned in his letters to Lithuania back in 1909:

Dear Father Editor! I have taken it upon myself to write a serious, deeply thought-out piece about the Lithuanian [national] movement (in Polish and Lithuanian). Therefore, I would beg you, Hon. Fr. Ed., to give me as much knowledge as possible: 1) Regarding the current functioning of the Saulė and Šv. Kazimieras Societies (statistics of schools, issues, funds, etc.) 3) regarding the matter of the Church in Lithuania, 4) regarding the state of [Lithuanian] literature (broader bibliographic messages). I would also beg you to be so kind as to send me the most interesting issues of Draugija, which contain a lot of the material I need. For this, Hon. Fr. Ed., I will be extremely grateful. I long to seriously serve Lithuania. Enough of those childish dreams. To work, together! I fervently beg of you – help me to work! I, for my part, of course, do not renounce the obligation

of repayment. I heartily salute you, Your Juozapas Gerbačiauskas. My address: Cracovie, Kanonicza 22. I. Roma, Bargo Nuovo 80. 3.II. [1]909.¹²

In 1912, the aforementioned work came out – Herbačiauskas’s book entitled *Głos bólu* (Polish: “The Voice of Pain”). On the first page, the author dedicated the book to the “Brothers and Sisters of Aušra”, i.e., the fosterers of the Lithuanian national revival and, as they called it, the Polish national liberation. In it, the following points of reference of the author’s analysis are outstanding:

- (a) the assessment of the current situation of the two countries, Lithuania and Poland;
- (b) the examination of political relations and the internal party situation in Lithuania;
- (c) the criticism of the ideological/party direction of the clergy (or in his words, the “clericals”);
- (d) the discussion of the purpose of the nobility and its mistakes in the context of the Lithuanian national revival and relations with the Poles (1912):

Alas! Most of the Lithuanian nobility does not want to think about either Polish or Lithuanian affairs; they do not want to feel or fight with either the resurgent Lithuania or the liberating Poland. [...] [T]errible is the tragedy of the Lithuanian nobility, which is gradually losing the awareness of its historical mission [...]. [The nobility] got stuck in a sick state of ridiculous, unrealistic, historically [...] unjustified ‘Lituanophobia’. (Herbaczewski, 1912, p. 182);

(e) the overview of the public reactions of Polish society to the Lithuanian national movement. Herbačiauskas paid special attention to the issue that was extremely pressing at that time in the Lithuanian/Polish-language churches in the Vilnius Diocese. He expressed dismay as to why broader sections of society and secular representatives were not included in his decision, why it was left for the clericals of both sides to decide by way of internal negotiations:

¹² Letters of Adomas Jakštas-Dambrauskas and Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas. *Naujoji Romuva*. 1938 (11).

It is time to realise that the 'issue of the church'... is already a national-political issue!... Poles must not accept the fact that Polish clericals, inflating the authority of the Polish nation, are provoking the national feelings of Lithuanians. Nor should Lithuanians tolerate the politics of the Lithuanian clericals that provoke the Polish nation.¹³

The author based his analysis of the political, social and cultural situation of Lithuania and Poland on specific data of cultural activities in Lithuania – Lithuanian press publications and various types of societies founded by Lithuanians, from cultural ones to trade unions and publishing cooperatives, examining in detail the characteristic fields of activity, the number of members, and the goals set. While discussing the press publications, he also provided the specifics of the contents of the publications, the circulation sizes and so on. These detailed data form an extremely valuable part of the book. He claimed that the national liberation of Lithuania is closely related to the national liberation of Poland, and as a possible form of cooperation, he suggested inspiring scientific research into the history and culture of the past of Lithuanians by giving young Lithuanians the opportunity to do so at Jagiellonian University. According to Herbačiauskas (1912, p. 11),

Every right- and noble-minded Pole knows that without a free Lithuania, there will be no free Poland. Whoever fights for the independence of Poland must also fight for the independence of Lithuania without any claims to the future. Even *post factum*, let Lithuania break away from Poland completely and forever; this would be an insignificant trifle – stupidity – compared to the great fact that Poland's national conscience would become clear in respect to Lithuania: the words 'Poland killed us' will burn with gratitude – 'The Poles contributed to our liberation!'

It seems that around 1912, the concept of Lithuanian sovereignty was gradually developing in Herbačiauskas's consciousness – from various different details. For example, in this book, he asserts that Lithuania is at the intersection of two cultures, East and West, so the

13 Ibid, pp. 161–163.

entire further cultural and national development of the country may depend on the point of reference chosen at this significant moment. Therefore, following the example of Hegel's spirit of the nation, it is important to refer to the origins of one's own culture: "A culture that does not draw the juices of life from its own roots, which have grown up with the depth of the nation's history, has no right to exist today. Such a culture is only a parasite of foreign cultures..." (Herbaczewski, 1912, p. 117).

Herbačiauskas believed that historical and cultural continuity and the connection with the depth of the nation's spirit were almost the only guarantee of a proper place in the European cultural community. Otherwise, too much is at stake: "A nation that destroys its own traditions becomes... a beggar of Europe!" (Herbaczewski, 1912, p. 118).

Herbačiauskas's latter book received comments in both the Polish and Lithuanian press. For example, a reviewer who went as K. S. (1912, pp. 289-292) wrote:

...from his book we hear the best voices, pure features of the Lithuanian spirit, from the patriotism akin to the heroic passion of Margiris¹⁴ to the wisdom of Mickiewicz. – Along with the bitter truth, the author allowed us to feel that honey of the past and the spiritual pull to the heights. Such a writer must continue to research and continue to write. Herbačiauskas's previous book, *I nie wódź nas na pokuszenie...*, put a seal of merit on his critical and literary activities not only with respect to his home society. – The present book, *Głos bólu*, must be published in Lithuanian as well.

However, the opinions that Herbačiauskas expressed in this book that were so favourably received in Poland were not in line with the views of the Lithuanian intelligentsia in Lithuania at all. The opinion of this side was expressed by Mykolas Biržiška (1953, p. 200):

Herbačiauskas vividly and graphically explained the Lithuanian national movement to the Poles, to the extent that he understood it

¹⁴ Margiris, who died in 1336, is a legendary prince of Lithuania (Samogitia) – a historical hero.

himself, while watching from the sidelines and not actually participating in it, and therefore not understanding the maturing and inevitable clash of the national Lithuanian cause with the Polish cause, and not picking up that the unionist traditions were particularly alive and undisturbed in Kraków, far from the little bit of Lithuania visible from here through the veil of the grim past, when they were able to face a living, mutually (Lithuanian-Polish) combative Lithuanian reality, thus archaising and poeticising the current one like Mickiewicz.

If that wasn't enough, in the review, Professor Biržiška (1953) called Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas an “insulted [rejected] prophet”, “hysterical”, and so forth:

...when in 1905 the Lithuanians began to demand from the Poles the return of their enslaved rights in the church, and then to openly deny the Poles' right to leadership in Lithuania and in general to clearly organise themselves for their future leadership, Juozas Albinas began teaching (rallying) them in the Lithuanian press, and published, in Polish, his *Głos bólu*, hysterically written by a prophet insulted by society, which for both Lithuanians and Poles, of course, was just *głos wołającego na puszczy*.¹⁵

However, at that moment in Lithuanian-Polish relations, would it have been better if Herbačiauskas had not tried to explain the Lithuanian national movement to the Poles in Poland at all? Probably not. Especially since the enemies of Lithuania and Poland had been successfully using the principle of *divide et impera*¹⁶ and manipulations also based on insufficient mutual knowledge not for years, and not even for decades, but for centuries. And as evidenced by the aggression of states hostile to democracy today, there is a reason why Clio, the muse of history, is considered a very strict teacher.

In 1914, Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas published his second most popular book among Polish readers, *Ironiczna nauka dla umysłowo dojrzałych dzieci* (Polish: “An Ironic Lesson for Mentally Mature

¹⁵ Polish: “The voice of someone crying in the wilderness”.

¹⁶ Latin: “Divide and rule”.

Children”). The main objects of the author’s attention in it are the concept of literary creativity and its relationship with the human will to choose and individual morality, and the harmonious combination of the uniqueness of one’s own literature and the world’s cultural achievements, as an aspiration:

What was the Jagiellonian Poland? It is what France was at the height of its power [...]. There was a moment in European history when Poland demanded the respect of the French the way France demands the respect of Poland today! [...] who knows, maybe in the person of France we love ourselves!... The cult of France does not allow us to be ourselves (Herbaczewski, 1914, p. 19).

In the book, Herbačiauskas also examined the works of Polish literary authors Tadeusz Miciński, Stanisław Brzozowski, Stefan Żeromski, Wilhelm Feldman and Stanisław Wyspiański, as well as their world view and that of his own:

I am living by the ideas of the heroes of the Catholic faith; I am maturing in the atmosphere of Roman and Latin culture. That is my attitude... The nation [...] is as our fathers and forefathers created it, as we are creating it today! It is a product of will, our historical will – our past and present! And there is nothing accidental about it [...]. Then why the constant hypochondriacal endeavour to persuade the nation – the constant notion that it is sick and despicable? (Herbaczewski, 1914, p. 40).

Herbačiauskas (1914, p. 13) also complained about the fact that his attempts, as an author who considers himself a Lithuanian, to evaluate Polish literary phenomena were assessed negatively in the Polish press: “Why, Sir, are you meddling in something that is none of your business?”. And that there were opinions in Polish society that by daring to write about this culture in a different way than is due, he, a transplant from somewhere else, was violating the “right of hospitality”. A separate, particularly ironic, sarcastic and critical chapter of the book was dedicated to Tadeusz Miciński, a poet, playwright and one of the most hostile Polish authors towards Herbačiauskas,

who, like Herbačiauskas, was one of the most gifted polemicists of the early 20th century. It is somewhat strange that these authors hated each other so bitterly, because according to Elżbieta Flis-Czerniak, there were more similarities than differences between them – the works of both Miciński and Herbačiauskas are full of Lithuanian motifs and colourful, exotic forms of the image of Lithuania.¹⁷ They both sincerely admired the archaic Lithuanian culture, history and its old religion. They both adored the Polish literature of the Romantic period, drawing inspiration from it and holding the firm view that the path to the liberation of Lithuania and Poland leads through the spiritual rebirth of both nations.¹⁸

According to contemporaries, the disagreements started after Herbačiauskas's review of Miciński's novel *Nietota* (1910). In his harsh review of Miciński's novel *Xsiądz Faust* ("Father Faust"; 1911), Polish literary and theatre critic Adam Grzymała-Siedlecki (1913, p. 47) reproached that, "Miciński's novel or drama is only a form of deception", and that in the novel, the author "portrayed persons who exist in real life, and acted unethically." According to the reviewer, the figure of Albin Hebetko is created in the novel – a criminal who is a despicable and excessively depraved person:

But with Hebetko, there is, apart from the torture, one more thing that critics cannot ignore in silence. By introducing the figure of this snake [into the novel], the author of *Xsiądz Faust* had the arbitrary scheme to endow it with a physical resemblance to a Polish writer living today. There can be no question of coincidence – the figure is characterised with a rare correspondence to reality in Miciński's work (Grzymała-Siedlecki, 1913, p. 47).

Herbačiauskas, for his part, mocked his opponent sharply in his book and called him *Magik Mistyficiński* (Polish: "Magician Mistyficiński"), much to the chagrin of Miciński, since this moniker really stuck.

17 Miciński T. (1911) *Nad Bałtykiem*, [https://pl.wikisource.org/wiki/Nad_Ba%C5%82tykiem_\(Mici%C5%84ski,_1911\)](https://pl.wikisource.org/wiki/Nad_Ba%C5%82tykiem_(Mici%C5%84ski,_1911)) Accessed: 30.09.2022.

18 Flis-Czerniak E. „*Tajemna księga Litwy*”. *Józef Albin Herbaczewski i Tadeusz Miciński*, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337864577_Tajemna_ksiega_Litwy_Jozef_Albin_Herbaczewski_i_Tadeusz_Micinski Accessed: 08.10.2022

He also hinted at a supposedly real event – a mysterious story with a young lady whose honour was allegedly made an attempt on by “Father Faust”:

I, a poor Lithuanian burial-mound, had the pride to compare myself to the Caucasus of thought, to the Himalayas of logic,¹⁹ to the Faustus of alchemy, to the Babylon of the spirit! [...] I, a snake from the Lithuanian forest, wanted to bite the eagles who after all scorned the plains of Mazovia²⁰ and ‘lay their eggs in the Himalayas.’ [...] Father Faust performed a mysterious kind of miracle on a young girl, the fiancée of Albin Hebetko’s cousin. Father Faust’s miracle began to take place in the square and it would have been a scandal [...]. Father Faust publicly declared that Albin Hebetko was the cause of the mysterious kind of miracle [...]. The people beat [him] with sticks and drove him out of the parsonage (Herbaczewski, 1914, pp. 66–91).

Herbačiauskas ended the intense polemic by stating:

The improvement of customs in Poland should start with oneself [...]. I don’t want to be acquainted with Mr Miciński anymore. I will never respond to his [...] provocations again. I taught him *pro publico bono* (Latin: “for the public good”), so that he would know that in order to teach others the righteousness and sanctity of the way, you need to be a fair and decent person yourself... (Herbaczewski, 1914, pp. 375).

So, as Kazimierz Bereżyński (1914, p. 5) so aptly put it in his review of Herbačiauskas’s books, “Whoever reads Herbačiauskas for the first time sees in him a man who spits on everything, but spits blood...”.

There is almost no data about Herbačiauskas’s work and activities during World War I.

In 1918, Lithuania and Poland regained their freedom and independence. The next stage of mutual relations between the two restored, energetic nation-states had begun.

19 Allusions to the motifs and details of Miciński’s work.

20 Mazovia is a historical region in eastern Poland.

Around 1919, the enthusiastic Lithuanian and Polish “mediator” Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas reappeared to the readers and the societies of both countries.

In 1919–1920 he visited Lithuania – Vilnius and Kaunas. He came on the initiative of Józef Piłsudski’s environmental politician Leon Wasilewski, who had come up with the idea of finding a “real” Lithuanian who would be able to speak publicly as a supporter of the “Lithuanian-Polish Union”. They turned to Herbačiauskas for this purpose, and since the writer himself supported the idea of the union at that time, he agreed to be a “mediator between the two countries”. In this way he became embroiled in political games, and, judging by the consequences, he was taken advantage of rather brazenly.

For the sake of clarity, here are some historical facts about the events of that time in Poland and Lithuania.²¹ In the first years of Independent Poland, Wasilewski, a well-known figure in Polish culture and society, belonged to Piłsudski’s closest circle and was actively engaged in politics. He served as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland from 18 November 1918 to 16 January 1919. It was on his initiative that a special department was established for Lithuanian and Belarusian affairs. During the Paris Peace Conference, Wasilewski was part of the Polish Government delegation and a member of the National Committee. He tried to use his position to establish relations with countries that were previously enslaved by Russia and were looking to assert their independence. He informed Piłsudski about contacts with the representatives of the three Baltic states, who, for the purposes of a possible federation with the Baltics, urged him to maintain contacts with the Latvians and Estonians (Wasilewski, 1936, p. 174): “If they were to join a federation, I can’t imagine how the Lithuanians could resist such double pressure”. In 1919, Wasilewski informed Piłsudski that the Estonians and the Latvians supported the formation of a Polish-Estonian-Latvian front, and that Poland should be at the forefront of such a league of Baltic states. In his August 1919 report to Piłsudski, Wasilewski wrote that the Estonians

21 For more, see: Vaitkevičiūtė E. (2007) *Žinomas nežinomas Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas*. Kaunas: Naujasis lankas. pp. 75–95.

had also requested that Poland recognise their state *de facto*, and that Poland should do so.

Talks with the Lithuanians did not go as well – despite the contacts established in Paris with some Lithuanian delegates, Lithuanian politicians and diplomats were strongly opposed to the idea of any kind of “federation” or “renewed union” with Poland. The situation was worsened by Poland’s desire to obtain more territories, rejecting Lithuania’s demand to recognise Lithuania’s ethnographic borders with the Kovno Governorate, Lithuania Minor, the Suwałki Governorate, part of the Grodno Governorate (now part of Belarus) and the Vilnius Region, with its capital of Vilnius.²²

In the first half of 1919, letters, protests and even diplomatic notes were constantly travelling between Lithuania and Poland. And in April 1919, the Polish army, advancing to the East, pushed the Bolshevik Russian army out of Vilnius and... stayed there. According to Lithuanian diplomat Petras Klimas (1990, pp. 227–228), this move did not seem like open aggression at the time, because “it could be assumed that it was a strategic manoeuvre by which Piłsudski wanted to block Russia’s path to the West.” Soon there was even greater diplomatic and even military confusion: the Lithuanian delegation in Warsaw did not receive the Poles’ recognition of Lithuania’s independence, and instead, the Legislative Sejm of Poland took the decision to take control of the lands of Vilnius from the Russians and annex them to... Poland. And there were some odd situations as well, like when Wasilewski had to urgently deal with another one of Piłsudski’s assignments in 1919 (Barbara Stoczewska, 2005): “When he returned to Warsaw in mid-July 1919, it turned out that

22 For the sake of clarity, it should be noted that Vilnius is an old Lithuanian city whose history dates back to the 10th millennium BC. It became the capital of Lithuania in the 14th century (c. 1322). It was first mentioned in written sources on 25 January 1323, in a letter written by Grand Duke of Lithuania Gediminas to the cities of Germany. This city demanded the respect of Poland as a centre of academic and cultural life from the times of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Belarusians also had sentiments for the Vilnius Region for similar reasons. The most unfounded claims to this part of Lithuania (just like today’s claims to Ukraine, Poland and the Baltic States) were expressed by Russia, which brazenly lied that it had belonged to the Russians since the times of Catherine the Great, so Russia supposedly had to “take it back”.

Latvian and Estonian delegations, misinformed about the Poles' alleged planned occupation of Kaunas, had come to that [Lithuanian] city to negotiate with the Poles."²³ There were indeed such plans; even though, according to Barbara Stoczewska, Wasilewski's own role in the whole affair is not definitively clear, he did participate in the "process" of creating a pro-Polish government in Lithuania – in other words, he got mixed up in the military coup against the Lithuanian government that was being put together by the POW (Polska Organizacja Wojskowa) and the OSN (Organizacja Strzelców Nadniemeńskich), two secret Polish military organisations. The coup failed – right before it started on the night of 31 August 1919, the Lithuanian Security Service arrested its main leaders and organisers, as well as most of their helpers. However, great damage had already been done to Lithuanian-Polish relations, as well as to the reputation of Wasilewski himself, who, according to Stoczewska, had spent a lot of energy and considerable sums from the modest Polish state treasury to pursue this disastrous idea.

It was in this context that Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas came to Lithuania in the second half of 1919, full of concern about the rumours of the allegedly "chauvinistic Lithuanians, who hate the Poles living in Lithuania" and – *o sancta simplicitas!* – with a burning desire to suggest to the Lithuanians that they "form a federation/union with Poland". He described this visit, his conversations with Lithuanian politicians, and his later reactions to the worsening relations between Lithuania and Poland²⁴ in his books

23 Stoczewska B. *O Leonie Wasilewskim*. 31 August 2005, <http://www.omp.org.pl/stareomp/index7c3b.html> Accessed: 12.10.2022.

24 On 9 October 1920, forces led by Polish general Lucjan Żeligowski entered Vilnius; on 12 October 1920, Żeligowski announced "Independence of the Republic of Central Lithuania with the capital in Vilnius." (Most historians agree that this was a puppet state of Poland, but are undecided on the degree of sovereignty.) Lithuania was forced to move its capital to Kaunas. Vilnius was only regained in 1939, and if that wasn't enough, it was on the initiative of Bolshevik Russia, which had occupied the Vilnius Region at that time – Soviet Russia did not pass up the opportunity to exploit the disagreements between the Poles and the Lithuanians, especially regarding the "Vilnius question", for its own purposes. On 1 September 1939, Poland was invaded by Nazi Germany, and then by the Soviet Union on 17 September. Lithuania was occupied by the Soviet Union in 1940.

*Kur eini, lietuvi?*²⁵ (Lithuanian: “Where are you going, Lithuanian?” 1919), *Rozważania na czasie* (Polish: “Timely Considerations”; 1921), and *O Wilno i nie tylko o Wilno* (Polish: “About Vilnius and Not Only About Vilnius”; 1922).

As he wrote in a letter to Polish politician Ignacy Paderewski (1921),

I belong to that group of Lithuanians who openly sought and are seeking, in word and deed, the renewal of the Lithuanian union with Poland, but in the spirit of modern English unionism [...]. Today, it is necessary to do everything possible to make Lithuania favourable to Poland, because if Lithuania falls into the hands of Poland’s implacable enemies,²⁶ then the fate of the Polish state will turn into a plaything of the enemies’ evil will [...]. To take solace in the fact that Germany is beaten and humiliated is a disastrous illusion. As long as Russia is [its] Bolshevik ally... Germany cannot be considered defeated (Herbaczewski, 1922, pp. 5-8).

According to Biržiška (1953, p. 201), when he came to Lithuania, Herbačiauskas

was predisposed by Warsaw, [and] in Kaunas... he attacked the ‘German’ policy of the Lithuanian Government, but after it was explained to him by [Lithuanian] Prime Minister [Mykolas] Sleževičius,²⁷ he realised

25 In the Lithuanian space, the main title is *Kur eini, lietuvi?* (Lithuanian: “Where are you going, Lithuanian?”), while in the Polish space, *Kur eini, Lietuva?* (Lithuanian: “Where are you going, Lithuania?”) is more predominant.

26 Herbačiauskas was referring to Soviet Russia and Germany.

27 As Herbačiauskas wrote about this meeting: “...after arriving in Kaunas – already late in the evening – I was received by the honourable Prime Minister, Dr Sleževičius himself, in the office of his presidium.... ‘Is there no more hope at all that friendlier relations could be established between the Lithuanian and Polish governments?... My role as mediator may be of some use to you, as fate would have it...’ ‘- We have never demonstrated anywhere,’ answered the Prime Minister, ‘and we are not demonstrating any malicious intent towards Poland. He who informed the gentleman otherwise is a liar. We want an agreement with Poland, but not at the cost of our honour or the pride of our nation... We absolutely cannot give up the five counties of the Vilna Governorate, which are organically linked to the territory of Kaunas. And on what basis can an agreement with Poland be reached?... Only two states can be restored to life in the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania –

that he had been deceived by the Poles; insulted, he returned to Kraków with nothing to show for his pains.”

It makes sense – after the Lithuanian audience booed his “union” proposals in Kaunas, and prominent Lithuanian politicians explained the real situation and the essence of the disputes with Poland, it became clear to Herbačiauskas that the rumours in Warsaw about the misdeeds that were allegedly committed by the Lithuanians and the “desire for a union” were nothing more than propaganda. In addition, as he mentioned when talking about his visit to Lithuania, it was during this visit (Herbačiauskas, 1921, p. 17) that

a secret Polish organisation under the pow was revealed in Kaunas that was made up of persons who were unconditionally devoted to Poland, and who were making efforts to overthrow the Lithuanian government and introduce a dictatorship. For that reason, there were arrests of persons. The Polish press [...] accused the Lithuanian government of ‘unbridled destruction of “Polishness” without any fault on the part of the Poles’.”

After terminating the visit, Herbačiauskas, deeply indignant, returned to Kraków and expressed his changed position in emotional public statements. In his book *O Wilno i nie tylko o Wilno* (1922) and in an article entitled “Pożegnanie”, he wrote: “They only wanted to make a battering ram out of me to destroy either the Polish or the Lithuanian masonry!” (Herbaczewski, 1922, p. 8).

Soon, Herbačiauskas was shocked by General Lucjan Żeligowski’s staged mutiny,²⁸ which ended with the Vilnius Region being ripped away from Lithuania. The letters that he wrote to Professor Zdziechowski immediately thereafter, in October and November 1920, were full of disappointment, grief, fierce indignation and bitter rebuke (1919):

that of the Lithuanians and the Belarusians. The Polish wedge... is unnecessary because it cannot be proven by the state in any way” (Herbaczewski J. A. (1921) *Rozważania na czasie*, p. 15).

²⁸ 7–12 October 1920.

And what, Mr Professor, did you ‘not understand’?²⁹ Was it all those lies and slander fabricated about ‘Kaunas’ Lithuania in Warsaw? Or the Polish policy towards Lithuania, modelled after the example of Bismarck (Krylov’s fable ‘The Wolf and the Lamb’)? Or perhaps Mr Professor sees the implementation of A. Mickiewicz’s ideas in that policy?!? For the love of God! With lies, deceit, violence and coercion, I would think, you cannot turn ‘Kaunas’ Lithuania into a *friend* [of Poland]! And if they don’t make a friend out of Lithuania, then all the devils will pull that ‘subtle’ (ach!) Belvedere plan and Poland will pay its debts to Belvedere with blood, and most importantly, with *honour*! [...] I am warning you – you are wrong in acting like this, because you are doing [exactly] everything that your enemies want and desire.... You will realise too late what is hidden behind the curtain of Lithuania – too late! [...] The cadets wanted Constantinople and got the Bolsheviks! You want Vilnius, and what will you get? It is frightening to think where your arrogance will lead you, your blind militarism – your pan-polonism! (Herbaczewski, 1922, pp. 33–35).

He said that he was determined to “give all his strength and achievements to Lithuania”, which he considered his homeland, because he

could no longer be neutral in the fight between Lithuania and Poland.... I will return to my homeland [Lithuania]... To defend Lithuania, I will give up everything I have achieved through self-sacrificing work. *First the person and then the nation!* [...] The Lithuanian is strong (Herbaczewski, 1922, pp. 33–35).

Herbačiauskas began to express criticism more and more resolutely about the actions of the then Polish authorities towards Lithuanians, and in 1921, the editorial office of the newspaper *Kurjer Codzienny* sent a complaint to Jagiellonian University regarding Herbačiauskas’s

29 Professor Zdziechowski sent an unusually brief reply to the first stormy letter that Herbačiauskas wrote on the topic of relations between Lithuania and Poland: “I don’t understand, Sir.” The hypothesis cannot be ruled out that Zdziechowski sent such a laconic reply out of fear of possible censorship or, perhaps, to avoid a topic that was painful to him as well.

behaviour in Michalik's Den (the venue for Zielony Balonik). According to the complaint,

on Saturday night at Michalik's Den, having met journalists from Gdańsk and thinking that they were Germans, he humiliated Poland and the Poles in front of the guests from Gdańsk and advised them to unite with Lithuania against Poland. Two Polish journalists from Gdańsk who were there wrote a complaint about Herbačiauskas to the editorial office of *Kurjer Codzienny* before leaving and asked to report it to the University, which the editorial office did (Doc. No: L.3996. Archiwum UJ).

The result of this complaint was a specially formed disciplinary commission to investigate Herbačiauskas's activities and loyalty to the Polish state. The conclusions of the commission (13 December 1921) state that even though the tone of his articles is undoubtedly controversial and divisive, there is nevertheless nothing in them to testify to the author's bias against the Polish state. The intemperance and lack of control in Herbačiauskas's articles were obviously due to his individuality. Regarding the incident, the commission decided that the conversation in question was of a private nature and cannot be considered a public statement, and strongly suggested that Herbačiauskas be more moderate when talking about political matters in the future (Doc. No L: 3996/21, Archiwum UJ). He also got a pay cut. Articles appeared in the press suggesting that Herbačiauskas "...take off to that Lithuania of his if he is so happy there" and so on.

Under these circumstances, Herbačiauskas moved to Kaunas in August 1923 at the invitation of Lithuanian professors Balys Sruoga and Vincas Krėvė, to work at the newly established University of Lithuania. According to Juozas Keliuotis (1961), cultural magazine (1931–1940) editor and journalist, they were planning on using Herbačiauskas for discussions with representatives of the Catholic wing, but the writer did not want to, so later their relationship deteriorated sharply.³⁰

³⁰ According to Herbačiauskas's later correspondence, the "intrigues" of these people resulted in him being forced into early retirement and even delays in his pension payment.

After living in Poland for 27 years, Herbačiauskas unfortunately never truly found his place in Kaunas, but he was popular for a while, giving public lectures to the intelligentsia of Kaunas, participating in literary evenings, and teaching various courses on Polish literature at the University of Lithuania.



J. Herbačiauskas (right) and writer Jonas Marcinkevičius (former prisoner for desertion from the Lithuanian army), Kaunas, Laisvės ave., 1932.

Source: The fund of the Maironis' Museum of Lithuanian Literature, Kaunas.



Writers' ball at "Metropol" restaurant, Kaunas, 1932 (photo by K. Baulas)
 Source: The fund of the Maironis' Museum of Lithuanian Literature, Kaunas.

He published a popular book of essays entitled *Dievo šypsenos* (Lithuanian: "Smiles of God"; 1929), wrote *Tyrų Vienuolis* (Lithuanian: "The Monk of the Wilderness"), a mystery drama that he submitted to the Kaunas Drama Theatre (but which was unfortunately rejected), and actively collaborated with the cultural and literary press. He was also one of the active members of *Naujoji Romuva*, a humanist cultural movement. According to Lithuanian cultural figure and writer Antanas Vaičiulaitis (1991, pp. 615–620):

Finally, J. Herbačiauskas has come out with his largest [Lithuanian language] work, retaining both his restless temperament and modern edge. While the other mentioned authors were representatives of traditional art, among them Herbačiauskas sounded like an innovator [...] his writings burst with spark, courage, capricious temperament, unexpected turns and a sincere search for new paths.

However, according to his friend Juozas Keliuotis (1961, p. 4), "Unfortunately, few people could read his writings.... Only after World War I

were his articles available in *Baras* and *Skaitymai*,³¹ but they were not read by the wider public.”

As Herbačiauskas himself complained, despite his works in Lithuanian, he was only acknowledged as a Lithuanian writer by a small group of friends (e.g. Faustas Kirša, Juozas Keliuotis):

...I write in Lithuanian and Polish. I have published books. I am struck off from Polish literature and not included in Lithuanian [...]. Real Lithuanians who write only in Russian (Baltrušaitis) and French (Milašius) belong to the heraldry of Lithuanian literature, but I do not inspire confidence for the fact that, while writing in Lithuanian, I also write in Polish [...]. The official spheres do not give me a literary patent (Solak, 1991, pp. 463–464).

With some representatives of the literary youth (members of the *Keturi Vėjai* movement), Herbačiauskas tried to initiate the *Grįžulio Ratai* publication.³² The idea fell apart because instead of the planned publication, the young people, unbeknownst to Herbačiauskas, changed the name to “*Keturi Vėjai*” and published it on their own: Juozas Petrėnas, for his part, said that Herbačiauskas was too much of an original for little Lithuania, and that not knowing the local conditions,³³ he would cause... trouble. Juozas Tysliava agreed with this opinion. He wrote to Jokūbas Stikloris, who was the president of the Rytas company in Klaipėda, informing him that the name of the publication was changing. Rather than “*Grįžulio Ratai*”, it would be “*Keturi Vėjai*”. Along with Kazys Binkis, Petrėnas and Tysliava informed Herbačiauskas about this decision (Tysliava, 1962):

– You know, Professor, we finally decided to release *Keturi Vėjai*, began Kazys Binkis diplomatically, but rather categorically.

31 *Baras* and *Skaitymai* were Lithuanian cultural and literary magazines published in Kaunas during the period of the First Independent Republic of Lithuania.

32 For more, see: Vaitkevičiūtė E. (2007) *Žinomas nežinomas Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas*. Kaunas: Naujasis lankas; Vaitkevičiūtė E. (2005), *Kowieńskie lata Józefa Albina Herbaczewskiego w Niepodległej Litwie. Ruch literacki*, R. XLVI (z. 4–5) (271–272), pp. 393–406.

33 Juozas Petrėnas’s letter to Balys Sruoga: LLTIR. F-53-830. L.1.

– Well then, you see, it would be best, you see, if each of us could publish a newspaper, replied Herbačiauskas, not without sarcasm.

– Why not, Professor?” Petrėnas intervened, “Vydūnas has been publishing his own newspaper for a long time now.

It was immediately clear to Herbačiauskas that I was also a participant in this conspiracy – I, who had just a couple of days earlier discussed with him the content of *Grižulo Ratai* and so on. Apparently not seeing this coming, Herbačiauskas suddenly stood up, pulled at his cuffs with his fingertips and, with a couple of strokes of his lapels, looked at me with tears in his eyes and left without even saying goodbye. As a host, this was not pleasant for me. Fortunately, it happened at Elta, where I was working at the time.³⁴

With one disappointment after another, Herbačiauskas's statements became sharper and his criticism became harsher; he was constantly involved in one scandal or another and began facing fines for “disloyalty to the state” and the like, so eventually a certain dissatisfaction with him began to emerge, as a strange, unhinged “transplant”. Moreover, his visits to Poland to meet with Polish politicians (in 1927 and 1928) did not increase confidence in him at all, especially considering the fact that right up until 1938, diplomatic relations had officially been severed between Lithuania and Poland. He often criticised prominent Kaunas politicians, especially Prime minister dr. Augustinas Voldemaras, whom he disliked very much. He harshly assessed the neglect of cultural matters, selfishness, as well as the behaviour of government representatives in the field of international relations. Herbačiauskas only taught at Kaunas University until the 1932 spring semester. He was dismissed as of 1 September 1932, with the documents stating that he “resigned from the university due to the circumstances at hand.”³⁵

There were several reasons for Herbačiauskas leaving besides the fact that he was a strange “transplant from Poland” who just never fit in. And not just that, over time, he had become angry with the

34 Juozas Tysliava about the members of “Keturi Vėjai”. *Vienybė*. 6 April 1962.

35 Vytautas Magnus University. *Antrųjų penkerių veikimo metų (1927.II.16. – 1932.IX.1) apyskaita*: Kaunas, 1933. p. 206.

official “spheres” in the true sense of the word. According to journalist Valentinas Gustainis, the initial reason for the conflict that led to him moving back to Poland was the fact that once, Herbačiauskas very harshly criticised the young but already famous poet Salomėja Nėris³⁶ for leaving Ateitis, a religious and cultural student organisation, to join Trečias Frontas, a group of leftist, Marxist youth.³⁷ The poet complained to Professor Sruoga, and then Professor Krėvė also got involved; a huge conflict³⁸ ensued and in the end, Herbačiauskas was fired.³⁹ In protest, he even announced publicly, in the Kaunas newspapers, that he would commit suicide by starvation. Fortunately, the students and friends who liked him managed to dissuade him from this idea. As the then still young Lithuanian poet Jonas Aistis wrote about one of his last meetings with Herbačiauskas in Kaunas:

He was already about to set off to Poland when I sat down next to him at Konradas’s one time.⁴⁰ For a long time he was silent in thought, then he began to speak louder, as if to himself: ‘If I ruled Lithuania, I would take out a loan of half a billion and build brick huts with deep and solid foundations for each of our villagers. The time will come when others will sweep away all these grey wooden houses of ours. Our villager needs to take root deep in this land... (Aistis, 1991, p. 243).

36 Salomėja Nėris was the pen name of Salomėja Bačinskaitė-Bučienė (1904–1945), a Lithuanian poet.

37 The real reason for the move in Kaunas was known to many. However, probably only Herbačiauskas could be so enraged by this to rail the poet in a public lecture for “selling Christ for Raila’s d...!” (from the memoirs of Valentinas Gustainis: *LLTIR*, f. 6–28.) What Herbačiauskas had in mind was the affair that had started between Nėris and Bronys Raila, one of the leaders of Trečias Frontas. It should be noted that later, in 1940, Salomėja Nėris became one of the first Lithuanian collaborators with Soviet Russia. That is, in my opinion, Herbačiauskas’s indignation towards her should be considered fair.

38 For a long time, the main assumption was that Herbačiauskas had only gone back to Poland because he was allegedly offended by the size of the pension he had been allocated.

39 Keliuotis J. Mano atsiminimai apie Juozą Albiną Herbačiauską, Vincą Krėvė, Balį Sruogą ir apie buržuazinę cenzūrą. 2 February 1961: F31/44, LNMB RS.

40 Maksas Konradas’s café was one of the most famous cafés in Kaunas during that period and was the most popular meeting place for artists, politicians and journalists.

In a letter to the priest Juozas Tumas-Vaižgantas, the writer complained: “You will calm down after losing J. A. H., who suffered hardship all his life, and in his homeland could not find any place for neither work nor...”⁴¹ In his “word of farewell” published shortly before his departure, Herbačiauskas – faithful to his concern for more harmonious Lithuanian-Polish and Polish-Lithuanian relations against the background of the increasingly aggressive Germany and the increasingly insidious policy of Soviet Russia – emphasised his rejection of union ideas (Herbačiauskas, 1933, p.2):

I am a proponent of [Lithuanian and Polish] reconciliation. But this does not mean that a union should be formed. Today, the friendship between the two states is manifested in economic cooperation. It is necessary to become reconciled in the economic sphere, and then the Vilnius question will gradually work itself out. Only gradually.

After leaving for Warsaw in 1933, Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas never returned to Lithuania. He was invited by Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Józef Beck to give lectures on Lithuania at the University of Warsaw.⁴² In his rare articles from this period in the Warsaw press, there was increased criticism of the policies implemented by the then Lithuanian government. As he wrote to Professor Zdziechowski (Herbačiauskas, 1937):

What am I doing in Warsaw? [...] I am vegetating without complaint. I’m getting ready to go – I’m writing [...]. I don’t want to be a real lunatic who believes that someone will ever ‘discover’ Herbačiauskas like Norwid [...]. I understand what’s going on. I know that in 1938, Poland will go through the danger of losing its independence [...]. Did Solovyov manage to force Russia to come to its senses with his prophecy? Not really. I have no ambition to be a prophet and therefore I am silent. I believe in myself. That is my strength.⁴³

41 Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas’s letter to Juozas Tumas-Vaižgantas: VUBR, F 1-F384, l.44.

42 *Rytas*, 4 December 1933. No 27 (2832), p. 7.

43 Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas’s 1937 [?] letter to Marian Zdziechowski: PAN Archive, Warsaw.

The dates of his last articles (in the Polish press) are in 1938. Bohdan Paszkiewicz (2003) remembers the last years of his life in Warsaw: "I saw Herbačiauskas briefly during a visit to his relative. He stopped by and stood sad and pensive at the window, silently looking out at the street. After a modest greeting, he didn't say a word." According to Paszkiewicz, he had changed almost beyond recognition. It was difficult to recognise the once cheerful, elegant and playful Herbačiauskas – the life and soul of the party – in that incredibly gaunt man who had clearly been weakened from extensive starvation. Sometimes members of the intelligentsia who knew him would help him out, including Paszkiewicz's relative.

In 1944, Herbačiauskas lived through the Warsaw Uprising, after which the German army razed the city to the ground; both he and his wife only survived because they were evacuated to Kraków. In what were perhaps the last letters of his life to Father Mykolas Krupavičius, Herbačiauskas wrote in shock from Kraków:

Everything that was is now a graveyard: our little ambitions, and our hatreds, and our childish counter-defences – everything is a graveyard [...]. Lord, the tiny nation, Lithuania, is at risk of losing its life! I see revenge in the future – Lord, save Lithuania! The raging beast will not be tamed any time soon...⁴⁴

Herbačiauskas died in 1944 at the Helcel Nursing Home in Kraków and is buried in Rakowicki Cemetery. For many years, there was grass growing on his grave, with daisies here and there. In 2007, at a ceremony attended by President of Poland Lech Kaczyński and former President of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus, a new tombstone was unveiled on the grave of Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas.

As Professor Vytautas Kubilius (1996) rightly put it, he was a "man of two cultures". As Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas himself said, he was the son of "two homelands", equally loved. Or perhaps he was the stepson of a dramatic fate who was not understood in time?

44 Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas's letters to Mykolas Krupavičius, 1944. Cited from: Vosyliienė Česlova. J.A. Herbačiauskas. *Santaka*. 15 June 1996.

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DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.06



The Undoing of Culture. Witkacy's Tragedy of the End of the West

Abstract

The article Undoing Culture: Witkacy's Tragedy of the End of the West looks at Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz's historiographical conception of the condition of Western culture in the first half of the 20th century. The reading of the Polish artist's literary works – dramas, novels as well as his philosophical and aesthetic treatises and journalistic writings – runs parallel to the reading of works by contemporary thinkers, economists, political scientists and sociologists. This juxtaposition makes Witkacy's observations, diagnoses and visions more relevant. They thus become an important tool for understanding the phenomena occurring in the world around us. They are also extremely helpful in studying modernity as such. One of them is the concept of the undoing of culture that is repeatedly considered by the characters in Witkiewicz's works. As a caricatured embodiment of totalitarian ideas, it is an important point of reference for reflecting on the events of the past century, the effects of which are still being felt today. Witkacy took a keen interest in the condition of the West as a civilizational formation. He was convinced of its decline. The undoing of culture is supposed to delay it, while being one of the signs

Suggested citation: Winch A. (2023). The Undoing of Culture. Witkacy's Tragedy of the End of the West. *Trimarium. The History and Literature of Central and Eastern European Countries*, 2(2), 143–162.

DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.06

Submitted: 05.04.2023 / Accepted: 19.06.2023

of the impending and ultimate catastrophe. It will be a strange tragedy. For as a result of it, people will achieve the happiness they have dreamed of since the dawn of time. They will, however, cease to be human. And this is what Witkiewicz feared most.

Keywords

modernity, culture, West, liberalism, capitalism

Born in 1885 in Warsaw, writer, painter, and philosopher Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz is one of the most important artists of the 20th century, not only in Poland. His work is universal, and touches on problems relevant to all of Western culture in the period of modernity. Originating from local, Central and Eastern European experience, it diagnoses the condition of Latin civilization in general at a time of rapid transformations – political, ideological, and social – which it underwent in the first half of the 20th century. Their consequences are still being felt today. That is why it is worthwhile to read Witkacy (this was the pseudonym that Stanisław Ignacy used) attentively even now, at the beginning of the third millennium.

In this article, we will look at an idea that often comes up in the conversations and discussions of the characters in Witkiewicz's dramas and novels, namely the "undoing of culture." We will begin the analysis of this concept with *The Shoemakers* (1927–1934), Witkacy's last surviving play. The first character in the work to speak on the matter is the prosecutor Robert Scurvy. "Either the whole earth will transform itself voluntarily into a single elitist self-governing mass, which is almost improbable without a final catastrophe – and one that must be avoided at all costs – or culture must be undone," (Witkiewicz, 2004, p. 320) he announces, and just when it seems he is going to continue his thought, he abruptly drops it. "I have unbelievable chaos in my head," (Witkiewicz, 2004, p. 320), he confesses, and his monologue becomes filled with less relevant remarks that contribute little to what came before. Things are different with other characters. They are more concrete. "Undoing culture without losing spiritual heights – this is our *idée*."

(Witkiewicz, 2004, p. 346), says the most important of the titular shoemakers, Sajetan Tempe. A little later, however, one of his aides, the Second Apprentice, declares that as part of the undoing of culture, some of the machines will be destroyed and the inventors will face death by torture (Witkiewicz, 2004).

These are the rough outlines of some program. It places a levelling emphasis on something that we would instinctively, without strictly defining terms, ascribe to the achievements of civilization rather than culture. After all, the former is closely correlated with the values transmitted by the latter. This was proven, for example, by Max Weber, who analyzed the relationship between, as he put it, "capitalist ethics" and "the inner-worldly asceticism of Protestantism." "Only ascetic Protestantism," we read in *Economy and Society*, "put an end to the search for salvation outside the world, only it created the religious motives for seeking salvation precisely in an inner-worldly occupation" (Weber, 2002, p. 480). There are no, there cannot be, factories without churches, the low without the high, the mundane without the sublime, the corporeal without the spiritual, the transient without the eternal, the profane without the sacred. Without these encounters, sometimes occurring in fierce conflict, our world does not exist.

However, they must be subsumed under a specific system. Certainly not a republican one, because Witkacy saw this one as a catalyst dynamizing the crisis of the West, accelerating its collapse. To better understand the artist's views on this issue, let's cite the reflections of contemporary French philosopher Chantal Delsol (2018) on the "welfare state," which grows, in his words, out of the "ideology of happiness." This political construct assumes that "the only important questions" a person should answer "concern where to vacation and where to buy home appliances" (Delsol, 2018, pp. 134-135). Consequently, the questions that are most important from an existential point of view are pushed aside. They can be phrased as Witkacy did:

why am I this very existence and not another? in this place of infinite space and in this moment of infinite time? in this group of beings, on this very planet? why do I exist at all, I might not exist at all; why is there anything at all?... how could I not have existed at all before my beginning? (Witkiewicz, 2002, p. 12).

Witkacy may have penned these words more than a century ago, but his remarks fit remarkably seamlessly, and thus disturbingly, with the observations of Desol. Both would agree that by focusing on a “vacation spot” and “buying home appliances” instead of looking for answers to questions like “why is there anything at all?,” we lose a great deal of our human condition. According to Witkacy, we lose almost everything.

Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz was not familiar with the term “welfare state,” whose policies, according to Delsol, are responsible for this state of affairs. He did, however, come across the concept of democracy, whose product, let’s assume without much risk, the “welfare state” is. More often than not, Witkiewicz coupled the word “democracy” with the adjective “insipid”. And he called for its abolition. A radical abolition. “In order to stamp out the lie of democracy, one must not grieve for corpses, and who knows if the so-called Soviet executioners were not right to rage at the end to nip this abomination to the last embryo” (Witkiewicz, 1993, p. 128), he speculated in *The Only Way Out* (1931–1933), his last, unfinished novel. In *The Shoemakers*, Scurvy seems to be making similar plans. “To carry out his program of the bolshevized intelligentsia,” Princess Irina Vsevolodovna Zbereznitskaya-Podberezka explains the prosecutor’s schemes, “he must first kill any vigorous social movement. He will put everything in the drawers, but in the process, he will tear off the heads of half of you for the right measure” (Witkiewicz, 2004, p. 321).

There is some demonic logic in this. Since democracy is harmful, dictatorship can be salutary. “I’ve always dreamed that Hitler, the indisputably only guy with balls in Europe besides Stalin,” confessed Witkacy in *Unwashed Souls* (1936) “will accomplish a purely social springel, i.e.... will usher in a radically socialist system, i.e. a truly democratic one, without the hypocrisies of democracy to date, a system free of both kosherism and phalansterism” (Witkiewicz, 2016, p. 228). This happened in 1936, and three years later the armies of “the two indisputably only guys with balls in Europe” invaded Poland. Upon hearing the news, on September 18, 1939, Witkacy committed suicide. Thereby he took a rather clear stance against “socialism taken to its last limits” in the form of both totalitarianisms.

He had already hinted at the terrible alternative they offered, leaving humanity, as long as it still considered oneself humanity, no choice. "Fascism or Bolshevism," thought Putrycydes Tengier to himself in his novel *Insatiability* (1930), "ganz gleich, égal, wsio rawno! – Machine or cattle" (Witkiewicz, 1992, p. 108).

We can therefore spare ourselves the debate of whether Witkiewicz was a supporter of communism or Nazism, or both at the same time. He was certainly neither. It would not be amiss, however, to consider the undoing of culture in the context of these two ideologies. They were the esoteric backdrop for the agendas of political parties, which were essentially millenarian movements. Yuri Slezkine (2019), in his excellent three-volume work *The House of Power: The Story of the Russian Revolution*, calls the Communists an apocalyptic sect. According to him, the Bolshevik epiphany owes much to millenarian movements (Slezkine, 2019). Since 1934, in his view, the Soviet Union has been an "ideocratic (theocratic, hierocratic) state composed of nominal believers, controlled by a priestly hierarchy" (Slezkine, 2019, p. 635). The same is true of Nazism. It brainwashed the minds and soaked the souls of its followers, or rather adherents, in occultism. In *Occult Roots of Nazism*, Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke takes a closer look at the sick fantasies it spun. He also indicates how inspiring they were to the apostates of the Thousand-Year German Reich, headed by their "messiah," Adolf Hitler.¹ Michael Hesemann, in *Hitler's Religion*, in turn, stated that National Socialism was a "mythical-religious worldview" (Hesemann, 2011, p. 16). The NSDAP's activities, with the goal of uprooting its members from the Church and society, was instead compared to a sect's *modus operandi* (Hesemann, 2011, p. 230).

The substitution of religious truths with political-social-economic theories, accepted with superstitious naiveté by both the so-called elite and the masses, is one of the hallmarks of modernity. Witkacy's undoing of culture is a grotesque take on this phenomenon. It triggered, and unfortunately still triggers, what Peter Sloterdijk

1 See. N. Goodrick-Clarke, *Okultystyczne źródła nazizmu. Tajemne kultury aryjskie i ich wpływ na ideologię nazistowską*, transl. J. Prokopiuk [The Occult Roots of Nazism: The Ariosophists of Austria and Germany], Aletheia, Warsaw 2010, pp. 250–251.

(2013, p. 190) called “immanent zealotry.” What makes this zealotry different from religious zealotry is that it knows no mercy, it does not know how to be merciful. The extremism inherent in it has determined the shape and course of our epoch, which has been beguiled and led astray – and is still being beguiled and led astray, which must not be forgotten – by chiliastic dreams of the introduction of, as Étienne Gilson (2020, p. 288) put it, “the State of God on earth.”

The undoing of culture mocks these dreams, in an effort to dispel the aura of false sanctity surrounding them. There is undoubtedly subversion in this, there is humor, but there is also something more: a warning. Unlike the millenarian originals, which inspire perverse hopes and fanatical enthusiasm, the undoing of culture produces an “immanent fervor” out of a gnawing despair. It filled Witkiewicz, and with him his characters, with a vision of a future so near now that it is disturbingly present, at best the future of tomorrow. The insipidly democratized, more and more yesterday’s modernity evoked in them distaste, irritation, disgust, but only what was to come was, in their minds, the most terrible nightmare. All the more terrible because it was longingly awaited by humanity.

Here we come across perhaps the greatest ambivalence in Witkacy’s historiosophical thought. Being a full-blooded catastrophist, he was simultaneously an equally full-blooded utopian. He believed in the advent of an earthly paradise. Indeed, he was certain of its coming. This was pointed out by Małgorzata Szpakowska, who wrote that in the works of Witkacy

there is also a clear utopian aspect in the traditional sense of the word. A nightmare is depicted in the foreground and with much ingenuity but somewhere far beyond the nightmare one can see the shores of Happy Island. True, Witkiewicz... declared that he did not want to live on it; at the same time, however,... he insisted that he considered his own views and preferences to be anachronistic (Szpakowska, 1976, p. 198).

And he considered them as such, because he was convinced that only unperturbed by existential doubts or the need to search for the meaning of his existence, man will finally reach a state of permanent, absolute eudaimonia, which he had longed for from the beginning.

He will be happy. With the happiness of an animal, admittedly, but he will not feel the slightest discomfort because of it. On the contrary.

A very Witkacian, yet scientific description of such a comfortably organized world – explained to the last conundrum, perfectly ordered and smoothly and efficiently managed – was made by American sociologist and political scientist James Burnham in *The Managerial Revolution*. It is worth citing this work here if only because the researcher worked on it in 1940, that is, shortly after Witkiewicz's death. The analysis and conclusions it contains, therefore, refer to processes that Stanisław Ignacy was able to observe and which he described in his novels, dramas, essays and philosophical writings. It is not only for this reason that Burnham's insights should be given some more attention. For not only do they provide an interesting context for the theses and predictions of the author of *The Shoemakers*, but they also reveal a great deal about the mechanisms that shape the reality in which we have come to live: The order growing, as Witkiewicz believed, from the loss, or rather the voluntary relinquishment by our civilization of the ability to experience metaphysical thrills, which had been building the greatness of Western culture for centuries, and now, in modernity, were crumbling with it into banality, blandness, Gleichschaltung, and boredom.

This disintegration is taking place in the heat of violent change. Burnham (1958) pointed out that the political systems like Stalinism, Nazism and the American New Deal are hallmarks of this change. These programs, despite the not inconsiderable differences between them, have one thing in common; namely, they represent a stage in the transformation of capitalism into a managerial community (Burnham, 1958, p. 261). It develops where the economic structure... is based on state ownership of the major tools of production (Burnham, 1958, p. 93). It is managers who are in charge of them in tandem with bureaucrats. From this technocratic union emerges a world where instead of "individuality" the emphasis is on "the state," "private entrepreneurship" is replaced by "socialism" or 'collectivism," while freedom and "free initiative" give way to "planning" (Burnham, 1958, p. 204). The human being turns into a human resource. And his/her only task is to meet ever-growing demands for productivity. The community can be run – managers believe, according

to Burnham – more or less in the same way as one runs... a mass production factory (Burnham, 1958, p. 206). And this will be done according to the most efficient plan, with the maximum use of the world's resources and the most appropriate division of labor (Burnham, 1958, p. 188). It is interesting that Witkacy anticipated, as it were, such an order in *Farewell to Autumn* (1925). He described it as “a mechanism that will be no different from a hive or anthill” (Witkiewicz, 1992, p. 116).

Witkacy's characters try to oppose him. Or at least – since an effective defense against him is not possible – to delay the moment when he gets into top gear. Let's take a look at two such “brakes”: Leon Węgorzewski from the play *Mother* (1924) and Athanasius Bazakbal, the main character from the novel *Farewell to Autumn*. The young men ponder how to protect themselves and others from the impending catastrophe of the lot of insects that have nothing but their work. The two, though separately, come to similar conclusions. It is necessary to start by creating the right “atmosphere.” Węgorzewski calls it “social,” while Bazakbal calls it “collective.”² As such, it needs large-scale actions. Their goal will be to spread awareness of the impending threat. The information campaign must be carried out on a large scale. A huge scale. Leon speaks of no fewer than of “a billion people,” Athanasius refers to “every, absolutely each and every person.”³ This seems unrealistic, but the young men do not bother with such details in their heads that are red-hot with the passion of the messianic idea. They will realize it by “consuming the organization that has already been conquered”⁴ (Bazakbal), because “this is what we have the organization of the collective for, so as not to give in and kill in it what is harmful to the individual” (Witkiewicz, 2004, p. 188) (Węgorzewski). If these ideas were successfully put into practice, there would be a chance

2 See S.I. Witkiewicz, *Mother*, [in:] S.I. Witkiewicz, *Collected Works*. [Vol 7:] *Dramaty III*, op. cit., p. 189. Cf. S.I. Witkiewicz, *Farewell...*, op.cit., p. 417.

3 See S.I. Witkiewicz, *Mother*, op. cit. p. 188; cf. S.I. Witkiewicz, *Farewell...*, op. cit. p. 416.

4 S.I. Witkiewicz, *Farewell...*, op. cit. p. 415.

for the emergence of “new types of people”⁵ (*Farewell to Autumn*), “individuals of a new type”⁶ (*Mother*).

These are bold plans. They involve a rebirth of the human race, a *creatio* from the current humanoid *nihilo*, who is degenerating in an insipid democratic way, of a human being worthy of the name. The undoing of culture will help to achieve this goal. This is what Athanasius contemplates, coming down from the mountains to reveal his truth to the last people.⁷ Yes, this Witkacian Zaratustra or, if you prefer, Moses, is high on cocaine and booze. Sure, he has his wife Zosia Osłabędzka whom he drove to suicide (and their unborn son, Melchior) on his conscience. True, he indulged in the most licentious debauchery with his mistress Hela Bertz, he destroyed people in partnership with her, he headed for perdition at break-neck speed, but hard luck. “A prophet today can be a pig – it’s sad, but it’s a fact” (Witkiewicz, 2004, p. 190), says Leon, a mother-sucking vampire, a spy, a kept man of a suspicious millionaire and last but not least a pimp for his own wife. “Am I not perhaps,” wonders Bazakbal, in a way also for Węgorzewski, “a completely ordinary, small, common, sad pig, ‘un cochon triste’?” (Witkiewicz, 1992, p. 13).

Yes, they are utterly ordinary, small, common pigs. The harm they do does not originate in their condemnable power of arch-monsters, but rather in their palpable weakness, shallowness, spiritual unfulfillment and flawed character. “I am like some cartridge of a high grade brand of explosiveness, lying quietly in the meadow. But so far there is no cannon and there is no one to fire me” (Witkiewicz, 2004, p. 192), whines Leon. The novel’s narrator writes the following about Athanasius: “Like a cannonball fired from the mysterious abyss of being, he kept rushing to crash and shatter at the end of his life, with the same senselessness with which everything else was also rushing toward its end” (Witkiewicz, 1992, p. 15). These wet percussion caps from the family of eternal misfires, despite their awareness of their tinny nature, have the audacity to aspire to the role of saviors of humanity. To become them, they must artificially

5 S.I. Witkiewicz, *Farewell...*, op. cit. p. 418.

6 S.I. Witkiewicz, *Mother*, op. cit. p. 189.

7 S.I. Witkiewicz, *Farewell...*, op. cit. p. 417.

trigger their explosion. “In the end, someone had to sacrifice himself in order to do what I did just as Judas had to sacrifice himself in order to betray Christ” (Witkiewicz, 2004, p. 186), Leon lights his fuse with the flint of biblical comparison. “Now humanity needs a new type of prophet,” we hear in turn from Athanasius, “but one different from those socialists of the nineteenth century. Programmatic degeneracy needs to be metaphysicalized a little for the sake of charm, to demonstrate its transcendental necessity. No known religion will help here as something completely new must be invented” (Witkiewicz, 1992, p. 155).

We learn from the novel *Insatiability* that it has already been developed – this is something completely new. The wise men of China already took care of it. The troops of the Middle Kingdom are standing close to the Polish border, preparing to attack. Not so much against Poland, but against the West as such. However, this is not a conquest, or at any rate not just a conquest, but a rescue mission. For it was concluded in Beijing that the “mad whirlpool (not a string) of rising culture” that has been unleashed in the West, having accelerated sufficiently, will lead to the “overcomplication of life,” and this in turn will end in the “complete annihilation of mankind” (Witkiewicz, 1992, p. 554). To avoid this, the races must be crossed. An Aryan-Mongolian genetic mix will “revamp humanity,” at least according to the Chinese. Then “unknown possibilities” will open up.⁸ “Perhaps the undoing of culture,” ponder, moreover, the theorists from behind the Great Wall, already standing at the gates of Europe, “and stopping it in its tracks will prove necessary only for a certain period of time,” at which point it is crucial to “contain and channel the power of ‘wild capital, the main element of acceleration” (Witkiewicz, 1992, p. 555).

When it comes to “wild capital” and its subjugation, there is something to it, insofar as one treats it not as a “major element of acceleration” but of decay. In the economic realities of the West of the beginning of the last century, and the first part of the current century, capital, and decay, too, were linked to the so-called free market. The vigorous development of the latter, as Hungarian economist Karl

8 See S.I. Witkiewicz, *Insatiability*, op. cit. p. 555.

Polanyi (2010, p. 91) argued, “led to changes in the organization of society itself. Somewhere along the way, society became an appendage of the economic system.” Social relations, hitherto determining “economic motivations,” began to be determined by those motivations themselves,⁹ “soulless” creations focused solely on generating “an automatic increase in materially conceived wealth” took the place of the former institutions that used to order collective life (Polanyi, 2010, p. 261). They were the ones that made, according to Delsol, the choice of a “vacation spot” and the question of “buying home appliances” virtually the only stimulators of the intellectual-spiritual life of the Western person of the modern era. If we wanted to use Witkacy’s term for this style of thinking, the birth of which he observed with disgust and trepidation, we should choose the expression “Pyknic philosophy.” It is referred to in *The Shoemakers*, and its program is summarized briefly: “to eat, read, chatter, fool around and go to sleep” (Witkiewicz, 2004, p. 377). A follower of this Witkacian variant of the “ideology of happiness” that Delsol described, “has a radio, has a stylo, has a cinema, has a date, has a belly and a non-smelling, non-leaking ear, has everything you can dream of,” and at the same time “is vile guano, a disgusting abomination” (Witkiewicz, 2004, p. 307). And he doesn’t care.

But he could care. For if he gave it more thought, he would realize that the radio, stylo, cinema, date and fooling around are not the pinnacle of what a human being can achieve and should desire. One’s needs go far beyond consumption. Focused on it, we fail to notice that our freedom of choice is gradually being taken away from us. The fact that this is happening under the banners of liberalism does not make the situation any better. After all, this system has redefined the concept of freedom. It believes that freedom is not based on the virtue of self-restraint, as it used to be in ancient times and in Christianity, but the opposite: freedom is the unfettered satisfaction of one’s own needs, whims and fancies. To prevent it from turning into anarchy, someone, or rather something, must control

9 See K. Polanyi, *Wielka transformacja. Polityczne i ekonomiczne źródła naszych czasów* [The Great Transformation: The political and economic origins of our time], transl. M. Zawadzka, PWN, Warsaw 2010, pp. 66, 70.

it. This function – of relieving man of his personal duty to control himself and his lusts – is what liberalism attributes only to the state. “Ironically,” states American scholar on the issue Patrick J. Deneen, “when behavior is no longer socially regulated, by such anachronisms as tradition, custom, and decent upbringing, the state must constantly expand through rampant legislation and regulatory activity. The “empire of freedom’ grows at a rapid pace hand in hand with an ever-expanding area of state control” (Deneen, 2021, p. 12).

This, I believe, is what Witkacy warned against when he prophesied the doom of the individual. Replacing a parish priest, a parent, members of the immediate, neighborhood community with an official is no liberation. It is one of the most ruthless types of oppression because it depersonalizes people into petitioners, and abstracts their real problems into codes of conduct, applications, permits, files, and signatures. Bureaucracy has no conscience, it has procedures. Faced with sprawling bureaucracy, the average citizen, so still called for the sake of appearances, is simply helpless. So, he or she is at the mercy of the administrative machine and its masters. Leading liberals believe, writes Deneen, that we must weaken the energy of the people all the time, offering to satisfy their private affairs and then protect them through the distant actions of the elected plutocracy and the bureaucrats of the liberal state (Deneen, 2021, p. 249). As you can see, the authorities enjoy the greatest freedom in liberalism. This is seemingly nothing new, and yet this is a little sad. “Democracy,” noted Colombian philosopher Nicolás Gómez Dávila (2009, p. 80), “builds totalitarianism with liberal tools.”

Deneen, it is worth noting, would disagree with the South American thinker here. According to him, it is the other way around: it is liberalism that builds totalitarianism with democratic tools. Hence Witkacy’s fear of them.

Some consolation may be found in the freedom that the liberal order provides its subjects to pursue their desires, or, to use a less seductive phrase, to satisfy their consumer hunger. Buyers, who are consumed by it, chasing after sales, promotions, bargains and discounts, have a rather vague, if any, grasp of the rules governing the economy. For them, they are semi-magical, of the spells they know only credit and, of course, debit. Therefore, they completely

rely on the opinions of economists, stockbrokers, bankers and other priests of the free market in white collars instead of clerical collars. In this way, liberalism creates, as Deneen (2021, p. 44) puts it, a cage of economic necessity. Trapped in it, culture becomes synonymous with hedonistic titillation, emotional vulgarity and absentmindedness, where the whole is subordinated to the promotion of consumption, lust and entertainment. As a result, argues the American, superficially self-exaggerating, socially destructive behavior begins to dominate in society (Deneen, 2021, p. 78).

“The introduction of the free market,” therefore, to refer again to Polanyi, “not only did not eliminate the need for control, regulation and intervention, but increased their scope enormously. Administrators had to be constantly on guard to ensure the smooth operation of the system” (Polanyi, 2010, p. 167). “In essence,” Joseph E. Stiglitz adds in his introduction to the work of the Hungarian thinker, “truly free markets for labor and goods never existed” (Stiglitz, 2010, p. ix). “Wild capital” was not, then, such an untamed beast as a reading of the passage of *Insatiability* cited above would suggest. It was always a farmed, domesticated creature, let off the chain by its masters to pounce at their command and bite the throats of those they named.

This does not change the fact that, according to the Chinese of *Insatiability*, the formula has been exhausted. “The thing is as simple as the construction of our prayer mill: you don’t know how to govern yourselves and you are racially exhausted,” proclaims one of them, only to promptly add that for him and his fellows “politics doesn’t exist... as such: it is all about scientifically organized and regulated production. We will organize your life and you will be happy” (Witkiewicz, 1992, p. 599). This global reset will be done in order to maximize the efficiency of production. This is probably what “scientifically organized and regulated manufacturing” is supposed to accomplish. We are talking here, therefore, about a world similar to the one described in *The Managerial Revolution*. The undoing of culture will play an important role in its creation. Not as an end in itself, however. The representative of the Middle Kingdom quoted above sees it as “a springboard for a leap. What will be the possibilities of an economically well-off mankind,” he muses like Bazakbal

and Athanasius, “even we can’t predict. Maybe it will only be made happy, and all higher forms of creativity will have to disappear – tough” (Witkiewicz, 1992, p. 599).

Tough, but it’s also a bit of a shame. If the undoing of culture is a springboard, so to speak, it is a double-edged one. On the one hand – taking a better, more forward-looking view – people with heads that have been bastardized into insipid democratic heads and souls that have been transformed into fodder for “wild capital” are rising higher and higher. On the other hand – taking the worse view without any prospects for the future, facing the earth as hard as the verdict of the Spirit of History – people are still jumping on it, lower and lower. The former, the more former and the most former. The kind into which Western man metamorphosed in the declining phase of his existence, just before his final degeneration into a beehive or anthill.

An interesting list of such his decadent incarnations can be found in Witkacy’s *Janulka, Daughter of Fizdeika* (1923). It was compiled by Neo-Crusader Grand Master Gottfried Reichsgraf von und zu Berchtoldingen. He lists Matthias Korbova, Gyubal Wahazar and Hyrkan IV – characters from Witkiewicz’s earlier dramas: *Matthias Korbova and Bellatrix* (1918), *Gyubal Wahazar, or On the Passes of Nonsense* (1921) and *The Cuttlefish, or The Hyrkanian Worldview* (1922)¹⁰ – only to enumerate the errors of the dramatis personae he mentions. He justifies this on the grounds that “without mutual confessions, without complete sincerity of psychic titans that are absolutely equal to each other, there can be no real deformation of life” (Witkiewicz, 2004, p. 128). The implication is, firstly, that he himself considers himself one of these titans, or at any rate considers them to be important reference points for himself. Secondly, however, we learn that “psychic titans” deal with the “deformation of life.” In turn, they deform it in order to turn Being – cast by modernity in the vaneer role of a supporting character of the tertiary farce called everyday life – into the title protagonist of the tragedy of Existence they stage. Its catharsis consists, to borrow the term of Hyrcanus IV from

10 See S.I. Witkiewicz, *Janulka, daughter of Fizdejka*, [in:] S.I. Witkiewicz, *Collected Works*. [Vol. VIII:] *Dramas III*, op. cit. p. 128.

The Cuttlefish..., in arousing “Hyrceanic desire” (Witkiewicz, 1998, p. 442). It is not the grotesque whim it appears to be on the surface. It refers to one of man’s basic existential needs.

For “the human spirit,” as Stanisław Ignacy understood it, has always “aspired in a terrible struggle with the Mystery” to develop “a system of concepts.” Witkacy defined these in *New Forms in Painting and the Misunderstandings Arising Therefrom* (1919) as “the Absolute Truth.” The search for it was once “a necessity of the human soul in its highest manifestations” and resulted in “the greatest works” of the soul. All would be well, or at least not so bad, were it not for the fact that this time irrevocably passed. This happened because “the question of a self-governing society came to the fore.” And in it, “everyone: the strong and the weak, the wise and the foolish, could be happy, and the pursuit of Truth, which had no meaning in the course of making people happy, became socially worthless and even harmful” (Witkiewicz, 2002, p. 182).

“Hyrceanic desires,” defined in *The Cuttlefish...* as the desire for “the absolute in life” (Witkiewicz, 1998, p. 442), can be considered a call triggered by the hunger for “Absolute Truth.” “Psychic titans” practice their theater of spiritual shadows of the past among the inhabitants of a radically non-Hyrceanic world who are completely indifferent to such sensations. In a metaphysical stupor, without knowing it themselves, this pathetic excuse for a person toddles by the millions from the workplace to his or her home, stopping along the way to use mind-numbing pleasantries of the rotting remnants of Western culture. With such an audience, the enterprise of the “psychic titans” is doomed to fail. If not to get a bullet in the head.

This is a lesson sorely learned, for example, by Maciej Korbowa’s companions, massacred at his behest by the “representatives of happy humanity” in the play’s finale, when they could no longer escape from the enraged reality into even the wildest fantasies. Lush they are, indeed, frenetic and captivating. They wobble over their own fantasies, and eventually slip like a clown on a banana peel, over the laws that mercilessly govern the real world, and smash their dreamy heads against the gray ordinariness. Then the “psychic titans” sober up. They sober up to be sad. “Only one thought nags at me,” confesses Bercholdingen in *Janulka...* during one such moment of katzenjammer

clairvoyance, “that to create a situation like today’s we didn’t need as much as a state, with all the trade, industry and so on.... A small room in some third-rate hotel would have sufficed. Doesn’t the background outgrow what was supposed to appear on it?” (Witkiewicz, 2004, p. 147). Well, yes it does. But what else is left? “Recognizing the necessity of social transformation and the absolute impossibility of going back to the old days of the monstrous oppression of millions of the weak by a few of the strong, we cannot, however, turn a blind eye to what we are losing through our socialization,” wrote Witkacy in *New Forms in Painting...* “perhaps this realization,” he continued, not without gloomy hope, “will allow us... to experience our contemporary artistic work in a meaningful way, which, though it enters the realm of madness perhaps, is nevertheless the only beauty of our epoch” (Witkiewicz, 2002, pp. 164–165).

Case in point. If we are going to end up ignominiously, we are going to end up dwarfed, shallowed, progressively primitive, then at least let’s end up beautifully. That is, as beautifully as we can. Yet. Because soon it will be too late even for that.

Shortly after the provocative praise of the Bolshevik hatchetmen, *The Only Exit* provides us with a diagnosis of the current condition of the “fine arts.” As is Witkacy’s infamous custom, they have “died’ “before our eyes.’ Given the above, one must grow “not art = true literature” on their rotting carcass. It should give up lulling the audience with the drug of “pseudo-beautiful hypocritical specters of our reality.” Instead of programmatically cretinizing the audience with blissful visions of a banal existence devoid of any Mystery, it must show it all its “ferocity and brutality,” ‘this beautiful monstrosity indeed” of our, that is, people’s, existential situation which is terrible in its inscrutability. After all, it is from it that culture grew as an antidote to it. “Let all civilization retreat three-quarters, if its further progress is to go in the direction it is going now” (Witkiewicz, 1993, p. 129), that is, towards the bastardization of existence, making it a matter of the proper functioning of glands, the undisturbed course of physiological processes, the satisfaction of animal instincts, the “purchase of household appliances.”

Perhaps, then, the idea that interests us here, encompassing ideas of politics, economics and social life, is in its essence an aesthetic

concept, an item in the repertoire of the theater of “psychic titans”? We do find out, after all, that Athanasius Bazkbal, the main character of *Farewell to Autumn*, “composed his life subconsciously like a real work of art” (never mind that right afterwards the vigilant narrator adds, “but on a small scale, unfortunately”) (Witkiewicz, 1992, p. 54). He shares this trait with many of Stanisław Ignacy's other protagonists. A significant number of them, as Jan Błoński (2003, p. 232) argued, “want to shape their lives on the model of a work of art.” Wherein, by the way, they faithfully imitated their author. Or he imitated them. “The theater of life, continually created by Witkacy, seeps into art and vice versa. It is impossible, when considering his work, to avoid the mixing of these spheres,” said Wojciech Sztaba (1985, p. 165). With that said, as Maciej Soin (2002, p. 117) noted, “the adventures of Witkacy's theater characters are related to his historiosophy and can be explained by historiosophical considerations.”

Arranging the events in which his protagonists participate into grotesque sequences of absurd sketches, among which the undoing of culture is one of the jokes that are as bitter as tears, was therefore not only a purely formal gesture on Witkiewicz's part, stemming from the poetics he adopted, but also an attempt to capture as faithfully as possible the ghastly *Zeitgeist* of the era. It had been hovering over the West since the French Revolution in the form of a seemingly innocent, light mist of faintly democratic ectoplasm. The merry spirits of liberalism, progress, affluence, universal equality, liberty and fraternity were nimbly frolicking in it. Meanwhile, quite unethically, it morphed into a flesh-and-blood tyranny. Witkacy's despots from the ranks of the “psychic titans” are sometimes too easily dressed up in the costumes of its leaders whom we know from the history of the twentieth century. The generallisimuses and *führers* of the past century, and this century as well, who wanted, and still want, to grab the world by the face first and foremost. Witkacy's heroes, on the other hand, want, and *NEED*, to grab it by the arché. Like a drowning man by the razor. “Then, as usual, death will follow,” declares Hyrkan IV bluntly, “but coupled with that feeling that life has been lived on the heights and not in a foul social swamp, with art instead of morphine” (Witkiewicz, 1998, p. 450).

The art-morphine, most likely produced according to the recipe specified in *The Only Way Out*, i.e., “some shit specially fabricated for this purpose, products of our messed-up brains” (Witkiewicz, 1993, p. 129), anesthetizes its audience to the Mystery of Existence. The repertoire proposed by the “psychic titans” has the opposite, stimulating effect. It allows one to experience existential anxiety against the backdrop of a sense of the complete inscrutability and meaninglessness of existence, which is a human, arch-human experience. Power here is only a means, not an end. The more absolute it is, the more Hyrcanic it is, and therefore the more resilient in stimulating the lust for “the absolute in life.” It springs directly from “Absolute Truth,” that deepest longing of the human soul, its greatest inspiration and only source of nobility.

But what to do if it has dried up? Or, at best, it has become so muddled that something alive in it can only die? Every endeavor of the “psychic titans” – even back then, in Witkiewicz’s time, and in our time even more so – “is mere theatrical baloney.” To quote Ella’s mother, equating the fantastic kingdom of Hyrcanus to the ground under a mordant tingle-tangle for social waste: “a bunch of lunatics and drunks, corrupt and degenerate, set on pretending to be a state in the old style. Shame on you! Hyrcania! Simply ‘bezobrazje’ à la manière russe” (Witkiewicz, 1998, p. 454). And at the same time a tragedy à la manière Witkacy: a tragedy of the end of the West, taking place among the witz dell’arte. The undoing of culture is the motif around which several of its lazzi are played out, until the commedia becomes finita and pity and trepidation are left behind. Both are like empty laughter. After all, there will be no one to feel them. Who knows if there is no one now? Or is it just beginning not to be? It is good to end with hope. Witkacy did not have any.

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DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.07



Czech Interwar Literature: How It Was Affected by the Cultural and Philosophical Currents of Europe from the “Great War” to Munich 1938

Abstract

In this study, the author attempts to portray Czech interwar literature, i.e., the period from the beginning of the independent republic to its demise in September 1938 (the signing of the so-called Munich Agreement). He focuses on some necessary political and cultural-historical issues, such as the end of the “Great War”, the dissolution of Austria-Hungary, and the establishment of an independent republic. However, he pays the most attention to the form of literature (prose, poetry, and drama). In conclusion, he notes that literary life significantly diversified and branched out over the two decades. The system of literature deepened in terms of material and genre, but also in terms of ideological and ideological direction. While initially, literature and literary life were quite centralist (just like the original Austro-Hungarian Empire with its bureaucratic apparatus), over time there is a more pronounced differentiation and the emergence of new cultural centers, usually associated with larger cities. He recalls great literary figures (K. Čapek, J. Hašek, etc.) as well as authors from the circle of German-written works.

Suggested citation: Pavera L. (2023). Czech Interwar Literature: How It Was Affected by the Cultural and Philosophical Currents of Europe from the “Great War” to Munich 1938. *Trimarium. The History and Literature of Central and Eastern European Countries*, 2(2), 163–192.

DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.07

Submitted: 28.06.2023 / Accepted: 14.07.2023

Keywords

Czech literature, interwar period, main figures, cultural-historical overview

The research conducted by historians over time increasingly lead to the confirmation of one idea: the creation of interwar Czechoslovakia in 1918 was not a matter of course. The new republic was an artificial construct (see Moric 2023). The new republic emerged during the collapse of Austria-Hungary, at the end of the “Great War”, and in connection with the prevailing opinion on self-determination of nations within historical conferences held in French castles such as Versailles and Trianon.¹ The so-called Paris Peace Treaties completely redrew the maps of Europe and parts of Asia, Africa, and the Pacific Islands, and also imposed financial sanctions, especially on Germany and its allies.

Interwar Czechoslovakia became a multiethnic state, newly uniting several ethnic groups. Besides the most numerous group of Czechs and Slovaks, it also included significant minorities of Germans, Hungarians, Ruthenians, Jews, and others. This historical moment brought many new questions and problems to the entire spectrum of society, including ethnic, national, and cultural differences. It also brought a sense of independence, freedom, and faith in a better tomorrow in building an independent state after centuries of perceived oppression.

Interwar Czechoslovakia was a country with a very complex ethnic structure, encompassing Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Slovakia, and Subcarpathian Rus, each of these regions having its own unique linguistic, ethnic, and cultural characteristics. Language, literature, and culture were supposed to aid in building the idea of Czechoslovakia. The language issue was particularly poignant in

1 Data based on the 1921 census: Czechs and Slovaks made up 64.8% of the population, Germans made up 22.3% of the population, Hungarians made up 5.5% of the population, Ruthenians made up 3.4% of the population, Poles made up 0.6% of the population, Jews made up 1.3% of the population, other nationalities made up 2.1% of the population.

interwar Czechoslovakia. Czech and Slovak, although very similar, are two distinct West Slavic languages, each with their own grammar and vocabulary. From the very beginning of the new state (the republican system), the idea of a Czechoslovak language was promoted, which was supposed to consist of two “dialects” – Czech and Slovak. The aim of this idea was to support the creation of the Czechoslovak nation and strengthen the unity of the country, but in reality, it faced considerable resistance from various sides, especially in the border areas inhabited by the German-speaking minority. This minority had its own language and culture and often felt marginalized and discriminated against by the Czechoslovak majority.²

The ethnic and language issue thus played a key role in the politics and society of interwar Czechoslovakia and was one of the main factors that influenced its building and historical development. This phenomenon also influenced the name of some studies and publications that at the time promoted the idea of the existence of the Czechoslovak language and nation (cf. *History of Czechoslovakia*, *History of Czechoslovak Literature*, or even *Grammar of the Czechoslovak Language*). Many of the indicated happenings were foreseen by the first Czechoslovak president Masaryk, who asked intellectuals to publish works on the building of the country.

Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk played a key role in the process of creating and shaping Czechoslovakia. At the beginning of the “Great War” in 1914, Masaryk was 64 years old (born March 7, 1850) and had an impressive and almost completed scientific, academic, and political career behind him. He was appointed professor of philosophy at the age of 32 (in 1882 at Charles University), was a member of the Imperial Council, and pursued politics concurrently with his scientific career. He focused his scientific work on philosophical and ethical issues, mostly related to the present (his habilitation thesis dealt with suicide as a social phenomenon), and from

2 Some issues of the common state of the Czechs and Slovaks manifested themselves to varying degrees not only during the so-called First Republic, but much later as well. Specifically, the language issue – the Czech-Slovak question caused tension and was not formally and legally resolved until the end of the existence of the first Czechoslovak Republic (cf. Rychlík 2015).

a historical-philosophical and literary perspective, he evaluated Russia (in the extensive treatise *Russia and Europe*). He did not spare criticism of the Russian political situation and society, but he was able to express himself positively, especially towards the authorial poetics and legacy of some Russian classical authors, and he initiated the creation of a special Czech edition (the so-called Russian Library, introducing Czech readers to the main works of Russian classical literature by L. N. Tolstoy, I. S. Turgenev, F. M. Dostoevsky, D. S. Merezhkovsky, and others). Masaryk's "struggles for truth", in which he stood against anti-Semitism and injustices in the judicial system (the so-called Hilsner affair) or against alleged ancient monuments (the so-called manuscript disputes, i.e., disputes about the antiquity of the forgeries of the Manuscripts of Dvůr Králové and Zelená Hora), also contributed to his growing fame.³

The writer Karel Čapek expresses some realities from Masaryk's life and the "state-building" in the book *Hovory s TGM*, "Conversations with TGM" (it is a summary of nine years of "conversation," but also "silence," with the first Czechoslovak president, published between 1925–1935). The title of the book suggests that it is in the form of a conversation, an interview of an aging experienced politician with a relatively young writer and journalist. In reality, it is information from discussions and meetings with Masaryk, captured by Čapek's memory. It is a specific book: it allows insight not only into Masaryk's inner self, seen through the eyes of writer Čapek, but also into Čapek's own self, who has the opportunity to "write history" based on the collected information, creating another construct of history, in this case, a construct about the building of a new state and Masaryk's place within it. Čapek's book, still widely read and

³ These were disputes that were scientifically resolved (Jaroslav Goll, Jaroslav Vlček, T. G. Masaryk, etc.), but only seemingly so, as they often reappear in the Czech environment, in the further development of the Czech lands: after the establishment of Czechoslovakia, opponents of Masaryk took the manuscripts hostage, the manuscript issue reappears in the 1960s and 1970s (allegedly medieval monuments are therefore studied by criminalists at the Forensic Institute using modern forensic methods), and after the revolutionary events at the beginning of the 1990s, when a fairly powerful group of manuscript supporters (Julius Enders, Jiří Urban, etc.) even emerges and develops extensive publishing activities, including websites.

published, was followed by the unfinished *Mlčení s TGM*, “Silence with TGM”. As a whole, it allows one to concretize Masaryk’s views on world revolution, the organization of world order, democracy, patriotism, nationalism, freedom, philosophy, politics, literature, and so on. It is indispensable in understanding the personality of TGM (Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk).

Masaryk, together with his closest exiled collaborators – Edvard Beneš and Milan Rastislav Štefánik, was the leading figure of the Czech national movement abroad and sought to gain support for the creation of an independent state. He had to work with his collaborators alongside the resistance “at home” (the Maffie group), in the Czech lands, on political and military matters, especially the creation of an independent army. This army was formed on the battlefields of the “Great War” mainly from soldiers who refused to serve and fight in the uniforms of the Austro-Hungarian army, to which these soldiers as citizens of Austria-Hungary belonged (the so-called legionnaires). Many of the legionnaires were also poets and otherwise versatile writers or publicists. They testified and talked about their time serving in the First World War through their texts – during the war, after the end of the “Great War” after 1918, and later, when they finally returned to their homes (their journeys home usually lasted several months, took on the character of anabases, and were not without adventurous elements).

A large number of the legionnaires published texts before the war, usually as epigones of symbolist or decadent poets. This is also the case with Rudolf Medek, who during the “Great War” on the Eastern Front went over to the Russians and in 1916 became a volunteer in the Czechoslovak army, which was forming beyond the future Czechoslovakia. His war poetry is filled with pathos – the lyrical subject stands face to face with war, death, his own existence, and the genre returns to the ode and hymn, the oldest forms of the song (the cycle *Lví srdce* “Lion’s Heart”, first published in Irkutsk in 1919, later reissued in the independent republic). He became a model for other poet-legionnaires. After the end of the war and his return, he wrote verses influenced by vitalism. Later, he also devoted himself to drama and the novel, often again with legionnaire themes. Following in his footsteps were Oldřich Zemek and

Adolf Veselý, better known as a journalist. Other important legionnaires that should be mentioned include: František Langer, Josef Kopta, or František Kubka. Even among the legionnaires, there were discussions: mainly about disputes or differences between literary individualism and socialist views (represented by poets and writers of the youngest, avant-garde generation), between Slavism of the older type and the new type of international humanity, between conservative views and experimentation in literature and drama of the new, upcoming post-revolutionary and post-war era.

Traditionally, as is typical in times of national threat or war, writers usually begin to return to the past in their texts. They refer to positive, glorious, and symbolic historical epochs, older recognized literary figures, famous figures associated with national history, or try to express revolutionary ideas abroad. During the “Great War”, the literary public returned to living authors of the older generation (Alois Jirásek, Eliška Krásnohorská, etc.), who demonstrated the enduring values of the Czech nation and its bright figures with their historicism; their themes created analogies to the present, and therefore these authors became relevant again. It was about finding and discovering a certain national pathos.

During the “Great War”, Emperor Franz Joseph I died (1916) and his successor, Archduke Charles I, promised greater openness towards the individual nations of the monarchy and modernization of the empire, including changes to the outdated centralist system. However, his ministers understood the monarch’s changes differently: they essentially wanted to maintain the status quo. While one part of the Czech political and scientific public expressed loyalty to the ministers, another part of the representation took a radical stance and, in the spirit of the powers of the Entente (Great Britain, France, Russia, and Italy), sought national independence. It was about the practical application of the concept of “self-determination of nations”, later closely associated with American President Woodrow Wilson, who incorporated it into his “Fourteen Points” in 1918, which were to serve as the basis for peace negotiations and the arrangement of the world after the war. The fifth point of these principles directly called for a “free, open understanding based on mutually guaranteed political self-determination of nations”, which

means that each nation should have the right to decide its political fate (see the speech “Fourteen Points”).⁴

Especially at the instigation of the director of the National Theatre in Prague and playwright Jaroslav Kvapil, a petition or statement of Czech writers was created: a document often referred to as the manifesto of Czech writers. The document was published in the agrarian newspaper *Večer* on May 17, 1917, and it was a significant step towards the independence and sovereignty of Czechoslovakia: writers and intellectual elites condemned the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and expressed support for an independent Czech state. One of the main signatories of the document was writer Alois Jirásek, the author of numerous historical novels, short stories, and dramas, which contributed to shaping the Czech national identity. His legacy was also used and politically abused in later periods.⁵ Jirásek’s relationship with Masaryk evolved over time. It is undeniable that Jirásek valued Masaryk (it was indeed Jirásek who welcomed President Masaryk – “The Liberator” – at Prague’s main train station in November 1918). Masaryk also spoke positively about Jirásek’s work and activities. This is best documented by a seemingly trivial detail: on the occasion of Jirásek’s seventieth birthday, Masaryk had his public congratulations published in the press, in which he wrote among other things:

You taught people to read with interest, to think and to ponder, that is to say, you paved the way to freedom. You affected their feelings, strengthened and fortified their will, the source of determination and brave deeds. For that, every Czech and Slovak heart is filled with gratitude to you, Master Jirásek...

4 The Entente countries used the idea for various purposes and selectively. On the one hand, the self-determination of nations provided an ideological basis for breaking up the empires of the Central Powers, such as the Ottoman Empire and Austria-Hungary. On the other hand, the principle of self-determination of nations was suppressed (especially in the Middle East) in favor of maintaining colonial control. Therefore, it has its supporters (it is a fundamental principle of democracy and human rights) and opponents (it leads to ethnic conflicts, instability of the political system, etc.).

5 The document was signed by 222 writers and intellectuals, whose literary, social, and political paths later varied significantly (including Jakub Deml, brothers Josef and Karel Čapek, Viktor Dyk, Jindřich Šimon Baar, Marie Majerová, Zdeněk Nejedlý, and others).

A whole range of representatives of the historical public expressed their opinions (publicly and privately) in the “ideological ferment”. The “dispute about the meaning of Czech history”, traditionally referred to as the tension between the supporters of the concept of Czech history from the pens of T.G. Masaryk and Josef Pekař, essentially a representative of modern Western-style Protestantism on the one hand and Czech conservative Catholicism on the other, has actually remained unfinished throughout the 20th century (see Havelka 1995–2006).

It is clear how not only writers, but also historians, along with intellectual elites, showed increased interest in political matters. Scientific fields usually resist politicization in everyday social operations: however, at the end of the First World War, several wishes and desires came together: the desire to end the monarchy, to end the raging war, to emancipate the entire spectrum of Czech society, and to catch up with the developed Western world. The politicization of scientific and cultural-social life (including literary) will be one of the typical features of the interwar era of the First Czechoslovak Republic.

From the beginning of the 20th century, foreign philosophical currents and literary influences had a significant impact on the Czech scientific, cultural, and literary environment. These “currents” already traditionally came to Central Europe from the French environment, especially vitalism in the form of Henri Bergson’s philosophy (“*élán vitale*”). American pragmatic philosophy (particularly William James and Charles S. Peirce), which found its advocate in Masaryk and his collaborators, also emerged, specifically as a reaction to illusionism and relativism. It gained popularity through the practical application of ideas and the evaluation of the truthfulness of concepts based on their practical consequences. Vitalism was viewed as a response to the mechanistic and materialistic view of the world by a number of literary authors (František Halas, Karel Čapek, etc.).

Although earlier impressionism, with the capture of immediate impressions and moods through light, color, and atmosphere, preferring landscape and everyday life, was already past its zenith, futurism – the extreme consequence of literary impressionism

with the simultaneous capture of perceptions and impressions, however, preferring speed, progress, and rejection of tradition – newly appears in the Italian and French environment and from there in other European countries. In the Czech environment, it found its application within the avant-garde movement Devětsil, especially within the framework of Poetism (J. Seifert, V. Nezval, etc.). Marinetti's ideas were received ambiguously and somewhat reservedly in the Czech environment. On the one hand, his celebration of modernity and technology inspired a number of Czech artists, on the other hand, his aggressive and confrontational style, as well as his political views (Marinetti was, for example, a great admirer of Mussolini and fascism), were often criticized in the Czech environment.

The Unanimist movement also permeated many areas, including literature, as did the results of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis and his students and followers, and the original visual art direction of Cubism with its premises. The concept of Unanimism was described by its founder, French poet and writer Jules Romains, as an emphasis on collective experience, community, and what unites people, rather than what divides them: it pointed to the emergence of a collective soul. Under its influence, large collective novels were created, focusing on the depiction of various groups and communities and on portraying their shared experiences and emotions. A suitable example might be Romains' novel cycle "Les Hommes de bonne volonté" (*Lidé dobré vůle*, "Men of Good Will"), which became popular in the Czech environment. Some Unanimist ideas appear in Czech interwar prose, for example in the works of Karel Čapek, who often emphasized the importance of solidarity and mutual understanding among people, which can be understood as being influenced by Unanimism. However, it never became as strong and dominant a direction in the Czech environment as Cubism or Surrealism.

The influence of translated literature is usually forgotten. However, when discussing the beginning of the interwar period of Czech culture and literature, one cannot overlook the anthology of translations from new, modern French poetry. Some authors of modern French poetry were known in the Czech environment through

the translations of Jaroslav Vrchlický, but his translations were considered archaic. A new anthology of modern French poetry was compiled by the linguistically gifted Karel Čapek (*Francouzská poezie nové doby*, “French Poetry of the New Age”, 1920). Young authors looked up to it, and in it they sought inspiration for their literary art. Similar anthologies were created more during the post-revolutionary and post-war period, not only from French literature. Newer selections from French poets were published in the collections of Hanuš Jelínek and Jindřich Hořejší, Adolf Felix from Italian poets, Otakar Vočadlo establishes the “Standard Library” and introduces American authors (J. Galsworthy, S. Lewis, Th. Dreiser, G.K. Chesterton, etc.). Even before the “Great War”, Scandinavian, Russian, and Polish literature were popular among readers.

While the political scene was oriented towards this foreign, especially French, environment under the influence of the war situation and the victory of the Allied powers, science, philosophy, along with cultural and literary personalities, did not resist continuing to explore the German and Austrian “ideological worlds”. The ideas about the decline of Western civilization finally resonated with people not only at the time when Oswald Spengler published his fundamental work – it is a problem that is still current and Spengler belongs to analyzed scholars to this day. There is no doubt that Spengler’s conception of the development of civilizations was influenced, like many other fields, including literary history, by the influential theory of Charles Darwin, from who he picked up cyclical alternation of history (in Darwin’s species) with stages of origin, maturation, golden age of maturation and decline.⁶ The German philosopher and historian published his work *Zánik Západu* (“The Decline of the West”, “Der Untergang des Abendlandes”) in two volumes in 1918 and 1922. According to Spengler, the West, or Western civilization, is in the late, decadent phase of its cycle – in a stage he called “civilization”, which for him was synonymous

6 One only needs to look at history or literary history textbooks, for example, to see how the explanation is structured and to take a closer look at the titles of some chapters („peak” of literature, „golden era” of literature, etc.). Does the development of literature really proceed so unequivocally and analogously to the evolution of animal species?

with inevitable and unstoppable decadence and decline. Spengler's ideas must have resonated with many people who experienced the horrors of the "Great War" and the social changes that occurred during and after the war.

Undoubtedly, influences can be found in the creative work of Karel Čapek, where categories such as "humanity", "civilization", "decline" can be found in his works. This does not mean that Čapek agreed with pessimistic views on the future of Western civilization – his vision was largely optimistic and his conception of man (especially the "small", "little" man) was permeated with humanism.

One of Spengler's critics was the leading Czech literary critic F.X. Šalda, who nevertheless acknowledged that Spengler's views constitute a significant discussion contribution to the future of Western civilization. Spengler was rejected mainly for excessive pessimism and fatalism, which at that time was in conflict with the post-war situation – it promised the building of a new world, faith in progress and the possibility of society improving.

The results of the work of psychoanalysts found greater application – both direct and indirect – in the Czech cultural and literary environment. It was not just about the categories that Freud and his followers worked with (consciousness, preconsciousness, subconsciousness, Id, Ego, Superego, etc.). Excessive pansexualism, which one of his students, Carl Gustav Jung, criticized Freud for, as well as the emphasis placed on dreams and primal experiences, found application in the poetry of surrealists, as well as in the prose of Marcel Proust and James Joyce, who were translated, interpreted and imitated in the Czech environment. Psychoanalysis found its *raison d'être* most notably among the surrealists (in the poetry of Vítězslav Nezval or Toyen).

German Expressionism arrived in the Czech environment somewhat belatedly. While in Germany, in connection with Expressionism, they speak directly of the "Expressionist decade" in the first decade of the 20th century, in the Czech environment, there was a strong emphasis on the negative and tragic aspects of human existence and the effort to emotionally and subjectively depict reality, to prefer expression over impression, to express oneself against reality with heightened emotionality, with the aim of reviving values suppressed

and silenced by war and civilization. These values are displayed in the texts of authors who debuted before the “Great War” and continued to create during the war, or published their texts after the war, even though these works were stuck in a certain time and space. One of them was the poet and prose writer Fráňa Šrámek, an author with a strong emotional charge and a tragic view of the world. Some of his collections (*Splav* “Weir”, 1916) or dramas became models and inspirations for young authors in the future (for example, for Jiří Wolker, especially in his debut *Host do domu* “Guest to the House”, 1921).

However, it is necessary to emphasize that Šrámek was not a pure Expressionist in the sense that his work was fully in line with this artistic direction. His work is influenced by a number of other artistic trends, including Symbolism and Impressionism, and his poetry is often considered transitional between older and more modern forms. At the same time, however, it features some characteristic elements of Expressionism, such as intense emotionality and the tendency to depict tragic and negative aspects of human existence. Therefore, he is sometimes referred to as an author who is influenced by Expressionism, without creating fully within its framework.

Marxist literary criticism referred to the authors under the name “anarchist troublemakers”, which was systematically introduced into literary history by František Buriánek, a Marxist literary historian and critic, author of a number of monographs on Šrámek, Dyk, Gellner and Bezruč. Another poet whose work intertwines elements of expressionism with older strains of impressionism and symbolism is Karel Toman. His poetic oeuvre is marked by a profound sense of solitude and alienation, capturing a diminished universe; yet, within his verses, one can find experiences of collective hope, a desire for justice, and the capacity for self-sacrifice.

The result of the preceding interpretation should not be the conclusion that the Czech cultural and literary environment was dependent only on foreign philosophical and literary currents and directions, which were more or less absorbed on Czech soil, mixed with domestic literary traditions, and contributed to the creation of new and original art. Modernism particularly aimed at and emphasized novelty, innovation, originality and a certain “completeness”,

as opposed to postmodernism (in *re-writing* or *remaking*) and seriality. It is also necessary to mention the artistic association founded in 1920 – Devětsil. It would certainly not be an overestimation to consider the founding as one of the most important avant-garde movements in Central Europe in the interwar period. Devětsil was founded in response to cultural and social changes after World War I and wanted to be part of the international avant-garde movement.

The movement had a great influence on the development of Czech literature, visual art, architecture, and film in the 1920s and 1930s. Its name “Devětsil” comes from the Slavic name for the petasites plant, which symbolizes strength and growth. The name was chosen to reflect the dynamism and energy of this movement, and basically the whole new post-revolutionary and post-war stage. Devětsil was created as a reaction to traditional artistic forms and sought a radical renewal of art. Individual members of the movement were definitely inspired by various avant-garde directions, including Cubism, Futurism, Constructivism, and Dadaism. Nevertheless, they sought to create original and authentic artistic forms that would express the specific social and cultural conditions of the new Czechoslovakia. Its members advocated for the integration of art with life and wanted art to become part of the everyday life of ordinary people. They held the view that art should serve social purposes and should be accessible to all: they therefore adhered to the ideas of the socialist revolution and collectivism, defended against manifestations of civilism and formalism, in fact, on the contrary, they were close to the ideas of Marxism and communism. The program of the association went through several developmental phases, which reflected changes in avant-garde thinking at the time.

The original artistic union Devětsil was built on the legal subjectivity of the association with firm statutes and enforceable conditions for its members. Although the first chairman was the prose writer and playwright Vladislav Vančura and the second was the director Jindřich Honzl, the role of the *spiritus agens* of the association was played throughout its existence, until 1930, by Karel Teige. Among the main representatives of the movement were poets Jaroslav Seifert, Vítězslav Nezval, the already mentioned writers Karel Teige

and Vladislav Vančura, as well as the painter and graphic artist Toyen (under the real name Marie Čermínová).

Devětsil went through several phases. The first phase (1920–1923) was characterized by the search for new artistic forms and experimentation with various styles, filled with the proclamation of a theoretical program, but also the promotion of so-called proletarian art. In the second phase (1923–1925), the movement turned to Poetism, which was defined as a joyful and optimistic artistic direction. During this time, members of Devětsil also engaged in the creation of leftist and proletarian artistic works: these were not only literary expressions, but also theatrical, architectural, or painting. The third phase (1926–1930) was characterized by conflicts between various groups within the movement and the gradual fading of its influence.

In the first phase, authors creating in the spirit of so-called proletarian literature were primarily inscribed in the awareness of the reading public and in literary history. The central place among them is occupied by poets Josef Hora, Jindřich Hořejší, and especially Jiří Wolker (1900–1924), who initially began to write in the style of decadents in his first attempts, but at the same time tried to use various traditional literary forms (ballad, short story, fairy tale, drama, sketch, program article). He came from a bourgeois family from Prostějov, significant for his transformation from a Catholic young man to a spokesman for the collective – the proletariat. Wolker's work is known for its Franciscan detail and delicate interest in the minutiae of the life of an "ordinary" person: with almost childlike joy. Wolker discovers the world of simple things, which according to him are small miracles. His verses are full of optimism, "enchantment from life" (vitalism) and hope for a better future. Vitalism, and the dream paradise on earth that grows out of it, is even stronger than the class differences that Wolker reflects. The verses are formally close to songs, children's rhymes or folk songs. This may be the reason for his popularity with readers, but later mixed reactions from critics. He was most prominent in two poetry collections – *Host do domu* "Guest to the House" and *Těžká hodina* "Trying time".

After his premature death from tuberculosis, members of Devětsil published an article in 1924 called *Dosti Wolker!* ("Tired of Wolker" in

the magazine *Pásmo*).⁷ In it, they condemned Wolker's verses as well as those who overestimated his poetry. On the contrary, there were those who appreciated and defended Wolker's pieces and creative gestures. It can be said that it was a time of "generational discussion" about the form of contemporary art. Artuš Černík, František Halas and Bedřich Václavek were all significantly involved in it. In the discussions about Wolker, other prominent poets of his generation were named: Konstantin Biebl, Jaroslav Seifert, and Vítězslav Nezval. Some literary historians even believe that it would be more appropriate to talk about the Taiga generation than the Wolker generation.

The theses of proletarian literature did not appear only among poets (J. Hora, J. Wolker), but also in prose, drama, or journalistic genres. For example, Marie Majerová, a far-left oriented author of novels, short stories, dramas, feuilletons, and literature for young people, published the novel *Nejkrásnější svět* "The most beautiful world", with a female character longing for self-determination and a plot set in various environments, from the countryside to industrial Prague. Ivan Olbracht's reports (*Obrazy ze soudobého Ruska*, "Images from Contemporary Russia") can also be attributed to the journalism of proletarian literature. The over-lyricism of contemporary poetry was probably also felt by the central author of proletarian art Jiří Wolker: he tried to bring a timeless confession, especially in ballads with social themes (*Balada o nenarozeném dítěti*, *Balada o očích topičových*, *Balada o námořníku*, etc.) and in fairy tales. While in the ballad he followed the Czech ballad tradition started by K.J. Erben, J. Neruda and P. Bezruč, in fairy tales he followed the tradition of the modern artificial fairy tale created by H. Ch. Andersen. His fairy tales are even more civil and radical, without so-called "easy time and space" or typical fairy-tale motifs and the supernatural.

7 In the unique and materially rich anthology "Avantgarde Known Unknown", compiled by a team of authors led by Štěpán Vlašín in the 1960s, Vladimír Doštal, a Marxist literary critic and historian, distinguishes five waves of critical disputes or discussions about the form of literary art in the introductory study. The first wave runs until 1924 and primarily concerns proletarian poetry. The second wave, from 1924–1925, discusses the transformation of proletarian art into Poetism, and the discussion opens up questions about the relationship between art and Marxism and the revolutionary movement.

Some poets of the generation were enchanted by the even older and more experienced J.S. Machar, the leading modernist poet of the 1890s, but the young authors debuting after the “Great War” were more impressed by the translations of French poets by the young Karel Čapek (most notably, the ‘divine rascal’ A. Rimbaud, followed by G. Apollinaire with his notable poem *Pásmo* ‘Zone’ from the collection “Alcools”). Not only Wolker, but also Vítězslav Nezval, followed the models of “pásmo” in the 1920s. Nezval considered poetry to be “a wonderful magician” (the collection *Podivuhodný kouzelník*): the magician comes into the world to reveal the exciting beauty of life to people, including the revolution. Nezval searches for an anchor of life and creative support; he later finds it in the idea of social revolution and in the arms of the Communist Party, which he joins. Socialism is for him a certain analogy to the robust era of the Renaissance.

Like Nezval, poets Konstantin Biebl or Jaroslav Seifert (1901–1986), the only Czech laureate of the Nobel Prize for Literature, transitioned from proletarian poetry to Poetism. Seifert himself in his thanksgiving speech to the Swedish Academy recalled that he received the prize for the entire generation. Joy of life, playfulness, language invention can be found in his collections *Na vlnách TSF* “On the Waves of TSF” (1925), *Slavík zpívá špatně* “The Nightingale Sings Badly” and *Poštovní holub* “The Postal Pigeon” (1929). In the last two, however, playfulness is overshadowed by nostalgia, memories and the passage of time. The Swedish Academy in 1984 particularly appreciated his “rich and diverse work, which with fearless free-thinking celebrates humanity”. Konstantin Biebl (*S lodí, jež dováží čaj a kávu* “With the Ship that imports Tea and Coffee”, *Nový Ikaros* “The New Icarus”, etc.) and especially the work of Vítězslav Nezval (*Pantomima* “Pantomime”, *Akrobat* “Acrobat”, *Edison*, etc.) should also be attributed to the period of Poetism.

With the coming economic and geopolitical crisis, in the 1930s, Nezval loses the immediacy, the playfulness of the original Poetism, the world of sensual beauty, exotic distances, the beauty of the modern metropolis; in the atmosphere of the time, they would already sound false. Echoes of Poetism can still be found in Nezval in the 1930s, but more often these are manifestations of Surrealism

(these are Nezval's collections *Žena v množném čísle* "Woman in the Plural Form", *Praha s prsty deště* "Prague with Fingers of Rain", *Absolutní hrobař* "The Absolute Gravedigger", etc.).

The playfulness of Poetism was also manifested in contemporary prose, especially in Vladislav Vančura (novella *Rozmarné léto* "Capricious Summer", 1927, also successfully filmed, *Markéta Lazarová*, *Konec starých časů* "The End of Old Times", etc.). He worked significantly with language, far more significantly than with narration, as if he wanted to "revive the word". In a time of growing interest in structuralism, Vančura thought about the functionality of language in relation to the chosen genre, character, social environment, etc. He went so far as to create a distinctive, specific literary language, which is unmistakable and characteristic just for Vančura's characters, his prose, dramas, and film scripts.

At the opposite ideological pole from Vančura stood Jaroslav Durych, an author of lyric poetry grounded in a profound understanding of theory, but primarily a short story writer, novelist, and author of religious plays in the style of Spanish Baroque drama. His interpretation of Czech religious history was distinctly Catholic, as can be seen, for example, in his novels set during the Thirty Years' War and the Baroque period (such as the larger Wallenstein trilogy *Bloudění* "Wandering", 1929). Some of his prose is highly lyrical, but the title of the greatest poet of Czech prose is often attributed to Jan Čep, who primarily distinguished himself as a profound short story writer (*Dvojí domov* "Double Home", 1926; *Zeměžluč* "Bitterness", 1931).

The work of spiritually oriented authors grows out of their religious faith and their understanding of humanity and the world, both in content and expression. Jan Zahradníček was an exceptionally talented poet and translator, whose poetry to a large extent anticipates religiously existentialist works (with motifs of death, nothingness, decay, loneliness, etc.): as seen in his collections *Pokoušení smrti* "Death's Temptation", *Jeřáby* "Cranes", *Žiznivé léto* "Thirsty Summer". Other authors who can be classified within the spiritual line include František Lazecký, Josef Kostohryz, and Bohuslav Reynek.

The language of literature between the two wars changed significantly compared to the previous literary language. Not only is the literary standard language used, as it is often confused with

the language of colloquial Czech, but it is also enriched with new expressions from the field of military (especially in legionnaire literature), technical (advancements in science, technology, and crafts), or sports-related vocabulary, as seen in prose with sports themes, for example, in E. Bass's (*Klapzubova jedenáctka*, "Klapzub's Eleven"). Bass's novel is considered a piece of classic Czech humorous literature. The story takes place in the fictional village of Dolní Košíkov, where a poor Czech cottager Klapzuba trains his eleven sons for football. The eleven gradually become so good that they make it to the highest Czech competition and even win a match against England, which is a huge success in the context of the time, when football was considered a typically English game. In addition, the book also describes other aspects of life in a Czech village in the 1920s and also emphasizes ethical principles (sense of fair play).

Similarly to Bass, K. Čapek and other authors also liked the "small", "minor" Czech person as the main character. The connection of writing activity with journalism also influences the language: this is the case not only with Bass, Čapek, but also with K. Poláček, I. Olbracht, M. Majerová and others. Many authors, for example Poláček, were even criticized by colleagues that they should have two tables: one literary and one journalistic, because the difference in styles was blurred and unaffected by criticism. It should be reminded that in the time between the two wars some book genres were created in installments just in daily or weekly newspapers: novels often came out in installments under the line or in a certain place in the newspapers, only later were the parts included in the wholes (for example, the novel-feuilleton).

Alongside avant-garde "games with language" and the literary system in general, a pragmatic line is noticeable in Czech literature between the two wars. This includes Karel Čapek (1890–1938) and a group of authors from his circle. He became one of the most significant Czech writers of the 20th century, known at home and in the world for his novels, short stories, plays, and essays. His work is widely recognized for its intellectual approach, wit, and ability to deal with deep philosophical questions. Perhaps the most striking of the contemporary philosophical directions was pragmatism, which developed in the 19th and 20th centuries, primarily in the

USA. The truth or value of any idea or concept depends on its practical usefulness and effectiveness, so pragmatism emphasizes the practical consequences and functions of ideas, unlike abstract principles or doctrines. Therefore, the pragmatic approach allowed Čapek to look at the practical aspects of life, solve specific problems, analyze social and cultural issues from a practical perspective. Čapek for that reason placed great emphasis on practical, moral, and social issues: he asked questions probing the essence of human life, thought about the role of technology, the nature of evil, and the possibilities and threats that the future brings. Čapek also often emphasized the value of human labor, social justice, and human solidarity. His work gained worldwide acclaim with the drama *R.U.R* (1921), in which the word robot (invented by his brother Josef) appears for the first time for artificial workers created by people for the purpose of performing work (robot probably from the old word “robota” means work). Robots are capable of learning and improving, during the play they become self-aware and independent, which leads to a rebellion and eventually the extinction of mankind. This concept undoubtedly influenced on the development of science fiction, artificial intelligence (AI), or modern robotics.

Fear for the fate of man, and more broadly the fate of mankind, is also manifested in other Čapek’s works (the novel *Krakatit*, in response to the growing fascism and Nazism in Europe, then *Válka s mloky* “War with the Newts” or the plays *Bílá nemoc* “The White Disease”, and *Matka* “Mother”). They take the form of allegorical-utopian, yet contemporarily felt ideas and moods: Čapek advocates for the defense of democratic freedoms and rights.

The entire group of writers and cultural workers around Karel Čapek and his brother Josef, a poet and more importantly a Cubism-influenced painter, was popular and active in literature. This group also included the publicist Ferdinand Peroutka and other intellectuals and journalists from *Lidové noviny*, in which Čapek published his texts almost daily: Karel Poláček or Eduard Bass. They are commonly referred to as the “Friday Men”. Originally, they used to meet on Thursdays, but later they met regularly on Fridays at the Čapek brothers’ villa. Sometimes the First Republic President T.G. Masaryk also visited, as well as left-leaning writers such as Vladislav Vančura or Ivan Olbracht.

The round table, a group of ideologically diverse individuals hosted by Karel Čapek in his Prague villa, was indeed a social center for many significant Czech intellectuals and artists in the interwar period. Although it was a relatively small group, its members had a large influence on Czech literature, art, and public discussions in the interwar period. The discussions and exchanges of views that took place during these meetings influenced many works and views expressed by these intellectuals in their works. Many of them did not survive World War II (Čapek died under the pressures of the reaction already at Christmas 1938; his brother Josef, journalist Ferdinand Peroutka and humorous prose writer Karel Poláček were taken to German Nazi concentration camps in 1938).

Left-leaning authors have already been mentioned. Some were influenced by the idea of a world revolution, others were directly inspired by the artistic principles and doctrines of so-called socialist realism, which came to the Czech lands from the Soviet Union. These left-wing concepts were significantly implemented in the social novel: by Marie Majerová (the novel chronicle *Siréna* “Siren”, *Havířská balada* “Miner’s Ballad”, etc.), Marie Pujmanová (*Lidé na náměstí*, “People at the Crossroads”), Jiří Weil (*Moskva-hranice*, “Moscow-Border”). In Czech literary history, the term “socially engaged prose” was coined specifically due to the work of these authors and others (Jiří Weil, Karel Nový, Helena Malířová, Ivan Olbracht, Božena Benešová, Karel Konrad, etc.).

A very significant part of Czech interwar literature is psychological literature. It draws from a contradictory time – both post-war development and interwar events, foreshadowing the second existential fall). The novels and short stories of Egon Hostovský (*Případ profesora Körnera*, “The Case of Professor Körner”, *Žhář* “The Arsonist”, *Danajský dar* “The Danaid Gift”, etc.) were artistically breakthrough and innovative, while Jaroslav Havlíček’s novels (*Neviditelný* “The Invisible”, *Petrolejové lampy* “Petroleum Lamps”) tended towards naturalism. Among the female authors of this line, the prose of Jarmila Glazarová (*Roky v kruhu* “Years in a Circle”, *Vlčí jáma* “Wolf Pit”, *Advent*) stands out.

Many authors benefited from their journalistic craft: this is the case of Karel Poláček or Eduard Bass – in *Lidové noviny* they made

a living writing barrel stories and other articles with themes from the criminal milieu. If it was not about crime, it was about explaining a mystery or a mystery (this is also the case with K. Čapek and his detective stories).

They introduce – against the rural theme in the literature of the second half of the 19th century – the theme of (small) towns and the city hero (K. Poláček, *Okresní město* “District Town”). They are able to, however, show a lively interest in archaic structures of society, in old Hasidic legends and myths, which they find in the environment of Transcarpathian Ukraine (Subcarpathian Rus), that is, in the area that became part of Czechoslovakia. Ivan Olbracht, Karel Čapek, Vladislav Vančura, and others travel to the eastern edge of the republic on study trips and discover old settlements in poverty. Thus, Olbracht comes up with the character of Nikola Šuhaj and numerous proses inspired by the Subcarpathian Rus (*Golet v údolí*, “Golet in the Valley”, *O smutných očích Hany Karadžičové*, “About the Sad Eyes of Hana Karadžič”, etc.) or Karel Čapek with his novel *Hordubal* (which is part of the so-called noetic trilogy “Hordubal” – “Povětroň” – “Obyčejný život”).

The new region, hitherto unthematized by Czech artificial literature, with its distinctive characters and untamed nature, provided a rich source of inspiration, also thanks to its unique cultural and linguistic context, which differed from most of the rest of Czechoslovakia. Similarly, the region of Czech Silesia found literary capture not only in the poetry of Petr Bezruč, but especially in the prose of Vojtěch Martínek, A. C. Nor, and others.

A completely unique place in Czech interwar literature belongs to Jaroslav Hašek (1883–1923) and his extensive, unfortunately unfinished novel *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka* (“The Good Soldier Švejk”). Hašek was a distinctive figure in Czech cultural life: a humorist and mystifier, a short story writer and novelist, a member of the Prague Bohemia. He started as a journalist, founded a satirical party, was drafted into the war in 1915, was captured on the Russian front, joined the Bolsheviks in 1918, and even served as a deputy district commander in Bugulma. His character Švejk and the whole novel have been variously interpreted and accepted since its publication: differently by Czech and German-written literary criticism, as

well as in terms of its significance for Czech literature and overall meaning.

In the novel, Hašek tells the story of the soldier Švejk, who is mobilized into the Austro-Hungarian army during World War I and experiences various absurd situations. The reception of the novel was originally mixed, with its evaluation by Ivan Olbracht adding to its significance. The novel was first published as a serial in 1921–1923 and caused controversy in the Czech environment for its satirical and ironic view of war, the military, and state bureaucracy. Some readers and critics understood Hašek's humor and satire and appreciated the novel as a strong social and political critique. On the other hand, some critics condemned the novel for its vulgarity and cynicism. The novel often ridiculed the mindless Austro-Hungarian army and state bureaucracy. In the German-written literary criticism, some voices appreciated Hašek's humor and satire, but also its timelessness, absurdity and existential problems of an individual tossed by the gears of time.

The Good Soldier Švejk is considered overrated by some researchers, while others consider it one of the peaks of Czech literature and one of the most significant anti-war novels in general. Its translations into many languages and its international recognition attest to its lasting significance and influence, although it should be noted that not all translations reflect the actual Czech text of Hašek (this is the case, for example, with the Polish translation by Hułka-Łaskowski). Fundamentally, the greatest attention to Hašek's work was ensured by its German translation (it would be worth paying detailed attention to the contemporary and later reactions of readers and critics to the Good Soldier Švejk and his various interpretations, cf. Merhaut 2014). Švejk is thus considered a specific literary type of character (see J. Jedlička, 1992), and the novel then as an absurd text with elements of grotesque, which both summarizes older styles of (humorous) novel (M. de Cervantes, F. Rabelais, Ch. Dickens, etc.) and foreshadows the development of prose in the 20th century.

Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich are among the most significant figures of the Czech theater and film scene of the 20th century. In 1926, they founded the Liberated Theater (*Osvobozené divadlo*) together with musician Jaroslav Ježek, which became an icon of

Czech avant-garde and satirical theater. The Liberated Theater was characterized by its innovative approach to theater, which combined elements of cabaret, revue, burlesque, and political satire. The theater used humor and irony as means to critique societal and political conditions in Czechoslovakia and Europe.

Voskovec and Werich created a number of significant plays that are still considered classics of Czech theater. These include *Vest Pocket Revue*, *Rub a líc* "Heads and Tails", *Kat a Blázen* "The Executioner and the Fool", *Balada z hadrů* "Ballad of Rags", and others. Their plays often contained elements of absurd humor, wordplay, and satire. A significant element was also the music of Jaroslav Ježek, which accompanied the plays and underscored their atmosphere. Some of the plays were also filmed (the film *Hej rup!* "Hold Tight!" – a satire on life in the First Republic of Czechoslovakia is well-known). However, with the rise of Nazism, both emigrated to the USA, where they continued their artistic careers. Only Werich returned to Czechoslovakia after the end of World War II. Another distinctive, this time avant-garde, left-wing and pro-communist oriented theater, was the D34 of Emil František Burian (the numeral following the letter D signifies the year of the theater season). Commercially successful were the theaters in Prague of Vlasta Burian or Oldřich Nový.

In addition to radio broadcasting (initially the private Radiojournal from 1923, later the state radio), it was a new type of medium in which writers also found their place. Another phenomenon that developed in independent Czechoslovakia was film. One of the most famous and oldest film studios in Europe was Barrandov Film Studios, founded in 1931. During the interwar period, it became an important center of film production and a place of collaboration with writers (they often contributed to film scripts – K. Čapek, V. Nezval, V. Vančura). Many significant personalities appeared on the interwar stage in the field of acting, such as Oldřich Nový, Lída Baarová, Adina Mandlová, and Hugo Haas, as well as directors like Martin Frič, Karel Lamač, Václav Wasserman, Otakar Vávra, Gustav Machatý, and others. As for foreign-language films, films in several languages, including German and Slovak, were shot at Barrandov to reflect the language diversity of Czechoslovakia. Some of these films included

the German-language film “Der Zinker” (1931) directed by Karel Lamač and the Slovak-language film “Jánošík” (1935) directed by Martin Frič.

Although the Devětsil movement officially ceased to exist in 1930, its influence on Czech culture essentially persists to this day: both in the literary plane and in the form of allusions, studies, and discussions about the avant-garde that have been held during the 20th and 21st centuries. Its members continued to create and had a significant influence on the development of modern Czech art (for example, surrealism in the 1930s).

German-written Jewish literature is inextricably linked with the German-speaking literary circle in Prague, which represented a significant part of cultural life in Prague from the 19th century until World War II. This literature combines elements of German, Jewish, and Czech culture and is known for its originality and high literary value. It includes authors such as Franz Kafka, Max Brod, Franz Werfel, Egon Erwin Kisch, and many others. These authors represent the diversity and depth of this literary circle, and their works are considered classics of world literature.

The world’s most famous representative of this circle was Franz Kafka, particularly with masterpieces like *Proces* “The Trial”, *Zámek* “The Castle”, and *Proměna* “The Metamorphosis”. He was born and raised in Prague in a Jewish family. He was characterized by a deep exploration of the human psyche, expression of life’s absurdity, and criticism of bureaucracy and state machinery. He first published his works in German, some of which remained unfinished: after Kafka’s premature death, they were published by his friend Max Brod, a German-Jewish writer, composer, and critic. Kafka’s work influenced many writers and philosophers around the world and is to this day considered one of the most significant in modern literature.

The Prague German Jewish literature circle also includes Franz Werfel, an Austrian writer of Jewish origin, who spent part of his life in Prague. He was a member of the Prague Circle and became famous for his lyrical poems and dramas, but also for the novel *Čtyřicet dnů Musa Dagh* (“The Forty Days of Musa Dagh”) depicting the Armenian genocide, or *Píseň o Bernadettě* (“The Song of Bernadette”), describing her visions of the Virgin Mary in Lourdes, France).

In the interwar period, the number of German journalism titles also grew. Egon Erwin Kisch, a Czech journalist and writer of Jewish origin, wrote in both Czech and German. He was known for his reports, in which he combined literary and journalistic elements. He became famous as a “raging reporter” and his work influenced the development of the journalistic genre in the 20th century. His most famous works are *Zaren, Popen, Bolschewiken* („Tsars, Popes, Bolsheviks“), *Abenteuer in fünf Kontinenten* (“Adventures on Five Continents”), and *Paradies Amerika* (“Paradise America”).

German Jewish literature (especially its creators) was later exposed to growing antisemitism and Nazism, which led to the emigration of many authors and eventually to its decline after World War II. However, its significance and legacy survived and is today considered one of the most significant parts of the European literary tradition.

Books began to become accessible among people, mainly thanks to a dense network of libraries. Library professionals learned from the organization of libraries in Western and Scandinavian countries. The Library Act of 1919 required the establishment of a public library in all political municipalities. Similarly to schools in minority areas operating in the minority’s main language, the law required libraries to create minority sections. The legal regulation naturally took into account books that were worthless or corrupted the morals of youth; these were not to be included in the collections and, on the contrary, began to appear in private libraries that loaned books on a commercial basis. The removal of books can be considered as state censorship interventions. Therefore, it is necessary to briefly mention censorship and the possibility of confiscating objectionable literature: although censorship was abolished after the establishment of independent Czechoslovakia, certain standards (including monarchist ones) remained in force, and although the constitution of 1920 guaranteed the freedom to “express opinion by word, print, picture, etc.,” various new norms were added (in 1933, the so-called Small Press Act), which maintained a certain degree of censorship throughout the interwar period. (For more details, see *V obecném zájmu*, “In the Public Interest”, vol. I., Praha 2015.)

In literary science and criticism, the top was reached by Arne Novák, a professor at Masaryk University, who wrote reviews for

Lidové noviny and many magazines and newspapers, Albert Pražák, Miloslav Hýsek, Roman O. Jakobson, Jan Mukařovský, Otokar Fischer (also a poet and translator), Frank Wollman, Vojtěch Jiráč, Antonín Matěj Píša, Karel Teige, Bedřich Václavek, Václav Černý and especially F.X. Šalda, who began his literary and literary-critical career in the 1890s of the 19th century. In addition to literary studies traditionally cultivated at the Charles University, significant centers began to emerge in Bratislava and Brno, centered around scholars from Comenius and Masaryk University, both founded in 1919. Around these academic figures, the foundations of the later Prague Linguistic Circle (PLC) were established on October 6th, 1926, with the presence of five Czech and Russian philologists. Jakobson's work particularly exerted profound influence across various humanities disciplines. Born in Russia, he spent a significant portion of his career in Czechoslovakia, predominantly in Brno and Prague. This intellectual circle became a hub for intense dialogue among linguists, literary theorists, and other scholars. Within the circle, Jakobson introduced many of his concepts and theories, from phonetics and phonology to versification and binary oppositions in language, which later had a significant impact on the study of language and communication. Notable figures within the PLC, besides Jakobson, included Nikolai Sergejevich Trubetzkoy, Jan Mukařovský, Vilém Mathesius, Bohuslav Havránek, Jindřich Honzl, among others (cf. Steiner 1982, Vachek 1999, Pospíšil–Paučová 2019).

It should not be overlooked that the quality of a literary creator or literature of a certain time and space is often evidenced and underscored by prestigious world awards. For the Nobel Prize in Literature, Czech authors of the period were nominated: Jaroslav Vrchlický (twice), Alois Jirásek, Otokar Březina (nominated eight times), J.S. Machar (twice) or Karel Čapek (nominated seven times).

Particularly Čapek's work, known all over the world in translations, permeated with futurological insight and expressing in literary form concerns about the fate of the "little man" in the dangerous machine called the world, is one of the highlights of Czech interwar prose and drama, but also a highlight of the heritage of world literature and culture. Just like the masterful work of Jaroslav Hašek, bringing into the world of literature a new, specifically type of

hero, soldier Švejk, expressing in his adventures, dialogues, and reflections the timeless humanistic mission. "In the Bible, we find almost everything, but in Švejk [we find] absolutely everything," is a legendary sentence attributed to the writer and screenwriter Zdeněk Mahler. Both Hašek and Čapek warned in their own way against war (pacifism), against the misuse of technology and power, and aligned themselves alongside a long line of authors oriented towards irenicism, pacifism, and humanism.

From the overview of literary events and expressions of individual authorial poetics, it is clear how literary and cultural life differentiated and how it branched out. It deepened in terms of material and genre, but also in terms of ideological and ideological direction. What is surprising is that initially, literature and literary life were quite centralist. Just like the original Austro-Hungarian Empire, in whose centralist system most of the inhabitants of the first Czechoslovak Republic still lived and knew it. Over time, there is a more pronounced differentiation and the emergence of other cultural centers, usually associated with larger cities (Brno and the local Literary Group of Expressionists, but also Olomouc, Stará Říše, Nový Jičín, etc.).

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DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.08



“The Nature of the Novella” by Hryhorii Mayfet: Formation of the Theory of Literature¹

Abstract

The article reconstructs Hryhorii Mayfet’s theory of the novella, which he presented in his two-volume work *The Nature of the Novella* (1928–1929). The Ukrainian scholar’s theoretical suggestions fit into the general context of German and American literary critics’ search for the key features of the novella genre. The article also reveals the history of the controversy over Mayfet’s book in the Ukrainian literary process of the late 1920s and early 1930s, which took place between Volodymyr Derzhavyn, Felix Yakubovsky, and the critics of *New Generation*. This discussion, which lasted almost four years, demonstrates how ideological control was increasing in Ukrainian literary criticism in the early 1930s.

¹ The publication was written as part of and with the support of the Philipp Schwartz-Initiative of the Alexander-von-Humboldt Foundation (Germany) at the European University Viadrina (Frankfurt/Oder). I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Annette Werberger and Prof. Andrii Portnov for their assistance in preparing this article.

Suggested citation: Pashko O. (2023). “The Nature of the Novella” by Hryhorii Mayfet: formation of the theory of literature. *Trimarium. The History and Literature of Central and Eastern European Countries*, 2(2), 193–215.

DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.08

Submitted: 28.06.2023 / Accepted: 07.04.2023

Keywords

short story, novella, composition, Ukrainian literary criticism of the 1920s and 1930s, Hryhoriy Mayfet, Volodymyr Derzhavyn, Formalism, Felix Yakubovsky, Oskar Walzel, Otmar Schissel von Fleschenberg, Brander Matthews.

“real literature impresses incomparably more
than the most conscientious reportage”

Hryhoriy Mayfet. *The Nature of the Novella*
(Mayfet, 1929, p. 135)

The fate of Hryhoriy Yosypovych Mayfet (1903–1975) repeats the fate of many repressed literary critics of the 1920s generation: articles in periodicals in the second half of the 1920s, often accompanied by editorial notes about disagreement with the author’s position, sometimes a publication of a book, accusations of “formalism” in the early 1930s, declarations of self-criticism, silence, and finally arrest. For those who survived the Stalinist camps, there was rehabilitation and a limited opportunity to return to literary life in the mid-1960s, and silence again after the end of the “Thaw”.

Mayfet went through almost all the stages of this “path of suffering,” but, unlike Hryhoriy Kochur, he failed to return to literature in the 1960s: he published several articles,² wrote several books “for the future,” and published many film reviews in the northern Pechora press, the place where he settled after the camp and then voluntarily lived. “Obviously, I will have to continue working only for myself,” “I am not writing anything, because it’s not worth writing when there is no possibility of publishing anything” (1972) (Rotach, 1988) – this is how the scholar assessed his “literary rehabilitation” in his letters to

2 In 1965, Mayfet was reinstated to the Writers’ Union, and his articles on the novels of Semen Zhurakhovych and Hryhor Tyutyunnyk were published in the periodical *Literaturna Ukraina*. The revised version of *The Nature of the Novella* was not republished: “The manuscript was returned with a categorical suggestion for a radical reworking of the material. His illness deprived him of this opportunity” (Rotach, 1989).

Petro Rotach. During his lifetime (in 1968), he managed to transfer his library and his archive to Kyiv, presumably out of fear that the KGB would confiscate everything the third time, as it did in 1934 and 1950, during his first and second arrests.

However, Mayfet's work remains *terra incognita* to this day, even after the exceptional attention of researchers to the period of the so-called “Executed Renaissance.” Only his friend and literary critic, a Poltava resident, Petro Rotach, wrote about the scholar's biography (Rotach, 1966; Homin, 1974; Rotach, 1988; Rotach, 1989). Of his theoretical works only those on translations have been republished (Mayfet, 2017).

Hryhorii Mayfet was born in Poltava to a priest's family. The scholar graduated in mathematics and philology (including *aspirantura* in Western European literature at the Taras Shevchenko Institute (Kharkiv)). However, he worked as a literary critic for only six years in his life, from 1928–1934: while writing his PhD thesis, he simultaneously published critical essays for leading literary journals in Ukraine, as well as taught Ukrainian and Russian languages and literature, music history, and literary reading, and – for only three months – taught the history of Western European literature at the Poltava Pedagogical Institute. From 1934 to 1946, Mayfet was imprisoned; in 1950, he was arrested for the second time and left for life as a “povtornik” (re-arrested) in Pechora (Kanin village). From 1946 until his retirement in 1965, he worked as a worker at a power plant, an economist, an accountant, occasionally gave foreign language lessons, taught for a very short time, and actively wrote film reviews in the Pechora press for several years. On September 13, 1975, in Pechora Mayfet committed suicide, having never returned to his native Poltava, except as a visitor during short trips.

The scholar's research interests were very diverse: from the theory of the novella to translation studies, poetry, and a reflexive approach to literature. He wrote about the oeuvre of Stefan Zweig, with whom he corresponded. Mayfet is also the author of novellas and memoirs about literary life in the 1920s; regrettably almost none of his extensive work has been published.

This article discusses Mayfet's works on the theory and history of the novella, which were published as a two-volume book *The Nature*

of the *Novellas* (1928–1929). In this book, he announced the release of the third volume (Mayfet, 1920, p. 5),³ but censorship and ideological restrictions in Ukraine increased, and these plans never materialized.

The articles collected in *The Nature of the Novella* are a successful combination of the scholarly and essayistic voice, with precise definitions of terms coexisting with metaphorical imagery. This two-volume edition is also interesting for its genre. Each volume contains both abstract information – analysis of theoretical works on the short story – and studies, or rather, *slow readings* (as Mayfet defines his own method, borrowing the term from Mikhail Gershenzon [Gershenzon, 1926, 13]) of selected texts, most of which are novellas by Ukrainian writers of the 1920s. The scholar examines the construction of works by Yuriy Yanovsky, Arkady Lyubchenko, Geo Shkurupiy, Hordiy Kotsiuba, Oleksa Slisarenko, Ivan Mykytenko, Yevhen Pluzhnyk, Valerian Pidmohylnyi, Volodymyr Yaroshenko, and others; he also analyzes works by such foreign authors as Arthur Schnitzler, Stefan Zweig, Joseph Conrad, and Stacy Aumonier.

Mayfet defines the purpose of writing the two-volume work as theoretical, namely to present research that is interesting for a “competent reader” examining “problems of literary technique of fiction” (V.D., 1930, p. 199). No less important was the popularization goal: “to contribute to the improvement of the quality of literary production in a laboratory-critical way” (Mayfet, 1929, p. 4)⁴, which inevitably led him to simplifying the book’s academic language.

However, it is precisely this practical orientation of the book that justifies the “formal”⁵ analysis of the works. Indeed, the immanent

3 In his short book *Poetics of the 1940s*, Mayfet described the main genre and compositional features of the novella. These include the plot, development, Spannung, climax, and denouement, which brings it closer to the drama; he distinguished static (portrait, landscape) and dynamic motifs in the short story; he emphasized the anecdotal roots of the novella [Mayfet, Hr., *Poetika*, p. 22, cf. – 24]. In his works, Mayfet often used German-language literary terminology: *Vorgeschichte* (prehistory), *Nachgeschichte* (posthistory), *Spannung* (tension), *Ich-Erzählung* (I-narrative), *Ungeschlossene Komposition* (unfinished composition, open ending).

4 Mayfet also emphasizes that “the technique of the short story is the basis of the fictional technique” (Mayfet, 1929, p. 232), and speaks of “the rise of interest in the novella in modern Ukrainian literature” (Mayfet, 1929, p. 229).

5 I use the word “formal” here not as a definition of the school of formalists in Russian literary criticism of the 1920s. An analysis of Mayfet’s works shows that

approach to literature is important to Mayfet, who emphasizes that he "confines himself to the formal characterization of the theme and structure of the novella" (Mayfet, 1928, p. 4) and that the sociological method is alien to him. The scholar never treats a work under analysis contextually, or in its cultural and historical, nor socio-political or socio-economic setting. The researcher believes that between "ideology and artistic image, among other necessary factors, lies formal technique, without which it is impossible to construct a work of art" (Mayfet, 1928, p. 5). The approach to literature as a set of techniques (according to Viktor Shklovsky) is unacceptable to Mayfet, who believes this often leads to artificial construction of a literary work ("juggling with techniques") or to the commercialization of literature (Mayphet, 1928, p. 6). Here are some definitions of "form" proposed by Mayfet in his early work on the poetics of poet Pavlo Tychyna. Drawing on reflexive⁶ and receptive approaches, the researcher defines "form" primarily through the category of the reader: "the only objective fact of poetic creativity for the reader is the form of the work" (Mayfet, 1926, p. 4)⁷. "Form," according to Mayfet, is a function of artistic task or style. Looking for a good definition of the nature of a literary work, the scholar speaks of "the functional subordination of the elements of form to stylistic dominants" (Mayfet, 1929, p. 5), and in another place, he notes the "conventionality of anatomical operation with living artistic material" and the "primacy of the artistic task over form." (129). A literary work, according to Mayfet, can be defined as "a functional complex of elements of external and internal form; the significance of this standpoint lies in the methodological

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- his interests included both the works of German scholars of the so-called "rhetorical school" and the works of American short story theorists who developed formal analysis of the text. It is important that in substantiating the "formal characterization" of works, Mayfet cites the work of Hans Braches (Braches, 1975) and the claim of Ivan Franko that a poet "must be well acquainted with the writing technique" (Mayfet, 1928, p. 4) as a precedent for the formal approach.
- 6 Mayfet was one of the few Ukrainian literary critics of the 1920s who wrote about the reflexive method in literary studies (Mayfet, 1925).
- 7 The researcher also substantiates the concept of form from an artist's point of view, and here he refers to music theory, namely to the work of music theorist E. Prout "Musical Form" (1917): "form is the plan of the work, and this plan is binding on the artist" (Mayfet, 1926, p. 32).

elimination⁸ of components under analysis” (Mayfet, 1929, p. 4). It was probably important for the scholar to study both the compositional and technical features of a literary work as well as its stylistic, primarily figurative, components.

In a polemic with Shklovsky, he formulates his vision of a literary work as an organic whole: “Every artist arrives at a compositional design organically in the process of realizing their task. This latter should be the argument that determines the function of the composition” (Mayfet, 1928, pp. 99–100). For Mayfet, it is important to consider the technique in the context of the overall teleology of the work, its acquiring of multiple meanings, and its symbolism. He illustrates his point with a mathematical model. Thus, a literary work is never just a sum of techniques: “a true work of art,” the researcher explains, “is always something more than a simple sum of its components, its techniques. To use a mathematical analogy, one may recall that general change in the laws of theory when one has to move from finite quantities to infinity; in the latter case there is even a theorem saying that the sum does not equal the terms of a sequence, a position directly opposite to that used in operating with finite quantities” (Mayfet, 1929, p. 244). The fundamental feature of a literary work is ambiguity, a certain symbolization; a work of art “inevitably hides ambiguity, which is always characterized by a certain increase in relation to the usual sum of its components – techniques. This increase provides the literary work with what the English call *survival*; while it is called here, of course, in quite conventional terminology, the symbolism of a literary and artistic work” (Mayfet, 1929, p. 244). In this context, the title of the two-volume edition, *The Nature of the Novella*, i.e., something organic, sounded like a polemic both against the articles of the famous 1920s researcher of the novella Mikhail Petrovsky, who spoke of the “morphology of the novel” (Petrovsky, 1921; Petrovsky, 1925; Petrovsky, 1927), and Mike Johansen’s “morphological studies” (Johansen, 1928), but it was most polemical against Shklovsky’s works.

8 Presumably, this refers to the mathematical term “elimination” – “the elimination of an unknown from the equation.”

As already noted, in his works on the novella, Mayfet describes his own methodological approach as "reading." "The method appropriate to the task is reading the work, understanding and interpreting it; this concept includes both the immediacy of perception and the possible subjectivity of this immediacy" (Mayfet, 1928, p. 6). This allows for different methodological approaches and re-readings; obviously, Mayfet does not deny that even an "ideal" literary critic engages in subjective reading; on the contrary, he emphasizes the importance of intuition for a literary critic: "For me, the science of art is a degree of gradual 'realization,' a means of extending the field of intuition" (Mayfet, 1926, p. 5). Accordingly, he characterizes "formal study" as follows: "the formal method translates certain means of artistic enchantment of poetry into the realm of 'consciousness,' that is, it makes certain 'conditional closures'" (Mayfet, 1926, p. 5).

When analyzing the composition of the novella, Mayfet distinguishes three parts: 1) the beginning; 2) the novella itself; 3) the climax (Mayfet, 1928, p. 83). He divides episodes into main ones (which drive the plot, are dynamic (successional), and are responsible for the arrangement of components) and auxiliary ones. Essential elements of the novella include the static portrait and landscape, which the scholar always pays attention to when interpreting the works of writers and identifying sources of motivation in the novella. According to Mayfet, the essential features of the novella⁹ are internal contradiction¹⁰ and a specific ending (i.e., "climax" or "decisive end point in the unfolding of the plot" (Mayfet, 1928, p. 87), which "should be set up by every previous step of the short story" (Mayfet, 1928, pp. 87–88).

9 Mayfet used the terms "short story" and "novella" synonymously and believed that both genres were characterized by plot tension and a surprise ending. For example, he translated the title of Michael Joseph's work "How to write a short story" as "How to write a novella" (Mayfet, 1928, p. 31). American short-story theorist Brander Matthews also used these concepts synonymously, i.e., for him Maupassant's novellas are short stories (Brander, 1901).

10 The internal contradiction of the novella was also discussed by German Romantics, in particular, Ludwig Tieck, who talked about the decisive turn of the narrative (*entscheidenden Wendepunkt*), as well as the antithetical construction of the novella, see Walzel, 1926, p. 247. Only in the work of Ukrainian literary scholar Vasyl Fashchenko do we find a cursory analysis of Mayfet's theory of the novella (Fashchenko, 2005).

Mayfet's interpretation of the works of Joseph Conrad,¹¹ whose popularity the researcher explains by association his short stories with the adventure short story, may serve as an example of "slow reading" (Mayfet, 1929, p. 98). Mayfet offers the following view of the compositional model of the writer's works:

it is not a circle with one center, but an ellipse with two foci, one of which is the background in the broad sense of the word, and the other is something human. There is a strong link between the two foci, with the adventure playing the role of a bridge between the reader and the psychological fabric of the work, which, briefly speaking, provides the theme, the idea of the work; this adventure is like a spotlight whose task is to illuminate the psychological side of Conrad's book: this is the essence of the transformation of the adventure genre he has made... With this graphics of movement, Conrad seems to call upon the reader to compose the novella together with him, as a result of which a composition emerges (Mayfet, 1929, p. 99).

Consequently, Conrad arrests the reader's curiosity by silence, by the presence of a secret¹²; the regressive description of episodes is connected with the disclosure of the secret; the presence of several storylines creates several so-called "illuminations"; "the appearance of several narrators is accompanied by a tendency to break chronology" (Mayfet, 1929, p. 105). Conrad often uses intriguing beginnings and rejects the "omniscient" author, by turning to first person narration (*Ich-Erzählung*) and slang. Conrad's novels are also distinguished by signs of cinematic poetics ("simultaneous film montage" (Mayfet, 1929, p. 98), i.e., a montage of real events and memories). Moreover, his works often take on an unfinished form

11 Mayfet worked with the Ukrainian translations of Conrad by S. Vilkhov (Serhiy Tytarenko) and Mykhailo Kalynovych (Conrad, 1926; Conrad, 1928). An appearance of a translation was often an incentive for him to write an essay (for example, in the second volume of *The Nature of the Novella*, a section on "The Modern Foreign Novella" (Kyiv, 1928) appeared) (Mayfet, 1929, pp. 302-342).

12 In Stefan Zweig's works, Mayfet also notes amusement, psychologism, first-person narration, and emphasizes the "psychological centeredness of the novella"; discusses the importance of landscape; and the lack of portraits; in general, he characterizes his works as "mystery novellas."

(here the researcher uses the term *Ungeschlossene Komposition* from German literary criticism) (Mayfet, 1929, p. 150). According to Mayfet, all these are features of the external form of short stories. One should single out the musicality of the description, the significance of the landscape, and visual impressions among Conrad's stylistic features,

In reconstructing Mayfet's theory of the short story, it will also be helpful to look at the theoretical part of the two-volume volume, in particular, the abstracts of five books by American writers and critics, including Edward O'Brien, Josephine Bridgart, Michael Joseph, and John Frederik, as well as the work of writer and professor at Princeton and Harvard Universities, Bliss Perry.¹³ The most influential of these scholars of the short story was Edward O'Brien, who edited the annual “Best Short Stories” (later “Best American Short Stories”) from 1915 to 1941 (Levy, 1993, pp. 36–38). Mayfet also cites the works of American critic and Columbia University professor Brander Matthews (1852–1929), one of the most prominent American short-story theorists.¹⁴ In his work *The Philosophy of the Short Story* (1901), Matthews conceptualized the ideas of E. A. Poe, expressed in his essay “The Philosophy of Composition” (1846). According to the scholar, the short-story is a short text, the combination of whose elements should influence the reader. Therefore, authors working in this genre have an absolute grasp of form, and the suggestiveness of the short story, like the French drama of the classicist era, is created by the unity of action, time, and place, and a limited number of characters (Matthews, 1901, pp. 15–17, 30, 35). The Matthews–Poe concept of the short story has become very influential in American literary criticism (one of Matthews' followers is the already mentioned Bliss Perry) (Achter, 2005) and has been used by authors of handbooks with recommendations for novice writers (Achter, 2005, p. 299). The combination of attention to literary theory,¹⁵ writing skills and

13 Bridgart Josephine. *How to Write Short Stories*. Cincinnati. 1921; Michael Joseph. *How to write a Short Story*. New York, 1926; John Frederick. *A Handbook of Short Story Writing*. New York. 1924; Bliss Perry. *Short story writing*. 1926; O'Brien. *The Advance of the American Short Story*. New York. 1923.

14 Brander Matthews proposed this spelling to define the genre of the “short story.”

15 There have been attempts to think about the short story genre in a different way, for example, James Cooper Lawrence emphasized the antiquity of the short story, and placed it in an archaic era (Lawrence, 1917, p. 274–286).

commercial success was an interesting feature of the American literary situation in the first quarter of the twentieth century (the phenomenon of “formalized Short Story Poetics” [Achter, 2005]). Andrew Levy believes that the authors of “the how-to-write-a-short-story handbook” were the first scholars to introduce “creative writing” as an academic discipline¹⁶ [Levy, 1993, pp. 77-107]). Such American handbooks attracted Mayfet’s attention and were analyzed by him in detail.

On the one hand, Mayfet emphasizes the practical approach of American handbooks and guides for aspiring authors. However, all of the American critics analyzed by Mayfet focus on the main structural characteristics of the short story, primarily the construction, style, plot, mechanisms of creating “suspense” (stimulating the reader’s curiosity), and the peculiarities of such a compositional technique as point of view. Out of the variety of theses of American critics outlined by Mayfet, I will mention only an interesting comparative parallel. For example, the Ukrainian scholar compares Josephine Bridgart’s concept of the plot with Shklovsky’s theory, and asks about the genesis of his ideas about the compositional features of the novella: “Isn’t this what Bridgart discusses, the need for two hostile groups in the novella, the need to defeat some obstacle, or what Shklovsky calls ‘the main conflict’ as a source of motives?” (Mayfet, 1929, p. 28). John Frederick’s research attracted the attention not only of Mayfet but also of the reviewer of *The Nature of the Novella*, the prominent Ukrainian literary critic Borys Yakubsky. In his review, he emphasized the importance of both refined style and a certain rhythm in the composition of the novella: “Of the elements of style, we must first of all note rhythm, which is achieved on the one hand in the linking of sentences, and on the other in the linking of individual parts within a sentence” (Mayfet, 1928, p. 67). The problems of rhymed prose and rhythm in fiction interested Mayfet not only in his works about poetry (Mayfet, 1926), but also in the context of the style, rhythmic organization of prose,

¹⁶ “Despite the haphazard, correspondence-school quality of many of their efforts, the handbook writers were members of the first generation of scholars to embrace creative writing as an academic discipline” (Levy, 1993, p. 78).

and features of the composition. When examining style, he often talks about the peculiarities of narration, and pays special attention to first person narration (he often calls this narration “an oral tale” (*skaz*),¹⁷ a reproduction of an oral story)¹⁸. Mayfet also makes an interesting and perhaps unique attempt to compare the concepts of American short-story researchers in the 1920s, which were replicated in handbooks, with texts on writing aimed at novice writers, Ukrainian and Russian authors (Shengeli, 1926; Shklovsky, 1927; *Observer* [1927]).¹⁹

In *The Nature of the Novella*, Mayfet also describes the formal features of several types of short stories. Firstly, he refers to the detective short story as a kind of “mystery short story”²⁰; secondly, to the peculiarities of the “inserted short story” and its inclusion in longer narratives; thirdly, to the principle of framing: “ring framing” of the main core of the short story” (this can be a motif or simply “thematic and lexical repetition” [Mayfet, 1929, p. 93]). In the theoretical chapter of his book “Toward a Poetics of the Inserted Novella,” Mayfet refers to Ukrainian writer Yevhen Pluzhnyk’s novel *The Disease* and Valerian Pidmohylny’s novel *The City*²¹ and defines two types of insertion of the novella into a larger literary form. The first occurs when “the constructive features of the genre” (Mayfet, 1929, p. 267) of the inserted novella are preserved and when it is distinguished by a special narrative: the fact of oral storytelling, “the most important sign of the independence of the small form” (Mayfet, 1929, p. 273); or the second possibility is when

17 The term “skaz”, borrowed from the works of Russian literary critics, was often used in the Ukrainian terminology debates.

18 The problem of the “narrative style” (*Ich-Erzählung*), stylization for oral storytelling, and of rhymed prose in the context of the history of Ukrainian literature was studied in the 1920s in the works of Agapiy Shamrai (Shamrai, 1930, pp. v–XLIII). The problem of rhymed prose and poeticization of prose is very important for Ukrainian literature, because this stylistic style persisted throughout the entire nineteenth century: from the works of Hryhorii Kvitka and Marko Vovchok, through the realistic prose of Panas Myrnyi, and then continued in modernist prose, such as that of Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi (Mayfet, 1929, p. 297).

19 *Observer* is the pseudonym of Oleksa Slisarenko.

20 Here, Mayfet probably draws terminologically from Shklovsky’s “Novella of Secrets” (Shklovsky, 1929).

21 Using Petrovsky’s term (Petrovsky, 1925), Mayfet calls such a novella a “novella of the person” (Mayfet, 1929, p. 268).

“the small form becomes deformed according to the requirements of the large form” (Mayfet, 1929, p. 280).²²

The second volume of *The Nature of the Novella* contains a historical account of the Italian Renaissance novellas, which begins with a reference to Otmar Schissel von Fleschenberg’s *The Greek Novella: Reconstruction of its Literary Form* [Die griechische Novelle: Rekonstruktion ihrer literarischen Form] (1913). Probably, one should raise the question of rethinking Fleschenberg’s concept in Mayfet’s works, and even more so, of rethinking the works of the German school of literary criticism, in particular, the poetics of the novella, in the works of the Ukrainian scholar.

This article attempts to compare Mayfet’s theoretical considerations with the works of Oskar Walzel, Richard M. Meyer, Richard Müller-Freienfels, and Otmar Schissel von Fleschenberg. At this point, it is difficult to speak of a conceptual reconstruction; rather, we are talking about individual works of which Mayfet was aware and on which he presumably relied in formulating his own theory. And although such a reconstruction is now fraught with dotted lines and hypotheticals, I believe that this line of research is important for identifying the genesis of Ukrainian literary criticism in the 1920s. In his well-known work “Deutsche Stilistik” (1906), Meyer distinguishes between the novella and the novel as a short adventure story and story with a development of events. Therefore, the German scholar situates the novella closer to poetry (lyrical coloring) and drama (dramatic structure) rather than the epic (Meyer, 1906, p. 168). In his *Poetics* (1914), Müller-Freienfels²³ sees the main difference between the novella and the epic in the way it is presented, in its orientation toward oral performance and reader perception.²⁴ The scholar adds that the style of the novella,

22 Mayfet supports his arguments with the theses of Viktor Zhyrmunsky (Zhyrmunsky, 1923) on the correlation between the “an oral tale” (skaz) manner and the “neutral” word; according to Zhyrmunsky, “the relationship between the subject and the composition is inversely proportional” (Mayfet, 1929, p. 296).

23 A translation of R. Müller-Freienfels’s *Poetics*, edited by Oleksandr Biletsky, was published in Kharkiv in 1923 in Russian (Müller-Freienfels, 1923).

24 These points are natural, since R. Müller-Freienfels belongs to the “psychological” school and, in explaining the theoretical problems of literature, focuses primarily on the category of the reader.

its structural features (complete composition and narrative dynamism) result from the mode of narration (often the presence of a narrator), which brings it closer to drama (Müller-Freienfels, 1923, p. 133). In his famous article “The Artistic Form of the Novella” (1915), Walzel calls for defining the formal characteristics of this genre. Relying primarily on the theories of the novella by Goethe and the German Romantics, he analyzes its principal genre features: brevity, distinctive characterization of protagonists, the presence of a turning point (*Wendepunkt*), framing, and the importance of oral narration (here Walzel develops the ideas of Müller-Freienfels) (Walzel, 1926, p. 252). The problem of framing and the inserted short story can be studied with reference to theoretical research in the works of Fleschenberg, Hans Braches, or Petrovsky (Fleschenberg, 1913; Petrovsky, 1921; Petrovsky, 1925; Petrovsky, 1927; Bracher, 1975). A contemporary of Mayfet’s, Ukrainian literary critic Volodymyr Derzhavyn, examines the scholar’s methodology in the context of Wilhelm Dibelius’s “compositional and psychological focus.” “The compositional analysis used by Dibelius, a well-known Berlin expert in English fiction and more of a historian than a literary theorist, is quite close to what is called “plot analysis” in Russian literary studies and “literary morphology” in Ukrainian literary studies (works by Petrovsky, partly by Shklovsky, and by Mayfet)²⁵” (Derzhavyn, 1928, p. 145). Derzhavyn does not repeat this important thesis about the genesis of Mayfet’s methodology (namely, the development of Dibelius’s ideas in Ukrainian literary studies) and limits himself to stating that Mayfet’s work has a descriptive approach to the study of the literary work.

To understand which school Mayfet belongs to we should talk about his understanding of the theory of the novella which was widely represented in foreign literary criticism at the time, and also about the formation of his own concept, which could often be censored upon publication. These non-academic factors are important for explaining some of the fragmentation of Mayfet’s theory, his sometimes deliberate inconsistencies, his caution in formulating

25 An unfortunate editorial correction, when the mention of Petrovsky and Shklovsky’s works should have come after the phrase “analysis of the plot.”

opinions, conscious absence of references, veiled contexts and subtexts, and the ability to place scientific ideas between the lines with hints. This can be called “academic Aesopian language.” Such “imitation of profanity” may have been a strategy of survival in the rather closed Soviet intellectual space of the second half of the 1920s and an opportunity to publish one’s work.

Mayfet’s research initially received quite favorable reviews, for example, the journal *Vaplite* described him as a “thoughtful, cultured and observant” critic who is well versed in the formal method and “knows how to apply it to literary practice” (Rezentsent, 1927). In his overview of Ukrainian journals, “A.N.” from the Dnipropetrovsk-based journal *Zoria* said that the scholar “engaged in fine formal criticism of art, but did not lose the sociological thread” (A.N., 1929, p. 32). In 1928, influential critic Abram Leites mentioned Mayfet’s “expressive analysis” of the novellas (Leites, 1928, p. 95). In 1929, Mayfet’s *The Nature of the Novella* was even included in the list of readings recommended for self-education in literary circles in Donbas, albeit with the explanation that the book requires a “qualified reader” (Donbasovets, 1929, p. 45).

Initially, professional readers also welcomed Mayfet’s book quite favorably. His first book, *The Nature of the Novella* (1928), was reviewed by Volodymyr Derzhavyn (Derzhavyn, 1928, pp. 130–133), Borys Yakubsky (Yakubsky, 1928), Isaac Yampolsky (Yampolsky, 1928), and Felix Yakubovsky (1929). However, the controversy that arose around this work is a good illustration of how the freedom of expression in Ukrainian literary criticism was narrowing in the 1920s. A fierce debate over *The Nature of the Novella* took place between Volodymyr Derzhavyn and Felix Yakubovsky.²⁶ Derzhavyn, who had been well acquainted with Mayfet at the Department of Literary Studies at the Kharkiv Institute for People’s Education (KHINO) and with whom he shared a common research interest, wrote a total of three

26 Felix Yakubovsky (1902–1937), Ukrainian literary critic, studied at the Kyiv Institute of People’s Education (KINO) in 1920–26, worked for various Kyiv newspapers, like *Bolshevyk*, and *Proletarska Pravda*, collaborated with the Kyiv branch of the Taras Shevchenko Institute, taught at the Kyiv Institute of Social Education (1930–1931), the Polish Pedagogical Institute in Kyiv (1933–1935), and was a literary critic of the Writers’ Union of Ukraine (Sheptytska, 2020).

reviews. Although all of them were cautious, the scholar nevertheless defended the need for an immanent approach to a literary work, both openly and under pseudonyms.

On the one hand, Derzhavyn, perhaps ostensibly, tried to prove to the reader that Mayfet's book is important as a preliminary analysis necessary for the sociological interpretation of literature. It is quite unfair, but probably forced by circumstances that he assessed Mayfet's study and the rather weak book of Petrenko *Marx's Method in Literary Studies* (Knyhospilka, 1928) as “a turning point in the development of Ukrainian literary theory” (Derzhavyn, 1928, p. 131). On the other hand, the reviewer rightly emphasized that the reader is presented with an “exemplary analysis of the composition” of the novellas (Derzhavyn, 1928, p. 132). Derzhavyn's summary review²⁷ of the two volumes of *The Nature of the Novella*, published in 1930 in the journal *Hart*, seemed to round out the discussion of the book. The critic noted that Mayfet confined himself to “purely descriptive analysis” (V.D., 1928, p. 198); he tried to protect the researcher from the harsh attacks of Yakubovsky, not only of “formalism”, but also of “a hostile attitude to Marxism in literary criticism” and even the formation of a “national-state theory of literature” (V.D., 1928, p. 198).

In 1929, almost simultaneously with the second volume of *The Nature of the Novella*, Yakubovsky's book *From the Novella to the Novel: Etudes on the Development of Ukrainian Fiction of the Twentieth Century* (1929) came out. In a scathing review, a certain W. Dietrich (probably a pseudonym of Derzhavyn), while criticizing the methodological principles of the study (“a systematic contradiction in the main method” [Dietrich, 1929, p. 253]), revisits the polemic between Yakubovsky and Mayfet, in an attempt to expose the shaky ideological ground of Yakubovsky. Derzhavyn's inflammatory response is provoked, first of all, by Yakubovsky's use of key points of Mayfet's analysis of the compositional features of Geo Shkurupiy's novella “The Provocateur”, as well as by Mayfet's accusations of formalism. Derzhavyn's sharp reaction was caused by the following point by

²⁷ The article is signed by V.D. Before the cryptonym was deciphered in the annual table of contents of the journal *Hart* (1931, No. 1-2), the work had not been identified as Derzhavyn's for some time.

Yakubovsky: “We think that in our estimation and motivation of certain motifs of Shkurupiy’s work, Mayfet’s purely formal description can be used as material that once again confirms our thoughts about Geo Shkurupiy’s fiction” (p. 257) (Yakubovsky, *From the Novella* 1929, p. 256). And actually, why can’t we use Hryhoriy Mayfet? Derzhavyn asks sarcastically: “This, of course, is a logical consequence of the frivolous and superficial attitude to both Marxist and formalist methodology. We should not stain our snow-white robes in the fields where the “evil one” roams. Do it for us, Mayfet (as Mayfet did for Shkurupiy), and add a small editorial note that will settle the matter” (Dietrich, p. 256). In the end, Derzhavyn seems to note conciliatorily: “We do not consider either Mayfet to be a ‘hopeless’ formalist or Yakubovsky a revisionist and vulgarizer of Marxist literary criticism” (Dietrich, p. 256).

The debate continued for several years, and its participants remained the same. In 1932, during the period of active struggle against “formalism” and the ideological campaign of self-criticism,²⁸ Yakubovsky, in his self-denouncing speech *Against Eclecticism and Opportunism: In Favor of Leninism in Literary Criticism* (Yakubovsky, 1932), again returns to Derzhavyn’s role in defending one of the official “formalists.” Of course, this was no longer a discussion of what formalism is and what its characteristic features are, but the assignment of a certain “stigma” that made it possible to crack down on this or that author. The repentant critic essentially writes a denunciation of Derzhavyn and does so in a seemingly self-deprecating manner: “The later defense of Mayfet by the second ‘specialist’ who appeared on the pages of *Hart* under the letters V.D., proved to me especially clearly the falsity, the harmfulness of this “criticism” of mine (regarding the use of the word “specialist” (*fachivtsia*) in Soviet journals) ... So Mayfet, according to Derzhavyn, is a formalist “without special pretensions,” a formalist who knows his formalism and does not seem to oppose Marxism... obviously, defending a formalist against Yakubovsky in those conditions was an easier and more profitable job than defending him against the

²⁸ On the phenomenon of self-criticism in Ukrainian literary criticism see: Babak, Dmitriev, 2021.

front of Marxist criticism" (Yakubovsky, 1932, pp. 64–65). Perhaps we are looking at one of the longest-running ideological literary controversies in literature: The battle against Mayfet around the "minor representative of Ukrainian formalism" (Yakubovsky, 1932, p. 65) lasted about four years and ended... with the victory of the "defender of the formalist" Derzhavyn.

It is unclear how, after the slanderous article, both Derzhavyn and Mayfet avoided making self-incriminating statements. Perhaps by mid-1932 other problems had already emerged in the ideological field of literary criticism. Moreover, in 1934 Mayfet participated in the First Congress of Soviet Writers in Moscow, and represented the Ukrainian delegation (Rotach, 1989). In November 1934, he published a sociological interpretation of Anton Chekhov's short stories, in an attempt to insert himself into the sociological discourse.²⁹ However, this return to literary criticism, which had already completely changed its ideological landscape, was quickly cut short in December 1934 by his arrest and conscription into the so-called "Kirov recruitment" (Rotach, 1989). Yakubovsky was arrested later, in August 1937. Derzhavyn, according to the information available today, was not arrested at all; since 1931, he had been working at the Institute of Linguistics of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, and in 1941 he even defended his dissertation in history on "Xenophon's Athenian Policy as a Program of the Oligarchy of the Thirty Tyrants" at Kharkiv University. Mayfet's name came up occasionally in his emigrant articles, as he would mention a "thorough monograph," an "exemplary, though little known, work by Hryhorii Mayfet" about Tychyna ("The Fiction Prose of Teodosiy Osmachka," 1952; cf. Stefanovska, 2021, p. 180).

The literary controversy over *The Nature of the Novella*, built on hints and subtexts, probably had a personal angle as well. In this context, Derzhavyn's remark in one of his reviews that the critics of the *New Generation* should learn from Mayfet is interesting and important. This phrase was perfectly understood by

29 Here are some of the points: "What class position did Chekhov occupy in these social conditions?", Chekhov as "a representative of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia of this period", "Chekhov's criticism is half-hearted, opportunistic, and incomplete" (Mayfet, 1934, pp. 182, 185).

his contemporaries and became polemical against theorists of the so-called “leftist” short story, in particular Oleksii Poltoratsky (Poltoratsky, 1929, pp. 111–130). According to Poltoratsky, the “leftist” short story focuses on a plot organized by “external material events” (Poltoratsky, 1929, p. 111), and is characterized by an unexpected ending, a sudden beginning *in medias res*, and “using the means of the so-called mystery” (Poltoratsky, 1929, p. 120). He traces its roots to European and American short stories, and in his opinion, Shkurupiy and Slisarenko are the most prominent representatives of adventurous story in Ukrainian literature. In *The Nature of the Novella*, Mayfet brilliantly demonstrates the awkwardness and unmotivated construction of the plot in the detective novella “The Provocateur” by one of the creators of the “leftist” story, Shkurupiy.³⁰ This illustrates the theoretical confusion in the ambitious studies of such young critics as Yakubovsky and Poltoratsky, who praised the formal achievements of Shkurupiy’s prose. However, the eloquent title of the novella itself cannot but attract attention: is it a coincidence that in the era of impending mass repression, the mastery of the “Provocateur” had become a fierce topic of discussion?³¹ And is it a coincidence that representatives of the *New Generation* periodical, whose polemical style was considered provocative and scandalous by their contemporaries, were so sensitive to the criticism of this particular novella?³²

30 Shkurupiy’s text *The Provocateur* “proves the impossibility of imagining how the episode was actually implemented” (Mayfet, 1929, p. 225); “in the real genre, there should be no misunderstandings about the actual implementation of the episodes” (Mayfet, 1929, p. 226), “the novel gives the impression of a superficial record, a retelling of mechanically connected moments” (Mayfet, 1929, p. 227).

31 In his memoirs written in exile, the former Taras Shevchenko Institute graduate student Hryhorii Kostiuk recalled this “morphological” method of Poltoratsky in connection with his alleged denunciations: “if Poltoratsky with his „morphological method” of political denunciation had not come to the surface of literary life. First an article about A. Lyubchenko, and later about O. Vyshnia” (Kostiuk, 1987, p. 280).

32 A separate and still unresolved issue is the connection of Yakubovsky himself with the “leftist” literary movement; for example, at the beginning of his literary career he was close to the Futurists (Ilnytsky, 2003, pp. 83–84, 125) and probably collaborated with the Kyiv literary group “Mars” (Yakubovsky, 1932, p. 60).

Echoes of this controversy, in which discussions of the compositional features of the novella, ideological denunciations, and personal relationships, can be seen in other pages of the leftist *New Generation*. In several consecutive issues in 1928, the Mayfet-Derzhavyn tandem was insulted and slandered. The object of criticism was Mayfet's "grave-digging." "In No. 6 of *Krytyka*, we find Derzhavyn's review of Mayfet's *The Nature of the Novella*. The review is surprisingly favorable. It abounds in epithets such as "beautiful," "thorough," and "wonderful," which even the review by the "sworn praiser" Yakubsky does not contain. One place in the review is very revealing: "H. Mayfet's patterns should be studied... first of all by those shrewd critics who, having written a "leftist story" instead of a "short story" or a "leftist novel" instead of a "novel," consider it "sociological morphology," and call serious formal analysis "grave-digging"³³ (D.G. 1928). The *New Generation*, recalling Derzhavyn's gratitude in the pages of *The Nature of the Novella*, provocatively reduced this literary controversy to "family matters" (D.G., 1928, p. 336).

Thus, summarizing the academic significance of Mayfet's research, it can be argued that even if limited by the requirement of practical orientation of theoretical considerations, the researcher formulated the first theory of the novella in Ukrainian literary studies. He touched upon many fundamental issues discussed by European and American theorists of the novella (short story) in the 1910s and 1920s. The scholar identified the features of the novella as a genre, its difference from the novel, the peculiarities of composition, the specifics of plot construction and the role of the climax; described the features of the inserted short story and the framing short story; emphasized the importance of the point of view for the composition; discussed the relationship between the style and the narrator; identified the distinguishing features of the adventure, detective, and mystery novellas; and discussed the similarities between the construction of the novella and the drama. Mayfet's theory of the novella, rooted

33 We are referring to Poltoratsky's own statement in the *New Generation*: "There is no need to talk about Ukrainian researchers. We have here either the grave-digging of H. Mayfet or the worst kind of general opinions of subjective psychological critics who prefer to call themselves Marxists" (Poltoratsky, 1928, p. 436).

in the formal study of literature, could not have been understood by critics in a situation where ideological pressure was intensifying in literary studies, so there was no constructive discussion of the theory of the novella in the 1920s. The tragic fate and silence of Hryhoriy Mayfet demonstrates shows how difficult and dangerous it was for a scholar to remain a literary theorist in the “red” 1920s.

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DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.09



The Literature Published at Balta-Tiraspol (1932–May 1937): A Forgotten Ideological Current

Abstract

Between 1932–1937, books in Romanian language and Latin script were printed in Tiraspol and Balta, in the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova /the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSRM). New literature emerged, mostly produced by radically left-wing émigré Romanian intellectuals, and by a young generation of writers from the villages with Moldovan population. Previously, during the tsarist period, there were no publications in Romanian or institutions operating in this language. In our opinion, the literature of the ASSRM belongs to no one. Most authors were tried and murdered during the cruel purges of 1937–1938 (S. Lehtիր, D. Milev, L. Madan, P. Chior, N. Cabac and many others whose actual names are unknown). Some of the most fortunate were able to flee, others survived either because they were tolerated by the regime or for other unknown reasons (I. Canina, I.D. Ciobanu, L. Cornfeld, V. Galit, M. Oprea).

Literary activity was centered around the journal “Octeabriu” which became “Octombrie” (“October”) in 1932. The books issued were edited by employees of the State Publishing House of

Suggested citation: Tăriță M. (2023). The Literature Published at Balta-Tiraspol (1932–May 1937): A Forgotten Ideological Current. *Trimarium. The History and Literature of Central and Eastern European Countries*, 2(2), 216–239.

DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.09

216 Submitted: 22.02.2023 / Accepted: 28.02.2023

Moldova, which had two printing houses in Balta and Tiraspol (the latter gained most importance after 1936).

Keywords

Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova (ASSRM), Romanian language, ideology, literature, social aspects

Introduction

The situation of the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova (ASSRM) – a state entity created in October 1924 at Kharkov – has often been addressed through the lens of geopolitics and international relations and from a post-communist perspective. The use of dichotomous patterns in investigating its development has lost sight of the local dimension, and thus of essential elements in reconstructing the past. Without aiming to formulate any definitive conclusions, the present study focuses on the cultural-literary dimension of life in this republic (nominally autonomous only).

Among the works published so far – be they original forays into the exegetical terrain, or writings on the cultural atmosphere of the period – it is worth mentioning those authored by Elena Negru (1998) and Petru Negură (2014), providing important factual data. The former focuses on the ethnocultural policy of the times, while the latter is centered on the state of affairs in the MSSR, subsequently reflected in the evolution of literature in the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) in the post-war period. At that time, it appears that between the authors from the left bank of the Dniester and those from Bessarabia there was a somehow antagonistic relationship.

A few months before the creation of the autonomous republic, the Bolshevik newspaper “Plugarul Roș” (“The Red Ploughman”) was issued at Odessa in Romanian and simplified Cyrillic script. Later it became the main Romanian-language bi-weekly publication of Balta, Birzula (also known as Bârzu) and Tiraspol (the three capitals

of the republic, in their successive order). Towards the end of the 1920s, the supplement “Moldova Literară” (“Literary Moldova”) also appeared under Dumitru Milev, its first editor-in-chief.

In the autumn of 1931, the newspaper “Red Ploughman” was renamed “Moldova Socialistă” (“Socialist Moldova”), and the literary supplement became the journal “Octeabriu”, with the subtitle “hudojestvenno-publitsysticeski jurnal” (artistic-publicistis journal). With the shift to Latin script (in 1932), the name was changed to the correct form “Octombrie” (Romanian for “October”). From May 1938, with the return to the simplified Cyrillic script, it was again renamed “Octeabri”, a loanword from the Russian language. After the Second World War, the title “Octombrie” was used again in Chişinău.

In late 1931, in the ASSRM, reflecting the developments across the entire Union, a defamation campaign was launched against several writers, including Mihail Andriescu, Leonid Cornfeld (Corneanu), and Samuil Lehttir. The campaign also included public self-criticism on the part of those targeted, which was published in the pages of “Octeabriu” journal. Although elsewhere in the Union, certain changes had occurred much earlier, in the ASSRM they took place later. In 1932, the third issue of this journal published critical and self-critical statements on the writers mentioned above. They were aimed at the so-called “bourgeois” influence and, indirectly, that political deviation from the central line of thought of the communist party. A special case was issue 5–6 of the literary journal “Octeabriu”, the last pages of which contained texts printed in Latin script. Andriescu and Cornfeld’s extensive criticism was placed in a section in the first part, which featured Cyrillic script. The literature had to be purged, cleansed of “rubbish” and all that was “rotten”. The author of the critical note proposed the removal of all Andriescu’s books, without any concessions, since they would have “poisoned” the readership (Corcinschi, 1932, pp. 177–178). We deem it important to mention this campaign because, in its early phase (1937), it resulted in purges according to the methods of 1931–1932 (see Appendix 2).

We shall hereby address the following aspects: the language used in the ASSRM, the thematic niche covered by its literature, the ideological prose and the reprisals in the ASSRM that were given the green light in May 1937 (at the meeting of the Tiraspol Party Committee).

The appendices attached to the present study, which contain excerpts from texts published in the Romanian language in Balta and/or Tiraspol before 1932, between 1932–1938, respectively after May 1938, indicate in square brackets the words that were intelligible only to the times' readers. The texts were printed in one of the two cities mentioned, each possessing its own printing house, but usually both cities were indicated alongside the publisher. The illustrative fragments from the period before and after the use of Latin script, have been transcribed in Latin letters according to the current rules of transliteration from the Cyrillic (Russian) script¹.

Since linguistic and literary research on this topic is almost non-existent, the present study relies mostly on primary sources, i.e. on the actual publications issued at Balta, Tiraspol and in the twofold Balta-Tiraspol format, during the years of existence of the ASSRM, especially during the period when the Romanian language was used (1932–1938).

The language used in the official and local publications in ASSRM

The language employed in ASSRM was Romanian. However, even since the early years, it had an obvious local "flavour". At least two factors may account for this: on the one hand, the need to make the written texts accessible to the Romanian-speaking population

¹ For instance, "ı" for "ы" inside the words, "io" for "ё", "ț" for "ц", "k" for "к", "ce" for "че", "cea" for "ча", etc. *Translator's note:* Much (virtually all) of the "local flavour," as the author so aptly puts it, has inevitably been lost in translation. Its distinctive character is partly acquired via linguistic contamination (direct imports from Russian language or spelling differences intended to render the local pronunciation influenced by Russian – Romanian is a phonetic language, so the pronunciation of words would depend on the spelling; also, it is due to a very peculiar use of the language, and to the occurrence of local (regional) terms, hardly intelligible to today's Romanian readership. Archaisms are not predominant, thus recourse to old English equivalents would do little to render the text's character. Rather, the texts quoted by the author could be described as a peculiar idiom, significantly different from contemporary standard Romanian and even hardly comprehensible. Since the English translation cannot possibly do justice to the author's intentions, the translator has included the original text of the excerpts included as appendices, for the benefit of the speakers of Romanian language.

on the left bank of the Dniester, and on the other, the high fluctuation of rules, making it difficult to develop a single framework or model to follow. We believe that the widespread introduction of the literary Romanian language was not possible on the territory of the ASSRM, even if it had been desired. In this case, the implementation of the local version can also be seen as the first stage of the phenomenon of 1932–1937/38. In 1926 the lexicographic work *Slovar ruso-moldovenesc* [*Russian-Moldovan Lexicon*] was published; its author was Gavril Buciușcanu, with Pavel Chior(u) and Dumitru Milev as editors. It does not provide any evidence of attempts to create a new language. Some of the existing differences can be attributed to the fact that the script was Cyrillic, in the simplified version imposed by the Bolsheviks. Certain disagreements and controversies over the language arose locally in the early 1930s. It is generally accepted that there were three currents of opinion on the matter. However, Buciușcanu's dictionary did not remain a reference work for long; it was superseded by the works of Pavel Chior, which were reprinted in several editions. These dictionaries – either by the choice of Chior or through additions and alterations by the editors of the main publishing house in the republic – contained calques or loan translations of Russian terms, which were also found in the version of the language used by the Bolsheviks.

As for the literary language (of the scarce literature which was published between the late 1920s, and 1932), it oscillated between two versions: a more readable one, consisting of a local version of the Romanian language, and another including obvious interventions. The latter – which promotes the spelling based on the criterion of pronunciation in accordance with the local speech (“șî”, “șîni”, “li”, “**parti**”, “**mari**” instead of “ce”, “cine”, “le” “parte” “mare”; “șî” instead of “și”, “**cî**” instead of “că”, etc.) – also includes contrived words or artificial constructions. These include “**sfatnic**” for “Soviet”, “**soiuz**” for “union”, “**privatnic**” instead of “privat” (private), “**obștime**” (“obște” or “de obște” would have sounded more appropriate) instead of “society”, “**partii**” instead of “partid” (party), etc. (see appendices 1 and 2). Most likely, there were divergences even on the basic level of the language, which is also reflected in P. Chioru's 1929 work, in which the author claimed that not all five Moldovan idioms could be

unified (1929, pp. 4–5). It is possible that this work was a guideline for writing and spelling rules until the introduction of the Latin script.

This language was difficult to follow in written form. It is even more complicated to assess today the extent to which the Romanian-speaking inhabitants of the ASSRM were able to recognize themselves in this language for communication. On the other hand, after several years of writing in this language, when in 1931 the communists' struggle with a kind of "democratic nationalism" and deviations from the party line was transposed to the small Moldovan ASSR, the language had taken a completely contrived form, and not infrequently was even made up. To get a sense of how the campaign of vilification of the Bessarabian poet M. Andriescu sounded like, see the above mention and Appendix 2.

The transition to Latin script was gradual. Republican publications such as "Moldova Socialistă" implemented it without hesitation, while district (Raion) publications continued to appear in Cyrillic script in the following months. The main beneficiaries of the shift to Latin script were schoolchildren. Textbooks for all grades were published in the Latin alphabet. Several model textbooks were produced for the primary school and adult literacy courses and were reprinted annually. For an example of a typical text included in a primer (textbook) for Moldovan schools see Appendix 3. The print run of this primer was 6,100 copies. In general, there was a large-scale publishing activity which has yet to be evaluated. In addition to grammar textbooks, more textbooks were printed for various subjects depending on the school type or profile (e.g. mathematics, arithmetic, algebra, history, social sciences, chemistry, geography and German language); these were no longer produced locally, but were translations from Russian into Romanian.

In May 1938, after the purges had already achieved their aim of physically eliminating – under ludicrous and completely absurd pretexts such as "espionage" or "counter-revolutionary activity" – those intellectuals and officials who were even remotely autonomous in their thinking, the Cyrillic script was reinstated. An interesting phenomenon would occur later. Although the entire territory of Bessarabia was taken over in early September 1944, in April-May 1945 the central newspapers in Chișinău were printed in Latin letters.

The language in which the Balta-Tiraspol newspapers were written and published between 1932–1938 (May) is intelligible to readers throughout the territory where contemporary Romanian is spoken. Certain differences appeared between the Romanian language of the leftist activists (a phrase that seems more appropriate to us) who had arrived from Romania and the Romanian language of the local writers who asserted themselves in the literary realm – most of whom usually came from the countryside.

Among the last books published in Tiraspol in the Romanian language with Latin script was the one authored by Borisiuc and Mamaev, dedicated to ASSRM. In addition to hyperbolic, extravagant praise of its Constitution, its successes, etc., the book also condemns the enemies of the regime and is thus eminently Stalinist. Those who were prosecuted and put to staged trials, then killed, were described in the following way: “The bourgeois nationalists were determined to turn the development of Moldovan culture, national in form, socialist in content, back onto the path of Romanian bourgeois culture” (Borisiuc, Mamaev, 1938, p. 61).

Thematic niche and poetry

For almost a decade (from the late 1920s until the beginning of the Terror in 1937) the thematic niche fluctuated, but from May 1937 onwards it was no longer legitimising at the pinnacle of power. On the one hand, beyond the anti-bourgeois stance, some of the authors had participated in the civil war on the side of the Bolsheviks, and others had been part of the illegal communist movement in Romania in the early 1920s. The themes in this literature include social injustice (seen from the radical left perspective), but also realities of the Romanian world of the 1920s. With regard to the civil war and the years that followed, this literature explores anarchism and banditry, as well as the plight of orphaned children (see Appendix 1, which presents the case of two little brothers in the care of their older sister).

A common theme with most of the authors originating from the Moldovan villages of the ASSRM is that of their native place, with more or less of an ideological agenda. The depiction of the rural universe involved specific figures with a certain role in

the community: either a wealthier villager (therefore less of a positive character), or a person beloved by children, or various mythical creatures that inspired fear (e.g. werewolves), or some dirt poor, destitute fellow. A natural element that appears in both prose and poetry is the Dniester River – an impersonal presence that is organically part of the landscape, inherently linked to it. Several authors dwelt in particular on the theme of the two river banks, on the situation of the brethren left on the other side (namely the Bessarabians); a frequently reiterated literary motif was the garden. The ostensible peace and stillness of this rural life is shattered by the horrors of the civil war in former Tsarist Russia. This literature was not proletarian, despite extolling the communist regime and some of the elements of modernisation it brought about. Even in its new form imposed by the Bolshevik changes, the world of the village remained anchored in a traditional atmosphere, where communication was based on social relations differing from those which the regime wanted to enforce as the norm.

Despite the imperfections of language, some texts also reveal certain traumas of their authors – orphaned in young age or having lost beloved ones in the years of anarchy and civil war. For example, A. Sfeclă evokes, without being able to attribute a political affiliation to them, the men in uniforms with green epaulettes who forcibly took his sister away (Appendix 1).

Poetry enjoyed some popularity in the ASSRM, but the books still extant demonstrate a clear preference for prose. Among the poets, the Bessarabian M. Andriescu, as well as S. Lehtțir and L. Cornfeld stood out.

An example of poetry in keeping with the atmosphere and tenets put forth by the communist party (the country of the proletariat surrounded by enemies) is provided by Lehtțir's poem *De pază* (*Standing Guard*). Here he dwells on the image of the sentinel guarding "the land's freedom": „O umbră întunecată spre râu se furișază, / Al lunii ochiu rece privește după plai, / Dar ochiul sentinelei pătrunzător veghează, / Cine? Stai!” [“A dark shadow creeps towards the river, / The moon's cold gaze wanders over the plain, / But the sentinel's piercing eye watches, / Who goes there? Halt!”] (Lehtțir, 1935, p. 6).

Quite likely, the “cold gaze” was borrowed from Eminescu, and the furtive shadow sneaking was inspired by the well-known image in Alexandrescu’s poem dedicated to Mircea the Elder; but it could also be a mere coincidence. In his early period of creation, prior to the introduction of the Latin script, Lehtțir pays poetic homage to the Dniester, choosing a similar approach: a depiction of the river in a nocturnal setting: „Tăceri, noaptea, Nistru curge,/ Apili șoptesc, șoptesc.../ Parcă Nestru cîntî o doină.../ Parcă’i grai moldovinesc./ Și pădurea parcî doarmi.../ Sus pi șeri plutești luna,/ Iar copacii di diparti/ Sî închin cu «noaptea bună»” [“Silent, at night, the Dniester flows,/ Its waters whisper, whisper away.../ As if the Dniester is singing a doina [traditional lyrical folk song].../ In the sweet Moldovan language./ And the forest seems asleep.../ The moon floats high above the hills,/ And the trees of the countryside/ Bid «good night»”] (Lehtțir, 1929, p. 8).

The Dniester was also celebrated in verse by the young poet Nistor Cabac (b. 1913, Culna village, Odessa reg.): “Nistre, Nistre, – apă tulburată,/ Ce-așa greu din mal în mal te zbați?../ Ce mă’ndemni să-ți cînt de bucurie/ Și-mi răspunzi mîhnit dela Carpați?/ Sau că țărmurile pietruite,/ Roase-ți sînt de valul zbîntuit./ Sau că rîde luna cea mășcată,/ Cînd ea goală’n apă s’a ivit” [“Dniester, Dniester, – troubled water,/ Why do you struggle so hard from bank to bank?... / Why do you ask me to sing to you of joy / And you answer me mournfully from the Carpathians?/ Whether your stony banks / Are gnawed at by the rushing wave./ Or that the full moon laughs,/ When she rises naked from your waters?”] (Cabac, 1935, p. 7).

The image of the small provincial town (Russian: “uezdnîi gorodișko”) of Tiraspol is tellingly rendered in Cornfeld’s 1932 poem. Its atmosphere and ethnic-social character are depicted thus: “Cu opt biserici,/ Zece sinagogi,/ Cu trei oloiniți,/ Și ‘ncă vr’o morișcă,/ Tu te numei:/ «Uezdnîi gorodișco»./ Cu pristavi,/ Cu urednici mustețoși,/ Bazaruri multe,/ Croitori, crîșmari,/ Cu «Bakaleinaia torgovlea»,/ Mărunțică,/ Tu te hrănei/ Din rupta bucățică,/ Sub tejghea furînd dela cîntari.” [“With your eight churches,/ Ten synagogues,/ With three oil presses,/ And also a mill,/ You are called:/ “Uezdnîi gorodișko” [Russian phrase in the original] / With town criers, / With your mustached governor, / Many bazaars, / Tailors, tavern keepers, /

With «Bakaleinaia torgovlea» [Russian phrase in the original], / You barely scraped by/ Made a living on the stolen goods under the counter/ And false weights and measures.”] (Cornfeld, 1932, p. 5).

Although he also wrote propaganda poetry, M. Andriescu left many verses that reflect a universe of emotions rooted in the rural world. A relevant example is *Scripcei mele* [To my violin]: “Scripcă, hăi bătrână,/ Nu boci din strună./ Nu stîrni din inimi/ Vechile suspinuri,/ Nu săpa din suflet/ Durerile uitate/ Lasă’n pace’n piepturi/ Oftările culcate./ Nu turna în plazma/ Pietrarilor noi, jună,/ Sînge vechi și putred,/ Plazm-ă rea, bătrînă./ Că destul am plîns/ Ș’am oftat de-ajuns, -/ Tot trecutul nostru/ De jale ne-e pătruns./ Cîntecele noastră/ Din dor ne au fost țesute/ Și noatele de doină/ Din lăcrămi împletite.” [“My old violin,/ Do not sound so mournfully/ Do not stir the old pain of hearts/ Do not awaken the soul’s forgotten aches/ Leave alone in our breasts/ The forgotten sorrows./ Do not pour into young ones’ bodies/ Old and rotten blood,/ For we have wept enough / And have sighed enough, -/ All our past/ Is suffused with sorrow./ Our songs/ have been woven from longing/ And the *doina*’s notes/ Are born from our tears.”] (Andriescu, 1932, p. 21).

The young poets’ creations evoke their first loves, but also their reflections on the transformation of village girls turned activists. Despite abiding by the aesthetic and ideological patterns dictated by the officials, many writings are interesting because, as already mentioned, they come from an area where there was previously no official literature in Romanian and no culture similar to the one that crystallized in Bessarabia, although there the Romanian population was treated by the Tsarist regime as a minority.

One of the few young writers who succeeded in publishing a volume of poetry as sole author was Doibani. In 1935 he published the little volume *Răsai lună de cu sară* [Moon, Rise Early], in which the influence of folk poetry is evident. And although the discourse belonged to a writer taking the “correct” position in the Stalinist society, its imagery still reflects the rural universe.

An important landmark in the local poetry production, showcasing the talent of some young authors, is the volume *Versurile tinereții* [Verses of Youth], published in 1936. The publisher of the volume is not specified. The colophon only mentions the editor-in-chief Soloviova,

the technical editor M. Dobrominski and the proofreader I.I. Colțov. The book was printed by the printing house “C. Voroișilov” in Balta in a print run of 3,500 copies. The contributors to the volume were Săteanu, Stepanov, Coverdeac, Andronic, Prodan, Oprea and Galiț. Some names may be pseudonyms. Of them, only Galiț later made a career for himself as a writer in the post-war Moldovan SSR. Oprea is possibly also the same person as the eponymous author of primary school textbooks, who died in battle as a soldier during the years of the Second World War.

Prose writings

Prose writing was quite widespread in the ASSRM. The natural narrative awkwardness (given the peculiarities of the cultural climate) does not make it any less interesting. It was the first time that people who had come *ad integrum* from the countryside and who had not lived in the Romanian-speaking area, not even in Bessarabia, strove to convey their impressions of the events that had impacted their lives.

The first narrative that particularly attracts our attention dates from the period before the introduction of Latin script: *Patima lui Petricî* [*The sufferings of Petrică*] by Ion Canna, published in 1931. This short story is also interesting because its 1934 edition contains obvious interventions in the text and has had some paragraphs deleted. The original version began as follows:

Luna lui mart din anu 1919 sî sfîrșă. Aiasta o arăta și soarili, cari tot mai tari și mai tari înșepusî a'ncălzi pămîntu nu dimult digerat, și florișelili rumîni – bălăi de jîșini și di zarzari împejiuru căroră bîzîie roiuri din alghini, și toloaca, și erbîșoara din grădini verdi-crunședî și chiar șă sătenii, cari deamu lipădasî ochincuțli și îmbla discuț.

Petricî – copchil di vo doișpriși ani – voios alergând discuț, cînd pi cărari, cînd pin glod, vine acasî dila școală cu străistuța albî di pînzî di tort în mînî plinî cu cărț. [March of 1919 was coming to an end. One could see it in the sunlight – lending more and more warmth to the thawing earth, still frozen until recently, and in the rosy and white blossoms of the sour cherry and cherry plum trees, surrounded by

swarms of buzzing bees, in the pastureland, in the tender green grass of the backyards, and even in the appearance of the villagers who had taken off their shoes and were now walking around barefooted.

Petrică – a boy of about twelve – was running cheerfully unshod, now along the path, then through the mud, returning from school with his little white homespun hemp bag, full of books”] (Canna, 1931, p. 3);

Petrică, un copil de vr’o doisprezece ani, vine acasă dela școală cu traistuța albă de pînă, plină de cărți

[Petrică, a child of about twelve, is coming home from school with his little white hemp bag full of books.”] (Canna, 1935, p. 3).

The short story offers glimpses into the life of the village community, against whose background the author reveals the dramatic story of an orphaned child. As a result of the fighting between the White Guard and the Bolsheviks, Petrică’s parents were killed. In the end, Petrică is drafted into the Red Army. Although Canna was 17 years old in 1919, the short story likely contains autobiographical facts. Canna had indeed been enlisted in the Bolshevik army at some point, but in reality, he may have been forced to join the military, rather than making a voluntary choice.

In another short story – *În gura mării* [*On the Sea Shore*] (1936) – I. Canna mentions the Tsarist period, sharing impressions (probably based on the accounts of family members or others) about the experience of Moldovans who had been displaced from Bessarabia to the Caucasus.

The text includes lyrical elements, such as the description of early morning in the author’s hometown:

E frumos dimineața să stai pe o bancă în bulevard sprijinit cu mâinile la piept și să cum încetul cu încetul strada începe să se învioneze. Se aude zgomotul pe care îl fac deschiderea obloanelor și ușilor ale caselor, troncănesc căruțele, sirenele automobilelor. Dar strada se învionează deabinelea după ce au șuerat sirenele fabricilor și uzinelor. [“It’s nice in the morning to lean back on a bench in the boulevard, arms folded on your chest, watching the street slowly start to stir. You can hear the noise of the shutters and doors of houses opening, the thunder of carts,

the horns of automobiles. But the street is completely awake only after the sirens of factories and plants have sounded.”]

Grammar awkwardness aside, the novel is written in Romanian and has no localisms whatsoever. Such a text, written in Latin letters, had little chance of finding acceptance in the following period among the authors who had survived the years of 1937–1938 and were later attempting to make a name for themselves in the Moldovan SSR. This is also important in the context of the ironic “folklore” that at the time was unofficially circulating in the intellectual circles of Chişinău about the ability of writers from the left bank of the Dniester to express themselves in Romanian.

The forcible relocation of Moldovan peasant families to the Caucasus, which is mentioned in the short story *În gura mării*, is introduced via the reminiscences of an old man (“grandfather Gligore”), who gathers the children around him. The plot revolves around his involvement in a clash with gendarmes during the Tsarist period in Bessarabia and, later, by the forced displacement to the Caucasus of those found guilty by Tsarist justice.

Mergeam pe jos. Nu cunoşteam locurile. Mulţi din noi n’aveau căruţă şi copiii mergeau derînd cu noi. Pe drum se îmbolnăveau şi mureau. Foamea ne doboră cum furtuna scutură frunzele galbene de pe copaci. Dar nici asta nu e lucru de căpetenie despre care vreau să vă spun. Vasăzică acolo, la Caucaz noi am alcătuit sate de moldoveni şi am început a trăi nici mai amar dar nici mai dulce decît în Basarabia. Pentru omul sărac şi bătut de neazuri pestotlocul era ca în patul de ciulini. [“We were travelling on foot. We did not know the places. Many of us didn’t have a cart and the children had to walk as well. Along the way they would get sick and die. Hunger was reaping us away like a storm shaking the yellow leaves off the trees. But that’s not even the most important thing I want to tell you about either. There, in the Caucasus, we made villages of Moldovans and began to live no more bitterly but no more sweetly than in Bessarabia. For the poor and afflicted ones, any place felt like a bed of thistles.”] (Canna, 1936, pp. 8–9).

Several novels and short stories were written by Nichita Marcov. His heroes are caught up in the events that began in 1917 and experience the typical developments after that date. A separate analysis of this author's literary output might be useful in order to establish the degree of peculiarity in the destinies of the people of these territories, caught in the whirlwind of history. Marcov was a victim of reprisals conducted by the USSR secret police in 1937–1938. His name appears on a list containing the names of 117 people rehabilitated in 1956. In Marcov's case, only the year and place of birth (1903, Corjevo) and the patronymic name Afanasie were specified.

Ideological and autobiographical literature

Among the texts published from 1932 onwards, there are also works signed by various Romanian (communist) activists or speakers of Romanian (P.V. Corneliu seems to have been Hungarian), who adhered to the illegal movement in interwar Romania. Some had been imprisoned. Their impressions, written in the Romanian language that is considerably more literary than that of the writers who were just emerging in the ASSRM, have strong ideological overtones. Further analysis might reveal the extent to which the contestation of Romania's existence was part of a wider discourse in the USSR at the time. This discourse was somewhat "muted" during the Soviet-Romanian rapprochement which tightened economic relations in 1934–1936.

On the other hand, in the case of most of these authors, their radical left-wing convictions must have been genuine since prominent intellectuals with such views had emerged in various countries of Central and Western Europe. But what these writings reveal – allowing for subjectivism and the denial of certain realities due to ideological commitment – is the social struggle in which these authors were engaged, while they were also aware of the contribution of the left-wing movement understood in a broader sense. Such people, with their memories, became dispensable and even dangerous from the standpoint of the Stalinist regime, which entered a new phase with the reprisals conventionally deemed to have been initiated in May 1937. These repressive measures also involved the

physical elimination of most of these activists, some of whom even managed to publish their writings in the ASSRM between 1932–1936. A desideratum for historiography research in the future should be to determine the causes and limits of this Jacobin-style purging of ideas. We could accept that it was a large-scale “settling of accounts” between of careerist Bolsheviks rallied around Stalin and an “archipelago” of members of the communist party with similar traits to the Bolsheviks, in the cultural sphere. Nothing is known about the fate of most of the authors of memoirs we will mention below, or at least nothing has been established by investigative endeavours so far. Apart from those executed, it is possible that some may have escaped by blending into the anonymous proletarian masses.

In 1932, with the transition to the Latin script in the Moldovan ASSR, several books were published by those who considered Romania, somewhat anachronistically, as the embodiment of the boyars’ (local nobility, or social elites) state. The new period was ushered in by the publication in Latin script of the “Communist Manifesto” (Tiraspol), translated from German by N. Vișoiu. It was edited by a team including I. Ocinschi, M. Andriescu, S. Lehtțir and P. Corneliu.

Another significant work, standing out both due to its volume and its radical ideological orientation, is “xv Octombrie: Almanah politico-literar” [“xv October: Political-Literary Almanac”]. The text worth mentioning among the satirical pieces included in this book is the one authored by P.V. Corneliu. In addition to an account of an illegal meeting prior to 7 November in Bucharest, he also evinced a certain talent for describing the atmosphere with lyrical overtones (see Appendix 4).

The issues of “Octombrie” journal published at Balta-Tiraspol in 1933–1937 are not available for research. They are not included in the collections of the Old and Rare Book Department of the National Library in Chișinău. In 1970–1980 many books from that period were retrieved by ordering copies from Kyiv. However, the journal’s issues dating from 1933–1938 have not been recovered. Only the issues of the children’s literary magazine “Scînteia leninistă” of those years can be read almost in their entirety.

The first work in a series of several belonging to this “niche”, is B. I. Borisov’s 1932 book on the Tatar-Bunar uprising of 1924. It was

printed in Latin script, with S. Lehttir as the art editor and I. V. as a proofreader. The author dedicated his work to communist activist Pavel Tkachenko, who had been assassinated in September 1926. With this work the publisher addressed, probably following the communist party's directions, the matter of Bessarabia. At that time, it targeted the Romanian-speaking inhabitants of the ASSRM; however, since it was published in Latin script, the book could also be distributed across the Dniester.

In 1933, *Garda Doftanei* [*Doftana's Guard*] by Ionel Focar, (most likely a pseudonym) was published. The work describes the life of the common soldiers who were used as guards at Doftana prison. Another book, contemporary with the workers' protests that broke out in 1932-1933 and dedicated to the so-called peasants' movement was authored by A. Tătaru. Prison experience was described by Gh. Marin in 1934 (*Evadarea din Jilava* [*Escaping From Jilava*]). Leftist stance aside, this work is important because Jilava became a place where crimes against political opponents would constantly take place, both in the period prior to 1940 and during the war years, and under the communist regime. According to this account, the author was able to escape from this prison together with a group of detainees.

To complete the picture, mention must be made of a history book that presents the Bolshevik perspective on the 1917-1918 events in Bessarabia. This work of almost 250 pages, written by E. Bagrov, was unparalleled in communist party literature until the collapse of the USSR. Published in small print and containing numerous copy documents (the authenticity of which has yet to be assessed), it is the only comprehensive Bolshevik effort by a contemporary of the events. The fact that such activists subsequently came to be regarded as out-of-line and outside the (Bolshevik) law is illustrated by the events shortly after the publication of this book, in Tiraspol, when attacks were directed against Bagrov's "wavering" stance (a context in which P.V. Cornelius and others were also targeted).

Anticlericalism is an important aspect, which however is beyond the scope of this study. A number of virulent thematic works were published against the church hierarchy and - to a greater or lesser extent - against religion itself, with authors taking various degrees of liberty in their attacks.

Among the latest ideological writings to be published in the period is that of Vladimir Dembo. In 1935 he issued a booklet commemorating the uprising led by Horea, Cloșca and Crișan. In addition to criticising the interpretation of this peasants' uprising as a national movement, and insisting that it actually had social character, Dembo also put forth speculations. He claimed that in Zarand, but also elsewhere, most landowners were not Hungarians but Romanians. The few members of local Romanian political elites that existed in Transylvania became Hungarianized in the Reformation era. The fact that the uprising was commemorated by the Romanian political class in 1935 also had cynical motivations, but this could not serve as an argument for Dembo's approach. It should be noted, however, that his booklet is the least ideologized among the series of texts that qualify as ideological.

The degree of compliance with the anti-religious discourse of Balta and Tiraspol writers and publicists could only be ascertained by close reading of their works. The point of reference was, in fact, the writings coming from the central authorities, translated into Romanian from Russian. In 1931, three books were printed in Balta under the aegis of the State Publishing House of Moldavia in Tiraspol [Editura Statnica a Moldovii la Tirișpolea]: *Împotriva cozonacului ș'a pașii* by V. Alexandrov (against traditional Easter practices), *A cui sărbătoari-i Creciunu* [Whose feast is Christmas] by S. Burnov and *Sfârșitul sărbătorilor bete* [The End of Drunkards' Holidays] by N. Amosov.

The fate of the literati in 1937–1938

The works cited above indicate that, thanks to a cultural horizon acquired before the Soviet power was established, some writers produced noteworthy lyrical creations and panoramic descriptions. Others, although they made their debut in the 1930s and wrote laudatory texts extolling the new regime, also expressed pride in their homeland – which was soon to be reviled. Once terror began in 1937, this ideological-literary production as well as its authors were no longer useful to the Communist Party.

Among the first to be arrested was D. Milev. His imminent arrest was announced by the article *O piesă dăunătoare* [A harmful play],

published in “Moldova Socialistă” [“Socialist Moldova”] of 28 July 1937 (no. 171). Its author, A. Chiricenکو, criticized Milev for the fact that his play *Două lumi* [*Two Worlds*] (Editura de Stat a Moldovei – the State Publishing House of Moldova, 1935) failed to denounce the counter-revolutionary activity of foreign spies, and also failed to mention the struggle of the communist party organization to strengthen the collective farms (kolkhozy). “Moreover, we find that Milev’s play grossly falsifies, distorts the facts, the truth of the days past”. Afterwards, the communist youth’s newspaper “Comsomolistul Moldovei” (3 August 1937) criticised Milev and Cornfeld on the grounds that they had not been active in the Writers’ Union (the text had an anonymous author who signed: Începătorul [The Beginner]).

These accusations, which could have been grounds for a literary indictment if the authorities so intended, instead resulted in Milev’s execution by shooting. Among those executed as well was S. Lehtir – who as an employee of the State Publishing House of Moldova had made a major contribution to the development of literature in the autonomous republic. The young poet N. Cabac was also among the victims. Even the so-called “envoy” of Glavlit – the official censorship body, Criulean (by the name he is mentioned in the documents), the one who supervised the publishing of books, was subject to repression. The fate of many writers is unknown. This is also due to the fact that the works were signed with literary pseudonyms, but also with possibly authentic names in the case of the illegalists.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

The episode of sister's abduction in *Doi și una* (1928)

Într'o noapți întunerici o'ncunjiurat căsuța pi malu Nestrului oaste vrăjmași în mântăli verzi și epoleturi pi umeri, o prinso pi una și cu cuvinti groaznici di ocarî o scoso la o cămăruți.

Din cămăruți s'auză sfadî, plesnit di arapnic și suschin slab, da piurmî o aruncato într'o căruți.

Atunci o suschinat, o răcnit doi frați.

Di dureri pintru sorî-sa cei iubiti tari o suschinat altu – copchil înci. O rămas sînguri doi frați. Așa o fost odati, dar piurmî înci o fost...

Mult o fost piurmî... Of tari mult...

On a dark night, the little house on the Dniester's bank was surrounded by the enemy military wearing green coats with epaulettes on the shoulders. They seized the girl and pushed her into a room with terrible swearing. Foul words, whip sounds and faint sobs could be heard from the room, but then they threw her into a cart.

Two siblings then burst into bitter sobs and sighs.

One of them, still a child, wept for his dearly beloved sister. Two brothers were now alone in the world. This happened then, but what happened afterwards...

So many things happened... Oh, so many...

Source: Sfecla, 1928, p. 4.

Appendix 2

Self-criticism of writer M. Andriescu in December 1931:

1. În poezia "O sută de ani" îi încântat [elogiat] on mijlocul avut, cari sî trași cu toată gloata lui în partea comunistă nu de-afta ci o "înstăpânit programa partii și ideinic vrea sî stă în rândurile avangardului clasului proletar, cari sî luptă pentru zidirea soțial-izmului, da deatâta cî-n partii esti "disțiplină" [disciplină]... băieții când aud de "disțiplină" înșep a lucra în gospodăria lui mai tîrziu și a.m. Chipu [imaginea] ista și istorișești nu-i adevărat. În vremea luptii cu țoțchiștii partia crește rîpădi, da'n partii într'a nu "nijlo-caș" de aiștea.

2. În poezia "Sara", "Iarna", "Reviderea" îi romantică nicburjuaznică [romantism mic-burghez], dicăderi, rupiri dila adivăru epocii ș.a.m.

3. În poeziile "Dor de țară" și "Amintiri" încânt [elogiez] Basarabia "întreagi" fără arătarea feții clasurilor ș'a antagonismului întri clasuri. Așăjderea [De asemenea] n'ari fați clasnică și "norocosu" din poezia "Hangu norocosului".

4. O parte mare de poezii îi pătrunsă de individualism, egoștrism putrăd; autoru-i rupt dila clasu truditoresc [muncitoresc], grăiești dila dînsu, da nu de la masă.

5. În avîntu închinării însuflețită a Moldovii Sfatniși [Sovietice], rupînd Moldova dila tot Soiuzu Sfatnic, eu ob'ectivnic întăresc pozățâili democratizmului națonalnic [naționalist].

Cunoscînd rolul și zădășili [sarcinile] literaturii proletarișe; și văzîndu-ni greșăli făcuti, eu li recunosc ș'a li juidic [condamn] hotărât.

1. The poem "O sută de ani" [One hundred years] praises a wealthy commoner, who sides with the party together with all his family not because he "has mastered the platform of the party and the ideas

and he wants to join the ranks of the avantgarde of the proletariat, who strives to build socialism”, but because the party has “discipline”... when the boys hear of discipline, they work better in his household, and so on. This image and this story are not true. During the fight against Trostkysts the Party grew fast, but no such wealthy commoners joined the party.

2. In the poems “Evening”, “Winter”, “Meeting again” there is *romanticî nicburjuaznicî* [petite bourgeoisie romanticism], decay, departures from the truth of the epoch, and so on.

3. In the poems “Missing the homeland” and “Memories” I extol the “entire” Bessarabia without showing the character of social classes and the antagonism between classes. Also the class character is not shown with the “lucky” one in the poem “Hangu norocosului”.

4. Many of my poems are pervaded by rotten individualism and egocentrism; the author is far from the working class and speaks his own words, not the words of the masses.

5. In my enthusiast praise of Soviet Moldova, separating Moldova from the other Soviet republics, I actually take the positions of nationalism democratism.

Aware of the role and tasks of proletarian literature and of my own mistakes, I acknowledge them and firmly denounce them.

Source: Octeabriu, 1932, pp. 146-147.

Appendix 3

Excerpt from a primary school textbook (1932):

Copiii, mergeau la școală.

– Oare ce se aude? – a întrebat Costachel și a stat pe loc.

Toți au stat și ascultă.

– Cocorii zboară, a zis Vasilică.

– Co-co-ri-i zboară-ă-ă..! scîncea și Mihalaș. Ridicînd capul în sus, el s’a împiedicat de o piatră și a căzut jos. Mihalaș a început a plînge.

– Măi, Mihalaș!

– Prost ai fost cu ceafa lată și ai rămas gura căscată! – rîdeau băieții uitîndu-se la dînsul.

Mihalaș s’a sculat și plîngînd zicea: co-o-co-o-ri-i..!

– Mihalaş, ian taci, nu plînge! – i-a zis Costachel – cocorii se duc dela noi pe iarnă în țările calde. Acuma ei n’au ce mânca la noi. Primăvara cocorii se vor întoarce la noi.

– Tu zici că ei vor veni?

– Da, vor veni numai decît! – i-a răspuns Costachel.

Copiii au petrecut cocorii și s’au dus voioși la școală.

The children were walking to school.

“What’s that sound?” – asked Costachel and stood still.

They all sat and listened.

“The cranes are flying away”, Vasilică said.

“Cra-nes fly-ing a-way!” Mihalaş also squealed. Raising his head to look up, he tripped over a stone and fell. Mihalaş began to cry.

“Hey, Mihalaş! You’re such a fool with your big head and your mouth hanging open!” – the boys laughed as they looked at him.

Mihalaş got up and cried: “the cra-a-nes...!”

“Mihalaş, come on, stop crying,” said Costachel, “the cranes are leaving for the warm countries in winter. Now they have nothing to eat here. In spring the cranes will come back to us.”

“You say they will come?”

“Yes, they’ll surely come!” – replied Costachel.

The children watched the cranes fly away, then went to school happily.

Source: Onufrievici, 1932, p. 40.

Appendix 4

Autumn in Bucharest before November 7, as described by P.V. Corneliu:

Se apropia 7 Noiembrie. Bucureștul se desbrăcă de frunzele sale verzi, acum ruginite. Seara venea de cu vreme. Prin grădinile publice frunzele căzute, – cele cari nu erau încă strînse în mormane, – fășăiau, printre picioarele celor cari se plimbau a lene, sorbind aerul răcoros al serii și pierzîndu-se în brațele melancoliei de toamnă, privind cum căde[a] frunză după frunză în formă spirală, atingea pîmîntul, se amesteca cu celelalte cu cari s’au născut deodată, a trăit și a murit.

Din cînd în cînd, cîte’o stea căzătoare albăstruie strălucea pentru scurtă vreme și apoi nu se mai auzea decît trompeta unei mașini, ce trecea în grabă, pe una din străzile apropiate.

Mai apoi a eșit și luna privind parcă mirată la copacii golinași, ce-ți inspira[u] numai tristețe, ce-ți reamintea[u] de iarnă, de frig, de lemne și..., brr... te strângeai mai tare în pardesiu...

Pe o astfel de seară târzie se întorcea[u] de la o ședință, – traversând de-a curmezișul, parcul Carol, – trei conducători ai mișcării revoluționare din România.

November 7 was approaching. Bucharest was shedding its green leaves, now rusty. Evening fell early. In the public gardens the fallen leaves, – those which had not yet been gathered in heaps, – rustled under the feet of those who strolled idly, breathing with delight the cool evening air and losing themselves in the arms of autumn melancholy, watching how leaf after leaf fell in a spiral, touched the ground, and mingled with the others with which they had been born, lived and died together.

Every now and then a bluish shooting star flickered briefly, and then the only sound that could be heard was the trumpet of a car rushing past in one of the nearby streets.

Then the moon came out, looking as if in astonishment at the bare trees, which only made you sad, reminded you of winter, of the cold, of firewood..., brr... you wrapped yourself tighter in your coat...

On such a sad evening three leaders of the revolutionary movement in Romania were returning from a meeting, crossing the Carol Park.

Source: P.V. Corneliu, 1932, p. 83.

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DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.10



Insights Into Reconstructing the History of the Making of Ivan Franko's Collected Works in 25 Volumes

Abstract

The article outlines the stages of the history preparing an edition of Ivan Franko's works in 25 volumes by systematizing literary studies and studying archive sources. The events are described in organic connection with historical and socio-political circumstances, which made it possible to show the meanders of Franko's legacy reaching his readers. Some of the unknown documents are introduced into scientific circulation. The research methods of choice were textual and source analysis and synthesis. The use of these tools made it possible to establish little-known facts about the history of the collected works, trace the announcement of the contents of the individual volumes in the press, analyze the obstacles encountered, and find out the reasons for the sudden collapse of this publishing initiative.

Keywords

Ivan Franko, anniversary edition, multi-volume collection, textual and source history, multi-volume collection.

Suggested citation: Holiak T. (2023). Insights Into Reconstructing the History of the Making of Ivan Franko's Collected Works in 25 Volumes. *Trimarium. The History and Literature of Central and Eastern European Countries*, 2(2), 243–264.

DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.10

Submitted: 16.03.2023 / Accepted: 21.03.2023

Ivan Franko's legacy and the fates of the people who prepared the editions encountered many difficult, dramatic, and even tragic moments, and therefore studying the history of the multi-volume collections of his works remains relevant. The details of this complicated process have to be assembled like a mosaic and the puzzle pieces of a complete picture have to be carefully put together. The edition of Franko's works in 25 volumes never saw its conclusion: only volumes 2 and 12 have been published. Even today, it is difficult to exhaustively recreate the course and conditions of the collection's preparation. Some questions remain unanswered, some episodes are hypothetical because witnesses and participants in the events have passed away, and many sources have been lost forever through history. However, the history of this project is marked not only by tragedy and impossibility, but also by the professionalism, the scientific apparatus, the selection of texts to be published, and the extraordinary responsibility of the team whose desire was to complete the complex task in a short time.

The source base for the reconstruction of the history of preparing Ivan Franko's works in 25 volumes was the publication of materials by Yevhen Pshenychnyi (Pshenychnyi and Trehub, 2007), Maria Trehub (Trehub, 2005), Maria Valio (Valio, 2006), historical and analytical research and publications of documents by Oleksandr Lutskyi (Lutskyi, 2006, 2020), memoirs of Volodymyr Doroshenko (Doroshenko, 1955), Lviv periodicals of 1940–1941 and archival materials from the collections of the Vasyl Stefanyk National Scientific Library of Ukraine in Lviv (LNSL), the Central State Archive-Museum of Literature and Art of Ukraine (CDAML), and the Central State Archive of Higher Authorities and Governments of Ukraine. The general literary study, the use of source and textual tools, and a thorough study of the array of archives and documentary sources have made it possible to analyze and systematize little-known facts about the history of the twenty-five-volume set of Franko's works of 1940–1941, to outline the textual foundations of the publication, to demonstrate the scale and complexity of the work done, and to emphasize the complexity of reasons that prevented the introduction of hitherto unexplored documents into scientific circulation.

Lutskyi (2006) claims that the stimulus for the new publishing initiative of a scientific edition of Ivan Franko's works dedicated to the celebration of the 85th anniversary of the writer's birth and commemorate the 25th anniversary of his death, was not so much in the anniversary dates as the socio-political circumstances that arose in Western Ukraine after its accession to the USSR in 1939. Thus, the publication of Franko's works was intended to demonstrate the Soviet government's loyalty to its cultural achievements. The Protocol Resolution of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine (CC CP(b)U) of January 10, 1940, obliged the State Literature Publishing House of the Ukrainian SSR to provide readers with the complete works of Ivan Franko by May 1941, and the Institute of Literature (IL) to participate in the selection and verification of the writer's texts (Lutskyi, 2006). This became a priority of the activities of the Lviv Department of the T. Shevchenko Institute of Ukrainian Literature, which was founded on 1 February 1940 (Onyshchenko, 2003, p. 244). According to the profile of the department (LNSL. F. 55. Od. zb. 255/1. Ark. 5), in 1940, within the framework of the general theme ("Scientific publication of the heritage of the classics of Ukrainian literature"), the work was planned in two directions: preparation and printing of artistic works by Ivan Franko and his scientific and critical writing in 10 volumes. In a fairly short period of time (March 1940–April 1941), they were going to present Franko's artistic heritage to readers (LNSL. F. 55. Od. zb. 255/1. Ark. 5). The first edition of the writer's scientific and critical works was to be published by scholars of the Institute of Literature in Kyiv together with the Institute of Folklore of the Academy of Sciences. The deadlines were also set: May 1, 1940–1942; during 1940, it was planned to prepare the first 3 volumes of Franko's literary studies (LNSL. F. 55. Od. zb. 255/1. Ark. 5).

The composition of the editorial board was not determined immediately. By the aforementioned Political Office resolution of January 10, 1940, it was approved as follows: Oleksandr Biletskyi, Mykhailo Vozniak, Kyrylo Studynskyi, Oleksandr Korniiichuk, [Y.]. Lysenko, Yurii Kobyletskyi, and Ivan Kolohoyda (Onishchenko, 2003, p. 243). The thematic plan of the Lviv branch of the IL for 1940 was somewhat different: O. Korniiichuk, O. Biletskyi, P. Tychyna, M. Vozniak,

K. Studynskiy, Yu. Kobyleckiy, Y. Lysenko (LNSL. F. 55. Od. zb. 255/1. Ark. 5). According to the documents, a meeting devoted to the problems of editing Ivan Franko's works would be attended by Petro Panch (LNSL. F. 29. Op. 1. Od. zb. 671. Ark. 34), Academy Member Filaret Kolesa also expressed his point of view on the upcoming edition (CDAMLM. F. 379. Op. 1. Spr. 171. Ark. 2-3).

The first meeting of the editorial board members, who discussed general textual principles (type of publication, its content, volume, structure of the scientific apparatus, etc.), the timing of publication and distribution, took place on February 10, 1940 (LNSL. F. 29. Op. 1. Od. zb. 671. Ark. 34-36).

The question of the language of the works immediately arose. The decision was made to bring the prose texts closer to the current spelling, if possible, and to make no changes to the poetry. During the discussion, a proposal was made to print some of Franko's works and a collection of selected poems from the same edition in parallel. Mykailo Vozniak was instructed to draw up a prospectus for the future edition and present it at the next meeting on February 15, 1940, in Lviv. His plan for the jubilee edition of Ivan Franko's works in 15 volumes, which was to include fiction, is preserved (LNSL. F. 29. Op. 1. Od. zb. 671. Ark. 42-46). Hypothetically, this could have been a preliminary plan. The concept for the new edition was borrowed from the thirty-volume collection edited by Ivan Lyzanivskiy and Serhii Pylypenko, despite the fact that it needed to be scientifically verified. However, at that time it was the most complete collection of a writer's works, and it was of great social and cultural significance.

A prospectus of literary and critical works by Ivan Franko was also made this way. In Vozniak's archive, there is a typewritten outline of works on literary studies and folklore, designed for 15 volumes (LNSL. F. 29. Op. 1. Od. zb. 671. Ark. 56-66). It could serve as a starting point for further discussion. During the publication of the thirty-volume set (1924-1931). I. Lyzanivskiy put a lot of effort into the project, and according to his plan, the corpus of literary and critical works was to be published (Holiak, 2020). Rewrites of articles and essays were organized; eventually, the general vision of the series was presented by the compiler in the form of an advertisement on the pages of the book of articles by I. Franko about Emile Zola (Lyzanivskiy

(ed.), 1931). A detailed prospectus for 11 volumes titled *Literatura (statti, rozvidky, zamitky, retsenzii)* was published in a collection of Franko's works on Leo Tolstoy (Lyzanivskiyi (ed.), [no year]). The history of the thirty-volume collection and its editors ended tragically, but their work has become a solid foundation, an important basis for additions. The plan drawn up by scholars in 1940 was to cover 15 volumes. It is identical to the prospectus of Lyzanivskiyi, starting with volume 3, and this shows that the principle of continuity was followed.

The next extended meeting of the editorial board was held on April 27, 1940. A letter by Davyd Kopytsia to O. Biletskyi of 3 May 1940 (CDAMLM. F. 379. Op. 1. Spr. 171. Ark. 2-3). It is known that a meeting was held at the Central Committee with Y. Lysenko. M. Vozniak and Yu. Kobyleckiyi reported. During the discussion, they approved the prospect with a note that M. Vozniak would finalize it. The proposal to publish literary and scientific works separately was rejected, specifying that this editorial board would concentrate its efforts on preparing an anniversary edition of Ivan Franko's works, not a complete one. Therefore, it was proposed to include only 4-5 volumes of Franko's selected literary studies and other scientific works. Professor Kolesa argued that one volume should be devoted to the writer's works on folklore, although M. Vozniak opposed this idea (CDAMLM. F. 379. Op. 1. Spr. 171. Ark. 2-3).

At this meeting, the editorial board approved an instruction (Pshenychnyi and Trehub, 2007, 494-495). In 11 points, they revealed the basic textual principles of the future anniversary edition. The compilers developed a scheme of the collection's scientific apparatus. The multi-volume collection of Ivan Franko was to include fiction texts (with the exception of his first childhood attempts and his last works), selected literary criticism and scientific writing. There were no plans to include prose translations, only poetry. The editors wanted to divide all the material into 20 volumes, each 30 printing sheets long. The format of the volumes and their artistic design were based on the five-volume set of Taras Shevchenko's works of 1939. The first volume would be opened with a preface by the editorial board on the principles of publishing Ivan Franko's works and a literary and biographical study of the writer. According to

V. Doroshenko, this part of the work was to be done by M. Vozniak: "... it was the responsibility of M. Vozniak as editor-in-chief also to compile a detailed sketch of Ivan Franko's life and work, which was to head the publication in volume I. It was a very responsible work, on which the late [editor] worked hard" (Doroshenko, 1955, p. 2). The principle of arrangement of the material is genre-based and chronological, but also "... preserving the principle of collections compiled and published by Ivan Franko himself and the genre division of the writer's entire work" (Pshenychnyi and Trehub, 2007, p. 494). They decided that each volume should have indexes, a concise explanation of the least used literary language or specific Western Ukrainian phrases and lexemes. Each volume would be accompanied by notes with information about the time, circumstances, and printing of each work, while the editorial board warned against turning them "... either into an explanation of the meaning of a given work or into imposing a certain understanding of its idea on the reader" (Pshenychnyi and Trehub, 2007, p. 495). Original explanations to individual texts and prefaces to the collections were also included in the notes.

This was the first multi-volume edition in which scholars could use the writer's archive in the course of preparing it. Therefore, the editorial board emphasized the principle of taking into account the author's last creative stage of work on the text: "Prosaic texts must be printed according to the latest editions by Franko himself, usually preserving Franko's language, phraseology, and style, and in no case changing his language" (Pshenychnyi and Trehub, 2007, p. 494). The ways to solve the problem of the language design of the writer's works were demonstrated in paragraphs 5-7 of the instructions. On May 3, 1940, in a letter to O. Biletskyi, D. Kopytsia did not note that from the very beginning this issue was one of the most troublesome and controversial ones, causing a wave of misunderstandings and generally showing the existence of completely opposite views. At different times, M. Vozniak, P. Panch, and K. Studynskyi expressed their opinions. Panch emphasized that the prose works of Ivan Franko should be closer to the current language and spelling, but this should concern only the author's language, while the dialogs should be fully preserved. He warned not to make changes to poetry, except in cases where there are no violations of verse size (LNSL. F. 29. Od. zb. 671.

Ark. 34). Academy scholar K. Studnytskyi emphasized the importance of caution when making corrections to texts and the importance of preserving Franko's linguistic flavor (LNSL. F. 29. Od. zb. 671. Ark. 34). M. Vozniak had his own position, and even in his articles of the 1950s it remained unwavering: he insisted on the publication of Ivan Franko's works, first as a strict academic edition and then as a popular one (Vozniak, 2007a, p. 539). In the end, it was decided to publish the works in the modern spelling. Deviations were allowed only in poetic texts, if such an intervention disrupted the rhythmic organization of the poetry and led to the destruction of rhyme.

A week later, on May 8, 1940, D. Kopytsia informed O. Biletskyi that the total volume of the publication had changed and would consist of 25 volumes: 15 would present the works by I. Franko, while the others would include selected literary critical works. However, he admitted that he could not fully visualize the whole process (CDAML. F. 379. Op. 1. Spr. 171. Ark. 6). This skepticism was due to the task of encompassing the incredible complexity of the project and the tight deadlines. V. Doroshenko mentioned that "in order to hurry up the printing of Franko's works, the government of the Ukrainian SSR ordered them to be sent to printing houses not only in Kyiv or Lviv, but also in Kharkiv, Katerynoslav, and Odesa" (Doroshenko, 1955, p. 2). Therefore, despite pressure from the publisher, Kopytsia deliberately delayed the signing of the contract (CDAML. F. 379. Op. 1. Spr. 171. Ark. 6).

The 25-volume anniversary edition was included in the working schedule of the Department of the Institute of Literature of the Academy of Sciences in Lviv for 1941. According to the documents, the compilation was to be completed by May 1, 1941; the executors were the Lviv branch of the Institute of Literature, the IL in Kyiv, and the branch of the Institute of Linguistics at the Academy of Sciences in Lviv. The composition of the working group was determined: Kyrylo Studynskyi, Yakym Yarema, Volodymyr Radzykevych, Veniamin Hufeld, Stepan Shchurat, Maria Derkach, Mykhailo Tershakovets, Mykhailo Sonevytskyi, Hryhorii Luzhnytskyi, and others. O. Biletskyi and M. Vozniak were appointed as executive editors. The general management was entrusted to the editorial board consisting of O. Kornychuk, [Y.] Lysenko, K. Studynskyi,

Yu. Kobyletskyi, M. Vozniak, and O. Biletskyi (LNSL. F. 55. Od. zb. 255/1. Ark. 6). However, it was difficult to manage the process from a distance, impossible to control its implementation, and the distrust among the team, which was growing every day, also hindered the work. That is why D. Kopytsia came up with the idea to send Kyiv employees headed by Ilia Stebun to Lviv, despite the fact that V. Hufeld was already there (CDAMLM. F. 379. Op. 1. Spr. 171. Ark. 6).

In the collections of the Manuscripts Department of the Vasyl Stefanyk National Scientific Library of Ukraine in Lviv (F. 55. Od. zb. 255/2. 71 ark.; F. 29. Op. 1. Od. zb. 671. 103 ark.; Od. zb. 778/p. 180. Ark. 1-17) and the collections of M. Derkach at the CDAMLM (F. 167. Op. 1. Spr. 18. 28 ark.; Spr. 16. 8 ark.) contain several versions of the plans and prospects of the twenty-five-volume edition and its individual volumes. Numbered and unnumbered, handwritten and typewritten, fragments and records that look relatively complete, they all illustrate the complex way in which the whole was formed. Without dwelling on their detailed analysis (this may be the subject of a separate study), it should be noted that the compilers had to take into account the ideological requirements of the time. The documents demonstrate hesitations in developing the content of individual volumes of literary and critical works by I. Franko. Confirmation that the bulk material was formed under the watchful eye of the Central Committee is also found in D. Kopytsia's letter to O. Biletskyi of 8 May 1940 (CDAMLM. F. 379. Op. 1. Spr. 171. Ark. 7).

The preparation of the anniversary edition, according to all the canons of the party nomenclature, was supposed to be widely publicized, but this story can be viewed from two perspectives: public information and the behind-the-scenes of working days, hidden from prying eyes, but no less interesting, intense and dramatic. Periodicals played a major role in shaping public opinion. It is an important source for studying official messages designed to create an informational picture of reality in accordance with specific political objectives. They help recreate the chronology of events and trace the announcement of the content of individual volumes of the future twenty-five-volume set.

Preparations for the celebration of Ivan Franko's anniversary and commemoration of his memory were reported in the pages of the

Vilna Ukraina and *Literatura i mystetstvo*. Formal and concise, they fully met the requirements of the information field of the time: to attract attention, arouse interest and trust in the reader, and at the same time demonstrate loyalty to the government and emphasize the party's achievements.

Details of the ambitious and socially significant publishing project were published in the press in August 1940. The news of the first volumes being printed were published on August 14, 1940 ([no author], 1940). "Pershi tomy yuvileinoho vydannia tvoriv Ivana Franka" [Announcement]), reported that the Lviv branch of the Institute of Literature of the Ukrainian SSR prepared 12 volumes, and the first five would be published that month. This included poetic collections *Z vershyn i nyzyn*, *Ziviale lystia*, *Mij Izmarahd* in addition to the short stories "Borys Hrab", "Panshchyzniani khlib", "Bez pratsi", "Kazka pro Dobrobyt" and others. Also, the stage of preparation of the volumes was outlined, emphasizing that they are undergoing literary editing.

Almost two weeks later, on August 25, 1940, the same newspaper reported that all 15 volumes of Franko's fiction were ready, and 10 volumes of literary criticism, journalism, and translations from foreign languages were to be submitted to the publishing house by the end of the year. The content of the first five was different: short stories, lyrical poetry, and early novels by Franko ([no author], 1940. "Yuvileine vydannia tvoriv Ivana Franka" [announcement]).

The readers were intrigued and eagerly awaited the announced publication. However, the announced first books did not appear either in August or by the end of the year. The stage of preparedness of the 15 volumes of fiction and three volumes of translations was confirmed on February 28, 1941, by the *Literaturna Hazeta* ([no author], 1941. "Vchasno vydaty tvory Franka" [announcement]).

The author partially outlined the causes and consequences of the delay in the publication, one of which is an inadequate assessment of the scale of the work, especially the segment related to translations and compilation of volumes of literary criticism:

Proofreading should take two weeks, but having received the first prints in mid-January, the institute continues to keep them... In addition,

the publishing house has not yet received Franko's critical works on Ukrainian literature and Western European literature. Many developments require further notes ([no author], 1941. "Vchasno vydaty tvory Franka [announcement]).

This resulted in the printing house being idle. The completion of the work was postponed until March 15. However, in April 1941 the first volumes had not yet been published. On April 4, the *Literaturna Hazeta* once again reminded that the State Literary Publishing House was tasked by the governmental anniversary committee to publish a twenty-five-volume set of works by Ivan Franko. It was hinted that meetings with the public of writers and scholars working on the texts of Franko's works and an exhibition of projects for the artistic design of the anniversary collection would be very appropriate and interesting ([no author], 1941. "Do yuvileiu Ivana Franka" [announcement]).

On April 11, 1941, the *Vilna Ukraina* again reported that the preparation of 20 volumes of the collection was nearing completion, and that five volumes of short stories, four volumes of novels, a volume of dramatic works, four volumes of poetry, and three volumes of literary criticism on Ukrainian literature had already been sent to Kyiv. They emphasized that some of the materials are unknown or little known to readers. Thus, it was planned to publish the work *Literatura, ii zavdannia ta naivazhnishi tsikhy*, articles on Lesya Ukrainka, M. Kotsiubynskyi, I. Karpenko-Karyi, V. Stefanyk and others ([no author], 1941. "Do yuvileinoho vydannia tvoriv Ivana Franka" [announcement]). Earlier, the newspaper *Vilna Ukraina* reported that the multi-volume collection would include an unknown translation of *The Tale of Igor's Campaign* found by IL researchers in Lviv in the writer's manuscript archive ([no author], 1940. "Yuvileine vydannia tvoriv Ivana Franka" [announcement]).

Meanwhile, a real drama was unfolding behind the scenes. Organizing Ivan Franko's works based on scientific and critical review of the texts was a great challenge, requiring a well-developed archive, a frantic pace of work and dedication of the performers, and most importantly, coordination at all levels. The timing of the publication of the twenty-five-volume work depended on the precise organization and close cooperation of scholars from the Department of

Ukrainian Literature, the Manuscripts Department of the Lviv Academic Library, and the printing house. The state, structure and content of the complex archive of I. Franko was estimated already in 1941 by M. Derkach in the journal *Literatura i mystetstvo* (Derkach, 1941). The researcher paid tribute to the titanic work of M. Vozniak. One can get an idea of the difficult conditions and the ascetic work of the staff of the manuscripts department thanks to the publication by Tetiana Hutsalenko (Hutsalenko, 2005). Despite all the difficulties, the research of the archive continued. In 1941, the compilers and members of the editorial committee presented a number of unknown works by Ivan Franko to the readers of the journal *Literatura i mystetstvo*, printed from manuscripts. M. Derkach and Oleksandr Kyselov published the poem “Shevchenko i poklonnyky” (Derkach, Kyselov, 1941), which was to be included in volume xv; also poems “Shche ne propalo” and “Pryvit” were included in this volume (Franko, 1941. “Shche ne propalo”, “Pryvit”) and the poetic work “Rubach”, preserved between the manuscripts of Osyp Makovei (Franko, 1941. “Rubach (z narodnykh perekaziv)”). The publication of these materials was also reported by the newspaper *Vilna Ukraina* on May 28, 1941. ([No author], 1941). “Literatura i mystetstvo – Frankovi”). On April 16, 1941, the *Literaturna Hazeta* published an abridged article translated from German, “Shekspir v Ukraintsiv” with a note that readers would be able to read the full text in the twentieth volume of the anniversary edition (Franko, 1941. “Shekspir v Ukraintsiv”). However, archives show that the publication’s prospectus was constantly being revised. The volumes of translations and literary criticism were marked by particular imperfections, although corrections were made to the volumes of fiction.

Many misunderstandings arose during the formation of the translation corpus. Along with ideological factors, the compilers faced the scarcity of professional translators (LNSL. F. 55. Od. zb. 246. Ark. 16). Most of the contracts were signed by Pylyp Derkach, a translator from Polish and German. According to his payroll documents, he translated the following works of Ivan Franko from Polish: “Nove vydannia tvoriv Shekspira”, “Kupets venetskyi”, “Narysy z istorii ukrainskoi literatury v Halychyni”, “Ukrainska literatura v Halychyni za rik 1886”, “Step”,

“Veselka”, “Ukrainska almanakhova literatura”, “Ukrainskyi teatr v Halychyni”, Lesia Ukrainka”, “Shekspir v Ukraintsiv”, “Z dilianky nauky i literaury”, “Halytsko-ukrainski narodovtsi i radykaly”. The articles “Maria Konopnytska” and “Hlib Uspenskyi” were translated from German (LNSL. F. 55. Od. zb. 246. Ark. 6, 7, 9–11). In addition, agreements were signed to translate theater reviews for the years 1888, 1889, 1890, 1892 and 1893, on top of articles “Dopovidi Miriama” (on Belgian literature), “Yan Kasprovych” (LNSL. F. 55. Od. zb. 247. Ark. 2). The number of translated theater reviews remains unclear. On April 21, 1941, the deputy head of the department of the Institute of Ukrainian Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, V. Hufeld issued a request to the accounting department to pay for the work performed, totaling only 2 printed sheets (LNSL. F. 55. Od. zb. 247. Ark. 16). The contract for the following translations: “‘Na storozhi’ B. Prusa”, “Yulij Slovatskyi i yoho tvory”, “Nove vydannia tvoriv Slovatskoho”, “Nove vydannia tvoriv Mitskevycha”, “Moi falshuvannia”, “N. Zaionchkovska-Krestovska”, “S. Kravchynskyi-Stepniak” and “Neshchasne kokhannia” were dated 30 April 1941. On 14 May 1941, V. Hufeld turned to the accounting department to pay P. Derkach 400 Soviet rubles for them (LNSL. F. 55. Od. zb. 247. Ark. 17, 18).

Also, V. Doroshenko translated from Polish: “Shevchenko v osvittenni p. Ursina”, “Poetychni tvory Shevchenka”, “Legenda pro Pylata”, “Bezhuзде vorkotinnia ‘Chervonoi Rusi’”, quotations in Franko’s articles on T. Shevchenko and about Mordovets’ stories (LNSL. F. 55. Od. zb. 246. Ark. 8, 18).

Mykhailo Rudnytskyi’s involvement was also used to translate the article “Ukraintsy” from Hungarian (LNSL. F. 55. Od. zb. 246. Ark. 19).

The translation prospectus also aroused controversy. According to a letter from D. Kopytsia’s to O. Biletskyi, the bibliography was compiled by Ida Zhuravska, assisted by Abram Hozenpud (CDAMLM. F. 379. Op. 1. Spr. 171. Ark. 6–7). However, the compilers of the volumes expressed criticism regarding the choice of articles, as it was virtually impossible to quickly prepare little-known texts and high-quality notes to them.

Along with this, in some cases, there was also the problem of attribution. The Question of Franko’s translations from old literature is a research topic explored by M. Sonevytskyi (LNSL. F. 55.

Od. zb. 255/1. Ark. 16–17), which, in particular, included the study of manuscripts and printed translations, and the authentication of texts preserved in the archive that were not written by Franko's hand. The writer's son, Taras Franko, was asked to help establish the authorship of a number of works (LNSL. F. 55. Od. zb. 246. Ark. 17).

However, most of the disputes and clarifications arose during the discussion of the principles of reproducing the language of I. Franko. As already noted, on April 27, 1940, the instruction on the basic textual principles of the publication was approved, and 5–7 paragraphs dealt with this issue. However, the general provisions did not contribute to the resolution of the controversial issues. There was a constant need to settle misunderstandings, as evidenced by the staff's official correspondence (LNSL. F. 55. Od. zb. 246. Ark. 12–13). D. Kopytsia also admitted to the sensitivity of this topic to O. Biletskyi on March 14, 1941 (CDAMLM. F. 379. Op. 1. Spr. 171. Ark. 8zv.) Even after a year of hard work, a clear position on language transfer has not been formed. On June 10, 1940, at a regular meeting, Vasyl Simovych, a senior researcher at the Lviv Department of the Institute of Linguistics of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR, expressed his vision of solving this problem. After the discussion, the commission consisting of Ahatanhel Krymskyi, M. Vozniak and V. Simovych headed by D. Kopytsia, adopted a number of resolutions concerning the phonetic, grammatical, and lexical levels of language design of works on June 11, 1940 (Pshenychnyi and Trehub, 2007, pp. 496–500). The course of those events was outlined in later publications by M. Vozniak and O. Kyselov during a discussion that broke out on the pages of the Bulletin of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in 1951 during the preparation of the publication of works in 20 volumes during 1950–1956. M. Vozniak was outraged by the chaotic linguistic design of Ivan Franko's works (Vozniak, 2007b).

I. Stebun and V. Hufeld were responsible for the work schedule and its observance (Lutsky, 2006). Given the limited time for preparing manuscripts (until January 1, 1941), the schedule was very busy. As V. Doroshenko mentioned, "... the work on Franko went smoothly, like on an assembly line, volume after volume" (Doroshenko, 1955, p. 2). The work was organized as follows: one or two scholars were assigned to each volume to prepare the texts and

develop the scientific apparatus. The results were reviewed by the volume editors. The review usually lasted 5 days, although in some cases up to 10 days. Next came literary editing and, finally, the work of the editor-in-chief. The entire stage of compiling the volume was supposed to last one and a half months. However, the possibility of returning the material to the editors after the literary editor was also discussed in order to increase the responsibility of the latter (LNSL. F. 55. Od. zb. 246. Ark. 12-13). An article in the *Vilna Ukraina* reveals that all fiction was read by literary editor Fedir Havrysh, literary criticism by V. Tatarinov, and Stepan Kovhaniuk worked on the volumes of translations (Kuzmiv, 1941).

The composition of the working group was not permanent. The compilers of the volumes organized mutual checks, made comments, corrections, expressed dissatisfaction, and often changed due to inadequate professional training and irresponsible attitude to the work (Vozniak, 2007b).

O. Lutskyi published the conclusion of the planning commission to audit the state of preparations of the publication for print, dated February 15-17, 1941 (Lutskyi, 2020). The text of the document refers to 14 volumes of Ivan Franko's works. The rest were at different stages of readiness. The desperate letter from D. Kopytsia to O. Biletskyi on March 14, 1941 (CDAMLM. F. 379. Op. 1. Spr. 171. Ark. 8-10) leads to the conclusion that the publication was actually on the verge of collapse. The addressee complained that he was forced to bear the brunt of the burden because the State Literary Publishing House had not taken care of organizational issues and had not appointed a person responsible for bringing the texts to a common denominator. It was simply unrealistic to prepare such a collection in such a short time. According to the letter, from January to March 1941, the publishing house handed over 7-8 volumes of proofreading, which had to be checked against the originals, dictionaries and notes revised, indexes compiled, and literary editing done. D. Kopytsia complained about the presence of numerous errors, repetitions, unprofessionally prepared indexes and comments, etc. This made it impossible to publish even one volume in a form that would not discredit the Institute. He considered it impossible to hire another literary editor.

He recognized that this state of affairs was a huge tragedy, because there were only four months left before the anniversary. The printing house was on the verge of shutting down. It should also be borne in mind that each volume, each note had to undergo a censorship review. This dramatic situation was primarily a consequence of the party ideology of the time: to set an ambitious and unrealistic task, disregarding local interests and capacities, and in case of failure to fulfill it, to deliberately divide the participants into “friends” and “foes”, the heroes and the guilty. The team of compilers of the 1940 edition was thanked for their diligent work (Lutskyi, 2020). But now the situation has changed. The tone of the letter suggests that D. Kopytsia realized that he could be included in the cohort of the “perpetrators”. He admitted to O. Biletskyi that the team was trying to protect themselves by signaling the authorities, but he did not believe that the case would be resolved positively. It is worth noting that the division into “friends” and “foes” was not long in coming, and M. Vozniak was accused of bourgeois nationalism, who should not participate in the next project of a multi-volume edition.

The distance also slowed down the work. Scholars in Kyiv and Lviv were constantly in dialog, as evidenced by the letters and telegrams of their colleagues, but they could not act according to instructions and meet deadlines (LNSL. F. 55. Od. zb. 259/p. XII. Ark. 3).

Finally, the names of the scholars who made the titanic efforts to compile 15 volumes of Ivan Franko’s works are recorded in a letter to D. Kopytsia on March 20, 1941: “Volume I: prepared for publication and compiled according to the scientific apparatus by S. V. Shchurat; [volume] II: prepared and compiled according to the scientific apparatus for publication by V.P. Radzykevich and Ya. Yarema; [volume] III: prepared and compiled according to the scientific apparatus for printing by V.P. Radzykevich; [volume] IV: prepared by Savytska and V.P. Radzykevich; [volume] V: stories prepared by Yu. Stefanyk and M. Sonevytskyi; the first editing of Petriiv: V.I. Simovych; [volume] VI: V.I. Simovych and M. Bernshtein; [volume] VII: “Zakhar Berkut” – V.I. Simovych and M. Tershakovets; “Lelum i Polelum” – M. Vozniak; “Heroi po nevoli”, “Hutak” – V. P. Radzykevich; “Ivas Novitnyi” – S. F. Havrysh; [volume] VIII: “Osnovy suspilnosti” – V.I. Simovych and M. Tershakovets; “Dla

domashnoho ohnyshcha”, “Velykyi shum” – Ya. Yarema; [volume] ix: V.I. Simovych and M. Tershakovets; volume x: H.L. Lyzhynskyi (texts checked afterwards against the originals by Ya. Yarema); volume xi: V.I. Simovych; [volume] xii: M.D. Derkach (texts checked afterwards against the originals by Ya. Yarema); [volume] xiii, xiv: Ya. Yarema; [volume] xv: O. Kyselov and M. Derkach” (LNSL. F. 55. Od. zb. 246. Ark. 14–15).

The first volume of Ivan Franko’s critical works was ready on April 1, 1941, as evidenced by a letter from D. Kopytsia’s letter with that date. It also states that three more volumes were ready (it is not specified which ones) and expresses the hope that all volumes of critical works will be delivered by the end of April 1941 (LNSL. F. 55. Od. zb. 246. Ark. 15). But in June 1941, the war broke out.

Oleksandr Lutskyi (2006), considering the conditions of preparation of the twenty-five-volume set from the perspective of a historian, emphasized a complex set of important circumstances that burdened and finally made it impossible to successfully fulfill the ambitious goals set: disorganization of scholars’ efforts on many research topics, writing monographs, etc. Almost all employees combined their work at the research institution with teaching at universities. According to the text of the explanatory note to the plan of the Institute of Ukrainian Literature at the T. H. Shevchenko signed by O. Biletskyi and D. Kopytsia, “... compared to 1940, the 1941 plan was significantly increased, almost twice” (Onyshchenko, 2003, p. 327). It was an unrealistic scale of work related to the writing of original research papers with a total volume of 225 pages, a scientific bibliography and scientific description of manuscripts stored at the Institute (up to 70 pages), two volumes of a textbook on the history of Ukrainian literature (up to 120 pages), publication of textbooks (80 pages) and scientifically verified works of classical literature with comments (to complete the publication of T. Shevchenko, I. Franko, V. Stefanyk and to start publishing Lesia Ukrainka’s works), along with holding 8 scientific institute sessions devoted to significant dates in the history of Ukrainian literature, at which 50 reports were published (Onyshchenko, 2003, pp. 326–327). Facing the insane amount of work, limited time, constant pressure, unfavorable moral and psychological climate and disciplinary and punitive measures

for lateness, absenteeism or unauthorized absence, nervous tension, and overcoming everyday difficulties, they had to sacrifice weekends, vacations, and leisure time, which led to overwork, misunderstandings, and constant stress. The discomfort was exacerbated by the totalitarian policy of the Soviet government, which deepened the feeling of uncertainty about the future.

M. Vozniak complained that one of the main reasons for the suspension was a banal delay: "Because some members of the editorial board were in no hurry to fulfill the task entrusted to them, only two volumes were published: the second and the twelfth" (Vozniak, 2007a, p. 536). D. Kopytsia admitted to negligence in the performance of his duties, not by him, but by his superiors (CDAMLM. F. 379. Op. 1. Spr. 171. Ark. 8-10).

The number of volumes ready for printing varies among the sources. According to V. Doroshenko, "... if not for the outbreak of the German-Soviet war, then perhaps not within the time frame determined by the government, but still in a fairly short time all 36 volumes would have appeared" (Doroshenko, 1955, p. 2). He was mistaken about the number of volumes, but his testimony leads to the conclusion that an incredible amount of work was done.

Vozniak reports on 20 volumes: "... of the twenty volumes signed and sent from Lviv to Kyiv, fifteen had time to be published" (Vozniak, 2007b, p. 555). His words can be confirmed by the text of the telegram of April 16, 1941: "All the volumes are ready, and I am looking for an opportunity to provide you with them" (LNSL. F. 55. Od. zb. 259/p. XII. Ark. 5). According to the results of O. Lutskyi's research, the readiness of 20 volumes was later confirmed by the director of the T.H. Shevchenko Institute of Ukrainian Literature, Professor O. Biletskyi and academic secretary Hryhorii Verves (Lutskyi, 2020). According to the 1940 report of the IL branch in Lviv, the staff submitted 19 volumes, one volume prepared by K. Studynskyi was half finished at the time of reporting on the results of the work (Onyshchenko, 2003, p. 296). Chairman of the Planning Commission of the Vice-President of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR, A. O. Sapiehin reported that "... out of 25 volumes, only 13 were submitted for publication" (Onyshchenko, 2003, p. 313). Among the main reasons he mentioned miscalculations in work planning and

overestimation of the strength of researchers. F. Havrysh noted in his autobiography that on behalf of the Institute of Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR, he carried out the literary editing of the first seventeen volumes of the edition (Lutskyi, 2020).

The question also arises regarding the preservation of materials during the war. In her diary of October 8, 1942, M. Derkach wrote: "I went to Mr. Dryhynych for the archives of the Institute of Literature. I brought materials for the IX volume of Ivan Franko, two final corrections of the first correction, materials for the seventeenth volume, translation of the Nibelungen, Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, *My Familiar Jews*, *Faust*, etc." (LNSL. F. 259. Op.1. Kor. III. 72). In M. Vozniak's archive (LNSL. F. 29. Od. zb. 778/p. 180. Ark. 1-17) a handwritten plan with a list of the contents of the volumes of the scientific publication is kept. The title page states that it was received from the Ukrderzhlitvydav and preserved by the efforts of the manuscript department of the Shevchenko Institute of Ukrainian Literature. The collection contains only a plan, although a note on the folder suggests that it was drawn up in accordance with the materials received. Records indicate that materials in volumes I-X, XII, and XXI were presented in the form of typescript and facets, while others were presented only as typescript. For volume XXII there is a note that four folders of materials were prepared, but with many pages missing. V. Doroshenko recalled that M. Vozniak also made efforts and saved some of his work: "... The late (M. Vozniak. - T. H.) managed to acquire it during the German occupation thanks to Mr. Kostiuk, who worked as a translator for the Germans in the Dnieper Ukraine, those volumes that he could find in the destroyed printing houses" (Doroshenko, 1955, p. 2). The fact that the work was saved is evidenced by the undated draft No. 1 of the meeting of the editorial board of the twenty-five-volume collection of Franko's works. The issue of academic editions of works by T. Shevchenko and I. Franko were submitted to the Bureau of the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR for consideration in the third quarter of 1945 (TSDAVO of Ukraine), Materials of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR. F. P-2. Op. 7. Tom III. Od. zb. 2739. Ark. 6), so there is no doubt that this document dates from 1945. According to the records, at the meeting, Yu. Kobyletskyi reported that he had taken

out 20 volumes of Ivan Franko's works from Kyiv and Kharkiv and handed them over to the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR for preservation. He also handed over all the portraits to the works of Ivan Franko for safekeeping. Ye. Kyryliuk confirmed the readiness of 20 volumes and their satisfactory condition (CDAMLM. F. 52. Op. 1. Spr. 112. Ark. 1). The surviving materials were also discussed in government offices. An appeal to the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR by a full member of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR, M. Ptukha is dated July 4, 1945. (Lutskyi, 2020, p. 118). He confirmed that a significant part of the twenty-five-volume scientific edition of Ivan Franko's works had been fully prepared, edited, and submitted to the State Publishing House. At the time, volumes I, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, XIX, XXI, XXII, XXIII, XXIV, XXV were kept in prints and manuscripts in the IL; the rest of the work was lost in Lviv and Kharkiv printing houses.

Scholars have made titanic efforts to process the archive, search for texts, first editions, select the main text, write commentaries, compile indexes, and eventually prepare the 20 volumes of I. Franko's works. The surviving materials became a solid basis, foundation, and experience for the next edition in 1950–1956. Not devoid of miscalculations and mistakes, brutally interrupted by military operations, the history of this collection should take a worthy place in the general textual and source history of Franko's multi-volume collected work.

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DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.11



Anton Makarenko and the Pitești Phenomenon

Abstract

Can any connection be justly postulated between re-education according to the views of Anton Makarenko (1888–1939), a Soviet and Ukrainian educational theorist, and the “re-education” of political detainees in the Pitești prison in Romania (1949–1952)? How did Makarenko come to be regarded as the “father of Pitești re-education”, as well as a “criminal Bolshevik educator”? His major work, the famous *Pedagogical Poem*, was published in 1933 in the USSR, and the first translations of Anton Makarenko’s writings into Romanian were published in 1949 and 1950, while “re-education” was in full swing, and we do not doubt either the recollections of the survivors, or the fact that Makarenko’s work was recommended for reading in several prisons. The present study compares Makarenko’s work, more precisely the particulars of “re-education” according to him, with the main elements of the truly criminal experiment at Pitești. To ascertain the truth, we follow the biography of the educator, his complex relationship with the Soviet secret services, and the main aspects of the re-education process *apud* Makarenko. Although there are certain common elements between the two

Suggested citation: Corobca L. (2023). Anton Makarenko and the Pitești Phenomenon. *Trimarium. The History and Literature of Central and Eastern European Countries*, 2(2), 265–290.

DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.11

Submitted: 21.02.2023 / Accepted: 28.02.2023

types of “re-education”, the Soviet educator does not bear the blame for the atrocities of Pitești prison.

Keywords

Makarenko, reeducation, Pitești (prison), Romania, communism

I. A profile of the future educator

Before addressing his methods of re-education, a point needs to be clarified: how communist and Stalinist is Anton Makarenko, described by the survivors of Pitești and by Romanian researchers as “the monstrous Bolshevik pedagogue” (Bordeianu, 1995, p. 121), “the Stalinist theorist of public education” (Tismăneanu et al., 2007, p. 294) “the typical representative of Marxist-Leninist hypocrisy” (Ianolide, 2012, p. 85), etc.

Anton Makarenko was born on March 1/13, 1888, in Belopolie/Bilopillia (Ukrainian Білопілля - “White Field”), the Kharkov region of present-day Ukraine, into a working-class family. A few elements of his biography would suffice to portray him as a rebellious, uncomfortable, non-conformist character, who was very far from the model Soviet citizen. He was not even 17 when he fell passionately in love with Elisaveta Fyodorovna Grigorovich, the wife of the local parish priest, and their relationship spanned about 20 years, without them ever marrying (priests were not allowed to divorce). Elisaveta worked alongside Anton in the Gorky colony and this strange relationship, unacceptable for the rigid moral standards of those times, could be regarded as the first “weak point” of Makarenko’s biography.

The second major “issue” would be his brother, Vitaly Semyonovich Makarenko (1895–1983), an officer of the Russian Imperial Army, a participant in World War I, wounded several times and decorated with the Order of St. Vladimir IV. In 1919, Vitaly became involved in the White Guard movement in southern Russia, and in 1920 he was forced to leave his homeland. He tried to leave together with his wife, who was pregnant, but the woman was unable to board the train

and was separated from her husband. Their daughter Olympiada was raised by Anton, and Vitaly never met her.

The two brothers exchanged letters until 1928, when Anton's wife put an end to this correspondence; having relatives abroad was dangerous. Vitaly had settled in Paris, where he was struggling to make a living. In 1970 he was discovered by the German Götz Hillig, a doctor of philosophy and an expert in education and in the works of Anton Makarenko (he edited *Opuscula Makarenkiana*). G. Hillig invited Vitaly to write his memoirs and the book *My Brother Anton Semyonovich* was thus created.

Another "interesting" figure in the biography of the future educator is Galina Stakhievna Salko, his only official wife, who played a pivotal role in shaping the public perception of Makarenko after his death. During the Great Terror, Salko divorced her first husband (citing family problems), was expelled from the Party and moved into the colony run by Makarenko, whom she had met several years earlier during an inspection. Galina's maiden name was Rohal-Levytskaya and she was descended from Polish aristocrats; thus she also had "unhealthy origins" (Hillig, 2014, p. 296). When many years later, wishing to protect her son (from her first marriage), a future aircraft engineer, Galina timidly expressed her desire to rejoin the Party, her husband Makarenko tenderly but firmly warned her: "My sunshine, if you go back to that kolkhoz, I'll hang myself" (Hillig, 2014, p. 428). Strangely, several sources state that the loving wife did not attend the funeral of the great educator (citing health reasons...).

It is important to point out that, in fact, Anton Makarenko was never a member of the (communist) party, which was reproached to him, especially during his lifetime. After his death, however, he was adopted by the Soviet authorities and declared a proud "Stalinist", in complete disregard for the truth.

The opening line of his *Pedagogical Poem* (English translation *The Road to Life: an Epic of Education*) reads:

"In September 1920, the head of Gubnarodobraz¹ summons me and tells me..." (read: "orders me"). He was therefore "proposed" to take charge of the colony for young offenders, with the mention that "no

1 *Gubnarodobraz* – the gubernatorial education department.

one will accept it; whoever I turn to, fights it with his claws and teeth” (Makarenko, 1956, p. 8). In the following pages, Makarenko himself expresses his despair, wryly noting that “no one wanted to devote himself to educating the «new man» in the middle of our forest; everyone was afraid of the «thugs» and no one believed that such a feat could be pulled off” (Makarenko, 1956, p. 15). The author did not openly say that he was not particularly pleased by this proposal either, but with such vulnerabilities in his biography, he obviously could not refuse.

Although the Gorky colony headed by Makarenko enjoyed certain popularity locally, it was constantly criticised by Nadezhda Krupskaya, deputy to the People’s Commissary for Education. In a letter to his wife, Anton Makarenko asks:

Have you read the «Komsomolskaya Pravda» of 17 May? How Krupskaya attacked me? I’m beginning to get excited. She cancelled me in the eyes of the whole Union. Again they started the horrible outcry against my colony, threatened to prosecute me. I’m sick of it. Eventually, they’ll manage to lock me up just because I won’t bow down to every fool (Evtsev, 2014; Hillig, 2014, p. 190).

However, Nadezhda Krupskaya’s antipathy and constant criticism of Makarenko may have served the latter well, for after Lenin’s death (in 1924) she sided with the old Bolsheviks Lev Kamenev and Grigory Zinoviev against Stalin’s candidacy; this choice was never forgiven and had her gradually marginalised in the later years.

II. Makarenko and the secret services

In 1927, Makarenko was transferred, without the right to appeal the decision, to the “Dzerzhinsky” labour commune, which belonged to the CHEKA (while the first colony, which was closed down in 1928, had been subordinated to the People’s Commissariat for Education). Feliks Dzerzhinsky (1866–1926) was the very founder of the Russian, then Soviet, secret services – the infamous CHEKA (All-Russian Extraordinary Commission), set up in 1917, which in 1922 became the Gosudarstvennoie Politiceskoie Upravlenie – GPU (State Political

Administration/ Directorate), a branch of the NKVD. Clarifications on the context of this event are needed. Before his official dismissal from the Gorky Colony, Makarenko was called to account during a Party meeting. This moment is described at length in the *Pedagogical Poem* and is one of the reasons why originally no publisher was willing to publish his book. “I had to explain to the scholars, educators and wise men of pedagogy what my pedagogical creed consisted of, and which principles I professed. There was no lack of pretexts for asking me to give such account” (Makarenko, 1956, pp. 637–638). Grave charges were brought against the educator during the meeting, which at the time was very serious. Criticism against him was harsh, Makarenko’s arguments – were useless, even the room’s silence was reproachful, and the sentence merciless: “The system of education he proposes is not a Soviet system” (Makarenko, 1956, p. 640).

Also: “There were many friends of mine in the assembly, but they kept silent. There was also a group of Chekists. They listened carefully to the debates, wrote something in their notebooks and left without waiting for the sentence to be pronounced” (Ibid.).

Thus there is evidence that the Chekists watched him closely and knew all of Makarenko’s “innovations” in detail. They certainly realised the importance of his achievements and that is why they invited him to run a new colony instead of sending him to the Gulag, as happened to many others who had fewer “sins” than our educator.

In 1932, Anton Semyonovich was removed from his position as head of the Dzerzhinsky Colony, and demoted to the somewhat honorary position as deputy supervisor of the education (pedagogical) department; on this occasion, he also had his first heart attack (a very serious second attack followed in 1935, another in July 1938, days before his final transfer to Moscow) (Hillig, 2014, pp. 380–382). At one point, the Chekists came up with proposals regarding the working hours in the colony, which Makarenko rejected, probably as tactfully as possible, but he made it clear, and also wrote in his poem, that he was fashioning people, not cameras (an allusion to the camera factory where underage offenders worked).

Early on, criticism stated that “one of the shortcomings of the colony is the absence of Komsomol and communist organisations” (*Komunist* newspaper, September 1925, *apud* Hillig, 2014, p. 422).

The Gorky period is referred to as the “Partyless Pedagogical Province” by his best biographer, G. Hillig, in his study *Makarenko and Power*, with the remark:

In the context of the non-partisan character of the Gorky colony, it is necessary to emphasize the deliberate unwillingness of the person in charge to accept any political organization in his institution, be it a Komsomol body or a detachment of pioneers. He formally based this prerequisite on his desire to preserve the integrity of the juvenile team. Thus, in one of the questionnaires from early 1923, the educator wrote: «The colony has such a tight-knit community that there is no need to organize other special social forms» (Hillig, 2014, p. 422).

When, at the insistence of higher bodies, a political activist arrived in the first colony, they could not get along well and Makarenko was dismissed shortly afterwards. Four years later, the same happened in the Dzerzhinsky commune, where the GPU/НКВД of the Ukrainian SSR dispatched the Chekist R.O. Barbarov to take charge of the political activities, forcing Makarenko – “a man without a party affiliation and also not a GPU member”, as he would later be characterised – to leave in search of new employment (Hillig, 2014, p. 422).

On July 1, 1935, he was transferred to Kiev, to the central office of the НКВД of the Ukrainian SSR, as assistant director of the Department of Labour Colonies.

The Pitești Phenomenon is said to have been initiated by the Soviet secret services, which actually coordinated the entire process of communization (and Sovietization) of Romania and the Eastern Bloc after World War II. Writing about this period, historian Mircea Stănescu (2021, p. 20) stated that Makarenko “became, from an obscure pedagogue, the deputy director of the Gulag in Soviet Ukraine”. This is one of the most unfair statements regarding him. Admittedly, the НКВД did also administer the Gulag, but Makarenko worked as an assistant to the director of the department for the ОТК – *Otdel trudovykh kolonii* (Department/Directorate of Labour Colonies).

While this might be regarded as a promotion, it was a tragedy for Makarenko. As he himself puts it, he had no choice and his departure

was not voluntary, but indeed it was a moment that deeply hurt him (he had another heart attack), and he always remembered it as a dramatic event:

You understand that it was one of the most tragic moments of my life. I had received a telegram to report immediately to Kiev, where I had been appointed. A surprise telegram. I was working for the НКВД, I was to leave on the first train. I got the telegram in the morning, the train was leaving at five. I had to say my goodbyes as soon as possible. I had been working with this staff for 16 years. The more emotional ones were moved to tears. I was unable to speak, too (Makarenko, 1960, p. 205).

The question that naturally arises is: how did Makarenko end up working for the НКВД? In brief: in 1926, probably during inspections, Makarenko met Natalia Balitskaya, fell in love with her and even intended to marry her (he would meet G. Salko a little later). Natalia was the sister of the head of the Ukrainian НКВД, Vsevolod Apollonovich Balitsky (1892–1937). He took this position in 1934, and in 1935, when Ukraine's capital moved from Kharkov to Kiev, a large team of specialists from Kharkov, including our educator, was brought to Kiev in order to join the НКВД (Hillig, 2014, pp. 295–296). Even though the secret services were already aware of his work history, Natalia's warm and enthusiastic recommendations propelled Anton Makarenko, despite all his vulnerabilities which he did not attempt to hide when presenting his biography.

His new job didn't suit him. Among his notes we find the reason for his dissatisfaction: "Reports, reviews, summaries, presentations. They are handwritten, typewritten, proofread, typewritten again many times and then abandoned because nobody needs them. This drives one crazy..." (Hillig, 2014, p. 299). In addition to the paperwork, he also inspected colonies around the country, but even this failed to bring him any satisfaction.

Makarenko arrived in Kiev at a very troubled time. He had hardly managed to settle in, when the first arrests began among his own department employees. On 31 July 1936, his immediate senior, Lev Solomonovich Ahmatov (Ahmanitsky), a legal expert, was arrested. During interrogation, he pointed to Makarenko as an accomplice

in “Trotskyist activities”. V.A. Balitsky himself, the NKVD People’s Commissary, intervened and personally ordered Makarenko’s name to be removed from the protocol, thus saving him from imminent arrest. With the help of Gorky and then Gorky’s secretary², Makarenko was quickly transferred to Moscow... (Hillig, 2014, pp. 133, 289, 355).

During this period, Gorky, who had always supported and helped Makarenko, died on June 18, 1936; on March 8, 1937, L.S. Ahmatov was shot; in July, V.A. Balitsky was arrested and on 27 November 1937 he was executed, and many other officials were arrested and killed...

In the midst of the Trotskyist trials, when the fight against the “enemies of the people” was fiercer than ever, Makarenko attended a festive meeting in the Dzerzhinsky commune (where he no longer worked). At this meeting, he had the unfortunate idea to declare in his solemn speech: “We all work under the leadership of the Party and Comrade Stalin, and if Comrade Stalin makes even a thousand mistakes, and one, whose name I do not wish to mention, leads us on the right path, then we must still follow Comrade Stalin.” (*Apud* Hillig, 2014, p. 364). By alluding to Trotsky, who had fallen into disgrace, but also by pointing to the fact that Stalin could be wrong, Makarenko added a few more tabs to his already thick dossier, which was not forgiven and never forgotten. This compounded the troubles he already had.

Many scholars have interpreted Makarenko’s departure for Moscow as an escape. There are testimonies that he received a phone call in the middle of the night from Vladimir Zatonsky, the Minister of Education, who told him, “Run, run away immediately!” (Hillig, 2014, p. 386). There were also many whistleblowers. However, the NKVD was hard to flee from. Several circumstances, some difficult to explain, may have aided his temporary evasion. Probably, no one had seen him as too dangerous an enemy. Officially, he died of a heart attack on April 1, 1939, at the age of 51, on a train that stopped at Golitsyno, a town not far from Moscow; he was on his way to a film studio and had a screenplay with him. The Militia officer thought he was drunk. Three months later, Margarita Barskaya

2 P.P. Kryuchkov (1889–1938), jurist, Gorky’s personal secretary and collaborator of GPU/NKVD, close to G.G. Yagoda.

(1903–1939), co-writer of the script for the film *Flags on the Battlements* (Eng. trans. *Learning to Live*), whom Makarenko was probably going to meet, (officially) committed suicide.

III. How original were Makarenko's methods?

When asked about his education methods, Makarenko was evasive and did not offer any categorical statements. Here are such instances of hesitation, found in his *Complete Works*:

No pedagogical method, not even the mildest one, nor that which is generally called remonstrance, or explanation, conversation, the shaping of society, can always be counted as absolutely useful (Makarenko, 1960, p. 212);

I have acquired certain convictions, I have arrived at these convictions not without hard thinking and not at once, but by going through several periods of rather tormenting doubts and errors... (Id., p. 67);

“Please do not take my words as a prescription, norm or definitive conclusion” (Id., p. 215).

In Makarenko's words (1960, p. 33, 90):

[The child] must be cheerful, confident, disciplined, able to fight and to build, eager to live and love life. The child must be happy. And be happy today, not only in the future, but right now, at present, day by day.

Temperance, respect for women, for children, for the elderly, for oneself, the whole theory of our conduct, whether it concerns society as a whole or a particular group, can be taught to our pupils in an extremely convincing and thorough form.

One of the central elements of Makarenko's method was the collective and the postulate of its important, even essential role in reeducation. However, his paternity of this idea has been questioned by scholars, since at the time there were hundreds of such colonies, all operating according to similar principles, some enjoying much

better coverage than Makarenko's. For instance: the Bolshevskaya commune, run by M. S. Pogrebinsky; "F.M. Dostoevsky" school-commune, run by V.N. Soroka-Rosinky; the "Red Dawn" school-commune, run by I. V. Ionina; the First Experimental Station (Pervaia Opytnaia Stantsiia) of People's Commissariat for Education, run by S. T. Shatski; Lepeshinsky experimental school in Moscow, run by M. M. Pistrak; the "School of Life", run by N. I. Popova, etc. In the 1920s, in the aftermath of the First World War and two revolutions, Russia had more than 7 million homeless children. Most of them could only survive on theft. Those children caught stealing were often beaten to death, and their tragedy was regarded as the "price to pay for the revolution". Eventually, ЧЕКА tackled the problem of homeless children. F. E. Dzerzhinsky, also director of the ЧЕКА, is considered to be the initiator of labour communes for underage offenders. On 18 August 1924, order no 185 of the administrative and organizational department of ОГПУ was issued, under the signature of G. G. Yagoda, deputy head (vice president) of ОГПУ. When the Great Terror reached the members of the НКВД, Yagoda was arrested in 1937 and executed in 1938, and the labour camps were abolished, with their staff usually arrested or even sentenced to death. Whereas films had been made and books have been written about these colonies, Makarenko's work only became known with the publication of his *Pedagogical Poem*. On the other hand, the Ukrainian educator was closely acquainted with the work of similar colonies, some of which he visited with the children (Hillig, 2001).

In order to restore the historical truth, M. V. Boguslavsky advises us "to definitively abandon the persistent myth of Makarenko's uniqueness and, even more so, that of his supremacy in Soviet pedagogy of this period", stating:

Only A. S. Makarenko managed to emerge «clean-faced» [be exonerated] from the repressions of the late 1930s. Although we now know very well that the danger of arrest always loomed over him, and an arrest warrant was actually issued, Anton Semyonovich died a free man, as a respected person and as a decorated writer³. His fellow writers were

3 Note that in 1928 Makarenko was awarded the "Red Flag" Order of Labour.

much less fortunate. Those few of them who survived the repressions of the 1930s ended their professional and personal journey in complete oblivion and disgrace (Boguslavski, 2009, pp. 54–66).

Certainly, both work and community were essential to the functioning of the colonies. It may be assumed that, as these were subordinate to the КГБ-НКВД, the secret services found a source of inspiration on re-education in all colonies, not just the “Gorky Colony” in an obscure Ukrainian forest.

In this context, we should also mention the role of Makarenko’s younger brother Vitaly, who directly contributed to the implementation of some elements in Makarenko’s pedagogy. From 1917 to 1919, he was assistant to his brother (Anton), who was at that time director of the railway school in Kriukov, and at the same time (also Vitaly) was a member of the amateur actors’ troupe of the Corso Theatre in their small town.

V. S. Makarenko, a military school graduate and demobilized officer of the Tsarist army, introduced – at first against the wishes of his brother, who was a convinced antimilitarist –, paramilitary elements in the teaching of physical education and in extracurricular activities, such as military training exercises, or marching with the flag to the sounds of a brass band (Makarenko, 1985). Later, Anton took up these elements, which would become very important in the successful organisation of the colonies, although his penchant for discipline is also attributed by some scholars to his father’s severity, not just to the closeness between the brothers (Rakovitch, 2014).

Anton Makarenko (1960, p. 190) was sometimes even called “colonel” by disgruntled superiors, and he felt the need to clarify: “There are still people today who think I was a colonel. Not only was I not a colonel, but I never served in the military.”

This “militarization” was reproached to him from his early years of activity. The educator found it necessary to explain what he intended to achieve by this method and even to cite his friend, the writer Maxim Gorky, in his favour:

I’m extremely glad that all our collective discoveries enjoyed Aleksey Maksimovich’s full approval, including the famous “militarization”, for

which some critics still bite into me, and in which Aleksey Maksimovich was able to see in only two days what needed to be seen: a little game, an aesthetic addition to a life of labour, to a life that was nevertheless hard and rather impoverished (Makarenko, 1960, p. 62).

He also added to the point:

There must be an aesthetic side to everyday military elements: timing, precision, by no means mere marching. [...] On the matter of the uniform I am ready to go even further. I believe that children should be dressed so nicely that they are admired. In past centuries, it was the army that dressed up. It was the pomp of the privileged classes. [...] To a certain extent I persevered in this direction, but I was hindered. We had gold and silver badges, embroidered caps, neatly pressed white collars, etc. A well-dressed group is halfway won over (Makarenko, 1960, p. 86).

However, he could not give credit to his brother Vitaly, a White Guard member and emigrant: “Where this tradition came from, I have no idea” (Makarenko, 1960, p. 85).

It was also Vitaly who proposed to create a drama class in schools, a tradition taken up by Anton enthusiastically in his future colonies, where children had their own drama clubs. The chapter on theatre in the *Pedagogical Poem* (entitled “Our Theatre”) sheds better light than any educational theory on the colonists’ life. Let us read a few excerpts:

Almost all our spare time was devoted to the theatre.

In the new colony we got possession of a real theatre. It would be difficult to describe the rapture we experienced on having the mill shed placed entirely at our disposal.

Our theatre could have seated up to six hundred persons – as many as the spectators from several villages. [...] During the winter season we produced about forty plays, but we never went in for the usual light entertainment found in clubs, offering only full-length, serious plays in four and five acts, mostly taken from the repertoire of the theatres in the capital. This may have been the utmost impertinence, but it was certainly not hack work.

By our third performance, the fame of our theatre had spread far beyond the boundaries of Goncharovka. Villagers from Pirogovka, Grabilovka, Babichevka, Gontsy, Vatsy, Storozhevoye, the dwellers in the Volovy, Chumatsky, Ozersky farmsteads came to see us; workers from the suburbs of the city, railway workers from the station and from the engine workshops; and soon the town dwellers also began to arrive: schoolteachers, people from the Department of Public Education, soldiers, Soviet activists, people from the cooperative administration and supply workers, or just boys and girls, friends of our own boys and girls, and friends of their friends (Makarenko, 1956, pp. 268–269).

In a paper on the educator, entitled “Key Pedagogic Thinkers: Anton Makarenko” (2014), historian Terje Halvorsen dwells on the central elements of Makarenko’s pedagogy: the role of the adult in child’s education (“Grown-ups as guides”); the collective and the individual; model learning (“He describes how the elder colonists made a decisive impact on the younger ones. To realize this potential he had to consider thoroughly how to compose the detachments”); the care and compassion that need to be offered to the child by those around; polytechnicalism (“Makarenko is a prominent exponent for polytechnicalism, i.e. a tradition in pedagogy and social science where the need to provide humans with some kind of professional competence is emphasized. For the individual qualifications imply access to paid work, which in turn brings self-confidence and social integration”); architecture psychology (“a research field dealing with how humans are affected by physical environments”); planning of activities: music, drama, literature, sports, travelling, and others, not related to any particular political regime but to pedagogical science. The politicized approach, mainly with reference to communism, proposed by Romanian scholars, is not unjustified, but Makarenko is an interesting personality for specialists in several fields, in a broader context, for times and places outside and beyond the communist regime in which the author lived.

IV. Makarenko and the Pitești prison

All the above would appear to indicate no connection between the “Pitești phenomenon” and Anton Makarenko’s pedagogy. In an effort to disprove such an association, Arleen Ionescu notes (2022, p. 3):

Țurcanu never mentioned Makarenko. He did quote Lenin’s *Complete Works*, which he hid in April 1949 during a search (ACNSAS, Fond Penal/Criminal Cases, File 001114, vol. 6: 238). Moreover, Țurcanu had been in prison since 1948, and the book (*The Pedagogical Poem*) was translated into Romanian only in 1949, when the Pitești experiment had already begun: the connection is far-fetched.

We find it less relevant whether or not Eugen Țurcanu, the leader of the Pitești torturers, did read pedagogical or other texts. He certainly received precise orders, which he carried out, and reading Makarenko would not have helped him. However, there is abundant evidence that Makarenko’s writings were known in several prisons, not just Pitești.

For instance:

At Târgșor prison, the *Pedagogical Poem* was read out, and also too, on the third floor, a “school of sorts” was organized, where conferences were held on several topics – political economy... etc. but also on Makarenko’s pedagogy (Stănescu, 2010 b, p. 27; Mureșan, 2007, p. 31).

Makarenko was also discussed in Gherla prison. At Târgu-Ocna Penitentiary “pedagogical articles by Makarenko” were on display (Stănescu, 2010 b, p. 221; 2012, p. 38). “Probably to avoid being accused of not undertaking any activity, Pătrășcanu and Badale exhibited pedagogical articles by Makarenko in room 2 (ground floor), which were also read out at Pitești, when there were prisoners on the same side of the barricade in the room” (Mureșan, 2007, p. 62). In Suceava prison, prisoners were provided with several books, including Makarenko’s pedagogical works. The Danube-Black Sea Canal detainees read *Flags on the Battlements*, which “made me realize in horror that the origins of Pitești phenomenon lie in Soviet «pedagogy»”, stated one of the former prisoners (Mureșan, 2007, p. 31; Stănescu, 2012, pp. 56, 190).

Researchers of the phenomenon go further than the witnesses in their accusations, positing an essential role in re-education for the pedagogical theory promoted by Anton Makarenko (Cesearanu, 2018, p. 190), which served as a “model of re-education” (Cioroianu, 2007, pp. 315–318), “according to the principles highlighted by Anton S. Makarenko in his seminal work, the famous *Pedagogical Poem*: applying torture constantly, without allowing individuals any time to recover” (Petrescu, 2010, pp. 507–508). Other scholars also accuse him of violence (Stănescu, 2010 a, p. 28), but he was also blamed for it during his lifetime by fellow educators and others. How well-grounded is this accusation?

Let us go back to 1920, when A. Makarenko was given the directorship of a delinquents’ colony not yet named “Gorky”. The place where it was to be set up was on the edge of a pine forest, in a dilapidated building without doors and windows, a ruin that sorely needed repair. The locals had already looted the old building of everything that could be used, as described in the chapter on this period entitled: “The inglorious beginnings of the Gorky colony”. The famous and oft-quoted scene of violence occurs in the following particular context:

The first colonists (six in number), were not even underage, actually. Four of them were 18 years old and had been charged with armed burglary, and the other two appeared younger and were only charged with theft (Makarenko, 1956, p. 14). In fact, the colonists had declared younger ages in order to avoid jail, given that in a colony for juvenile delinquents they had a milder regime and, most importantly, were not placed behind bars (1956, pp. 16–17). The “children” went around town whenever they felt like it, they went out at night if they wanted to, and soon one of them, Bendiuk, was seized by the judicial police and charged with murder and robbery. So these were actual lawbreakers (young, tall, strong, brawny men), for whose education (re-education) his previous experience as a pedagogue was useless, a very worried Makarenko noted. However, the educator still hoped for some miraculous solution and, in search of it, read books on pedagogy day in, day out, in search of a method enabling him to manage his “juveniles”. Of course, he could not find the answer in books and was then accused of repudiating the

classics of pedagogy. Apart from nocturnal escapades and walks, the “young bandits” did not want to do anything and refused any task, expecting the educators to clean up, chop the firewood (it was winter), shovel the snow to clear the road, fetch water, cook for them and serve them as in a restaurant. They would not cooperate, they didn’t care about anything, and they simply mocked the poor team of desperate educators who didn’t know what to do or how to behave. This would happen daily.

Here is the all-important, and widely criticized moment:

One day, inmate Zadorov was asked to chop wood and replied cheekily to Makarenko using the informal rather than the formal “you”: “Do it yourself!” Enraged, Makarenko could not help slapping the boy, who was caught on the wrong foot, lost his balance and fell. He slapped the boy a second and third time, then seeing him terribly frightened, he apologized in a low voice. The others were watching the incident, and Makarenko, again enraged, shouted at them, “Either go get some wood or get the hell out of the colony!” (Makarenko, 1956, pp. 18–19). They considered it for a moment, then approached Makarenko and said, “We’re not such bad chaps. Everything will be all right. We understand...” (1956, p. 20) Clearly, violence was the only idiom that worked.

That Zadorov was actually a strapping, strong man, not afraid of anything, not so much intimidated by the blows as surprised and impressed by the courage of Makarenko (a short, frail man) to stand up to him, by his indignation, “his all-too-human outburst” (1956, p. 22). And the “children” understood that the educator was taking things seriously, and he had reached his limit: either they accepted to do as he asked, or they had to leave the colony. They had no choice. They understood that all these unfortunate teachers were working for them, living there in the forest, on the outskirts of the civilized world, and what was asked of them was not impossible, so they decided to behave and do their share with chores, in other words to cooperate. Later, when dozens of other, much younger offenders began to arrive, these first members of the colony became the educators’ right-hand men.

The book’s conclusions: “The incident with Zadorov proved to be a turning point in discipline”; “It should not be thought that

I believed, even for a moment, that I had discovered a sovereign disciplinary method in the use of physical force” (Makarenko, 1956, pp. 21, 22).

However much he later criticized this scene of violence, however harshly he criticized his own behavior in later writings, his amends did not matter. The method must have been carefully recorded by the watchful eye of the GPU (political police) agents, then the NKVD. But the connection between the extreme violence of Pitești prison and this scene is still far-fetched, although it cannot be ruled out as inspiration for the “foolproof procedure” and for the use of violence as an element of surprise. Anyway, given the extensive Gulag network that existed in the USSR, presenting Makarenko as a proponent of violence is still unfair.

I was incredibly surprised when I was overwhelmed with accusations that I recommended beating. That is not my point in the *Pedagogical Poem*. The incident was regrettable, not because I had come to this desperate act, but because the solution was not found by me, but by Zadorov, the boy I had struck... Not everyone is lucky enough to meet a man whom he hits, and who then lends him a hand and says: I will help you; and does help him (Makarenko, 1960, p. 225).

Also about that incident, A. Makarenko added: “this demonstrated, first of all, my poor training as an educator, my poor endowment with pedagogical technique and my deplorable state, my desperation”; “One can punish, but he who punishes is a bad teacher. Good is the teacher who does not punish!” (1960, pp. 100–101, 108.) To conclude firmly and clearly:

I am against physical punishment. I was against it before. In general, I cannot accept physical punishment as a method. I have never known a family in which physical punishment has brought any benefit;

A child should not be scolded, humiliated or reprimanded for poor work. [...] Even more so, the child should not be punished for work badly done or work not done (Makarenko, 1960, pp. 263, 321).

The harshest and most unfair accusations against Makarenko come from Mircea Stănescu, the first Romanian scholar to investigate the source texts, i.e. Makarenko's pedagogical work, and comment on it. Holder of a PhD awarded by the University of Bucharest (1999) with a thesis on the re-education at Pitești prison, author of the trilogy *Reeducarea în România comunistă (Reeducation in Communist Romania)* (2010–2012) and of the book *The Reeducation Trials in Communist Romania, 1952–1960 – Procesele reeducării în România comunistă* (2011), as well as of other volumes (of single authorship or co-authored), Stănescu has written a substantial chapter on the subject: “Nașterea noii metode: Makarenko (The emergence of the new method: Makarenko)”, included in the first volume of his trilogy. In this study, Makarenko never enjoys the thorough and unbiased examination that would have lent more credibility and reliability to the text. First of all, the “Makarenko Method” has been addressed, over the years, by dozens or even hundreds of researchers around the world, there are studies in English, German, French, not to mention the existing research in Russian and Ukrainian (but these two languages are less accessible and less familiar to Romanian researchers)! However, no name, no book or article relevant to the topic under discussion is mentioned, even in passing, by Stănescu (Alain Besançon is referenced in the notes, not in connection to Makarenko, but to the “wooden language” of the time). This is surprising since the book is the result of doctoral research, whereby authors tend to be overzealous in bibliographical matters.

Secondly, when one thinks Makarenko, one thinks *The Pedagogical Poem*. This book is the educator's most important testimony. Here one can learn about his “method”, here one can see how close it was to the Pitești phenomenon, herein lies the unravelling of the “mystery”. Although the book has been reprinted several times in Romanian translation, Mircea Stănescu never quotes from it, confining himself to indirect references and explanations provided by Makarenko, citing only the second edition of the *Selected Pedagogical Works*. These pedagogical works, lectures, articles and speeches were published – almost all of them for the first time – after Makarenko's death, and it can no longer be ascertained how much of the text is strictly Makarenko's opinion. Moreover, some editions state that

several texts were written in collaboration (with his wife Galina Salko, who assumed the role of a censor).

In the following, we will only dwell on one process, called “explosion”, which has been the focus of many studies and which is related to the “re-education” at Pitești prison. Stănescu insists on this method – employed and explained at length by Makarenko – but he comes up with his own interpretation, which is consistent with the violence applied at Pitești, claiming that Makarenko does not provide details on this “explosion”. Moreover, he quotes some excerpts from a study by Makarenko, which explicitly states: “I have given above an example of the method I call the **explosion method**.” (Makarenko, 1960, p. 219) [emphasis mine – L.C.].

Stănescu’s commentary:

“Shock”, “avalanche” – these terms ought to alert the reader and are deeply disturbing. What could cause this catastrophe of the Self? **The author does not provide any details about the nature of this disturbance**, of the cataclysm described above. For this reason, but also because it is not easy to believe that such a thing is possible, it is hard to accept that the author is talking about actual facts. Makarenko, however, does not write literary essays as he used to do in his youth. He is talking about terrible things. **Mental pressure and psychological torture, beatings, collective hatred** – all taken to extremes – are the means of this truly revolutionary method (Stănescu, 2010a, p. 28) [emphasis mine – L.C.].

Indeed, “mental pressure and torture, beatings, collective hatred – all taken to extremes” did exist at Pitești prison, but they are completely absent in the writings of Makarenko.

What, then, did Makarenko pursue by this method, which he describes at length in the section “Some Conclusions of My Pedagogical Experience” in the volume *Selected Pedagogical Works*, which includes a long essay (1960, pp. 215–235) neutrally entitled “On My Experience”? In brief, the educator aimed to persuade vagrant, homeless children to join the colonies willingly: “This is the method I used to make the strongest impression on newcomers. Of course, this method had many aspects; it also consisted of preparing the

accommodation, the dormitory, the place where they would work, the classroom, preparing the outward appearance: flowers, mirrors” (1960, p. 217).

Children were first gathered from railway stations, from trains passing through Kharkov at night, from rooftops, from public toilets, from under train wagons. “Communards were good at gathering these «passengers». I would have never been able to find them” (Makarenko, 1960, p. 217).

Our communards would address the children, saying: “Dear comrades, our commune has great difficulties for lack of labour force. We are building a new factory, we have come to you to ask that you lend us a hand.” [...]

And the next day, at noon, the whole commune with the brass band – we had a big band, a very good one with 60 trumpets – carrying flags, in parade attire with impeccable white collars with monograms, lined up in a row, near the station. When the detachment of homeless children appeared in the square before the railway station, seeking to cover their nakedness with the hems of their overcoats they were wearing one on top of another, taking small steps with bare feet, they suddenly heard the music resounding and found themselves facing the whole front aligned before them. We greeted them in the sounds of the orchestra, as we would greet our dearest companions (Makarenko, 1960, p. 218).

And so they all solemnly set out for the commune, stirring the admiration of emotional passers-by. Then the newcomers had their hair cut, were washed and dressed as neatly as the communards, in suits with white collars. Their old clothes were doused with gasoline and burned in a solemn setting.

An even more telling instance of this method at work is found at the final part of the *Pedagogical Poem*, which describes it in over 200 pages; it is not yet termed an ‘explosion’, but contains all the elements later theorised (the term itself would be used in his subsequent pedagogical essays). This is when the settlers moved to Kuryazh, a former monastery near Kharkov, founded in 1663 and closed after 1917. In 1923, a children’s colony was set up there, which after a while fell into disrepair, “the forty educators and four hundred boarders

appearing to the listeners as sinister jokes on humanity, the product of the sick imagination of some miserable, mean-spirited misanthrope, some disgusting scoundrel, happy to be able to sully the notion of humanity” (Makarenko, 1956, p. 394). It was a veritable “nest of bandits right next to the capital” (Kharkov was then the capital of Soviet Ukraine), a “dreadful place” (Ib., 1956, p. 395), characterized by filth, degradation, despair, thievery, home of all evils.

Initially, Makarenko refused to move there: “we cannot endanger the Gorky colony...” (1956, p. 401), “the move will turn into slaughter” (1956, p. 410), “What could have attracted us to Kuryazh? In the name of whose values were we to leave our life which flowers and the Kolomak⁴ embellished, our parqueted floors, our restored estate?” (1956, p. 402). They all reckoned that these wild vagabonds outnumbered them 280 to only 120, that most of them were thieves with violent tempers, that many were grown ups and only a few were young children.

The Gorky colonists nevertheless decided to move to Kuryazh and began preparations.

Preparing for battle against the Kuryazh, I was banking on a single, lightning-fast strike; the Kuryazhites were to be taken by surprise. Any procrastination, any hope in some evolution, any reliance on a «gradual penetration» would have turned our whole operation into a dubious enterprise. We knew well that not only our forms, traditions and tone would have penetrated «gradually», but also the traditions of Kuryazh anarchy. The Kharkiv sages, who insisted on gradual penetration, were actually taking long outdated views: that the good guys would have a good hold on the bad guys (Makarenko, 1956, p. 418).

Man cannot live in the world if he sees nothing ahead him that gives him joy. The real stimulus of man’s life is the joy of tomorrow. In pedagogical technique, this joy of tomorrow appears as one of the most important goals of work. First you have to organise the joy itself, bring it to life and make it a reality. Second, you must stubbornly transform the simpler aspects of joy into more complex and more meaningful

4 Kolomak was a small river that ran through the territory of the colony.

ones. An interesting line joins these points: from the primitive satisfaction given by a piece of gingerbread, to a deep sense of duty (ib., 1956, pp. 572–573).

Eventually, the children of Kuryazh were impressed with the songs, the clean clothes, the discipline of the colonists and the experiment was considered successful. However, following this resounding success, Makarenko's methods were declared anti-Soviet and he was dismissed from office. At this point, "friends" from the GPU/NKVD appeared with a proposal to have him work in their colony (Dzerzhinsky).

I have described this moment at length, because herein lies the most important similarity to the "re-education" at Pitești prison, namely the idea that re-education occurs between two groups (children or inmates), one already re-educated and the other to be re-educated by the former. At Pitești, where the detainees were mostly young students accused of anti-communist activities (real or imagined), the process symbolically called "re-education" consisted of the torture of the inmates by other inmates, who were all sharing the same "cell". The group of torturers, inmates brought from other prisons, initially appeared very friendly, trying to gain the trust of their colleagues, learn their secrets, etc. A few days later, their behaviour changed abruptly and, from former fellow sufferers, they suddenly turned into executioners, ferociously beating their colleagues. Both the element of surprise and the shock can be found in Makarenko's writings, but not the idea of violence, of course. Makarenko's "explosion" was taken up and used against the "enemies of the people", in a distorted, perverted, altered form, but Anton Makarenko is not to blame for this misuse of his pedagogical ideas and methods with criminal purposes.

Certain elements – such as re-education as a pedagogy of the collective, violence as an element of surprise (not just any violence), the interaction between two groups (one of re-educated people shocking the other, uneducated ones) and the role of the collective, the shock ("explosion" or surprise, lightning-fast action) – exist in both Makarenko and Pitești. However, the Pitești prison also featured other crucial elements, which are not found with

Makarenko at all: unceasing violence, torture, humiliations of all kinds, “external delation (unmasking)”, i.e. “confessing to one’s entire activity and divulging those who acted, spoke and thought against the communist regime. In this way, the political detainee became a collaborator of the Securitate (secret police) and a potential witness in other trials” (Stănescu et al., 2008, p. 28), as well as “internal unmasking”, which aimed “to convince the victim that he was a scoundrel, a villain, hiding his wickedness under the mask of religion, honesty, love of country...” (Stănescu et al., 2008, p. 29) etc.

I did not set out to be “devil’s advocate” by presenting evidence of Anton Makarenko’s innocence. Thousands of pages have been written on this subject and studies, polemic exchanges, as well as original documents from the educator’s archives are still being published. I simply endorse research into the sources, unbiased and fair interpretation, *sine ira et studio*. In the process, I discovered a formidable book, the *Pedagogical Poem*, undeservedly ignored by Romanian researchers, from which much can still be learned today. The “Makarenko case” in Romanian historiography demonstrates how easily we can make mistakes when we ignore the voice of the “accused”, when we accept someone’s assertions without consulting the original source. We cannot identify with certainty the reasons for this injustice: shallowness, mediocrity, indifference, ill will, but sooner or later, hopefully the historians and experts will accept a different image of Anton Makarenko: a complex, nuanced one, free of prejudices and ungrounded labelling.

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DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.12



Sorin Titel and Danilo Kiš: Prisoners' Long Journey to Nowhere

Abstract

The present study aims to explore the similarities between the novels *Lunga călătorie a prizonierului* (*Prisoner's Long Journey*, 1971) by Sorin Titel and *Grobnica za Borisa Davidoviča* (*A Tomb for Boris Davidovich*, 1976) by Danilo Kiš. Both Central European writers, Titel (Romanian) and Kiš (a Serbian, born to a Jewish father and a Montenegrin mother) experienced the same traumas, stemming from their living through a nightmarish history and struggling to pursue their literary careers in countries under totalitarian regimes. Influenced by Samuel Beckett and Franz Kafka, while also learning from the contemporary French *nouveau roman*, Sorin Titel employs the well-known theme of travel in an allegorical novel apt to be made into a road movie – a journey with no beginning or end, enriched by means of myths and symbols, but offering neither revelation nor salvation to the traveler. Danilo Kiš takes a different approach: at first glance a collection of short stories, the stories included in *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich* enhance the information in the previous texts, adding new dimensions to the characters, accounting for their actions and impulses. At times, the omniscient narrator becomes an unreliable narrator, adding to the confusion,

Suggested citation: Popescu D. N. (2023). Sorin Titel and Danilo Kiš: Prisoners' Long Journey to Nowhere. *Trimarium. The History and Literature of Central and Eastern European Countries*, 2(2), 291-302.

DOI: 10.55159/tri.2023.0102.12

Submitted: 03.04.2023 / Accepted: 11.04.2023

despite the exhaustive amassing of facts and data. Nevertheless, subtle affinities can be discovered in the common motifs of Titel's and Kiš's works: victims turned executioners and vice versa; imposture; desacralization; blood and slaughter. On the other hand, the most terrifying characters in *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich* are embodiments of a certain type of prisoners: trapped in amorality and in their own inability to evolve.

Keywords

narrative, affinity, totalitarianism, captivity, absurdity

In spite of their differing modes of expression, Sorin Titel and Danilo Kiš do share common ground – the territory of themes, motifs and vision, stemming from their similar experience of Central Europe. With different ethnicities, both the Romanian Titel and the Serbian Kiš (born to a Jewish father and a Montenegrin mother) know the trials and tribulations of life in countries under the communist ideology, inherit the traumas of previous generations and have not abandoned the desire to become and remain writers.

Complex and fascinating, Central Europe eludes precise delimitations and simplifying formulations. In the extensive study that opens the *Dictionary of the Central European Novel of the 20th Century*, a study that could constitute volume in its own right (almost 100 pages' worth of small print), the editor (Babeți, 2022, pp. 17–18) provides a comprehensive description of Central Europe, “whether as a concept, a geographic reality, a mental-affective matrix or a cultural pattern”:

The overlapping of an infelicitous (historical) time and an often unfavourable (geographical) space engenders other aspects that have shaped, over the centuries, the specific character of the area. First of all, there is the delibility of borders in this «other Europe» – so highly uncertain, borders are likely to be redrawn or even altogether erased from the map at any time. Hence a sense of instability, temporariness and insecurity; hence the skepticism about history and the fear of the future, coupled with an inability to build long-term projects and to put any hope in

them. But, on the other hand, these fragile, porous borders have not always separated groups, but allowed them to interact and communicate.

Thus, ideas were able to circulate unimpeded, especially by virtue of their viability in other regions. The literary critic borrows a compelling image (launched by Kiss Csaba György), very tellingly depicting the fate of the Central European destined to be a prisoner: “Being in the neck of the hourglass is to always find yourself at that point where, like the sand, everything flows ever faster, until the time is reversed and history flows backwards [...] – held captive by an «unfortunate», adverse history, made up of a row of unpredictable «bad days» [...]” (Babeți, 2022, p. 45).

Such *adverse histories* and *bad days* – spanning years and decades – are the subject of Titel’s parabolic novel *Prisoner’s Long Journey* and Kiš’s collection of short stories (actually a novel in disguise), *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich*. The characters of both writers find themselves *in the neck of the hourglass*, either progressing only apparently – in fact moving in a circle, like the prisoner and his two guards, or immobile, locked in a symbolic tomb, like Boris Davidovich.

As Ungureanu (1980) points out, since its very beginnings the novel is related to the theme of travel, to migrating characters, like Don Quixote, the first great hero of the early modern novel. The travelling prisoner in Titel’s novel has a similar identity to the protagonist in Franz Kafka’s *The Trial*: “Before the novel’s end, Josef K. is captured by two individuals who take him to the place of execution. In Kafka’s famous novel, this journey was of no importance at all; it forms an ending in which Josef K., the prisoner, obediently follows his executioners without initiative. Based on this page by a classic of modernism, Sorin Titel writes an entire novel” (Ungureanu, 1980, p. 235).

Critics have repeatedly noted the influence that Kafka and Beckett, authors of tragic absurdist fiction, had on the Romanian writer: “An unsettling book, in the direct lineage of those writings of the century that one might describe as books of human trials, epitomized less by the works of Kafka than those of Beckett.” (Balotă, 2005, p. 132);

The motif is Kafkaesque, obviously, but the modernity of the literary form places the book in line with the “nouveau roman”. The protagonists’

walk unfolds in cinematic manner. The gaze thus becomes the operating instrument. While walking, the three record snapshot views (Micu, 2005, pp. 263-264).

Ungureanu (1980) was perhaps the first to note that *Lunga călătorie a prizonierului* (*Prisoner's Long Journey*,) is apt to provide the script for a *film-fleuve*. (A road movie, a stream of tableaux, with episodic characters, we might add.) In his subsequent books, the Timișoara-based exegete elaborates on this point, showing that the narrative formula employed by Titel is rooted in his directorial studies (interrupted under unclear circumstances) and in his experience of the contemporary French *nouveau roman*:

His passion for the New Novel, professed in a number of articles, for «educating the gaze», is not separated from his passion for film. As a film commentator, Sorin Titel opts for the Robbe-Grillet model because it offers him a new pattern: in opposition both to [...] the established patterns of the novel and to the dictates of official propaganda (Ungureanu, 2015, p. 291).

But, Ungureanu (2005) points out, *The Prisoner's Long Journey* is not an ordinary *nouveau roman*, a novel of objects, but of places devoid of any personality – of residual spaces, of *non-places*.

The book begins abruptly, in a dismal mood, heightened by the designation of the protagonist by the common noun *the prisoner*, and ends mid-sentence, to suggest the journey continues endlessly. The prisoner, accompanied by two guards, embarks on a journey from nowhere to nowhere, amid apocalyptic scenery in which the succession of seasons creates the illusion of the passage of time.

Exegetes have commented on “an epic of depersonalization” (Iorgulescu, 1971, p. 9); “an allegory of life. Of life seen as the crossing of the valley of tears”. (Micu, 2005, p. 264); “a time of decomposition, of slipping into a kind of nothingness” (Balotă, 2005, p. 132). Or, more trenchantly, they have revealed meanings that could not be overtly declared in 1971, the year the book was published:

The itinerary of the three protagonists of the novel may be a symbolic expression of the search for epic substance, just as it may, of course,

be indicative of something else even more definitively serious in the order of literary significance: an expression of the totalitarian concentrationary universe, of the irrationality of discretionary power, of the annihilation of the individual (Vighi, 2005, p. 85).

“Sorin Titel’s short novel reads as a parable of human existence, but it also presents itself as an image of a concentration-camp universe” (Vintilă, 2004, p. 217).

The fluid, dreamlike setting, in which the characters are deprived of any clearly defined contours, takes on an absurd, sinister turn: the attendants catch butterflies and tear off their wings, slaughter the horse driven by the woman with blood on her hands, devise a bowling game in which the prisoner is supposed to be struck. The guards act as his masters, oscillating between cruelty, inhuman experiments and fake compassion, worrying that the prisoner might die at their own hands. At times camaraderie seems to take the upper hand and the three travelers appear united by their shared circumstance, but soon the cruelty of the torturers takes over as they assert their power over the victim.

Gradually, the illogical, typically oneiric elements give way to suspicions of some deceit – as in the scene where it is not known to which one of the three, the family photos belong. Confusion is all-pervading in the second part of the novel, which takes the form of an inner monologue of an uncertain character, a monologue throughout which the obstinate fear of having lost *the right way* persists. In fact, there is no road that can lead to the destination and the travelers now appear inextricably linked in a triad: “Turning back was now the only solution, but I knew I could not leave them, I knew that if I tried to run away, they would find me, so the last thing left for me – I was lucid enough to understand that – was to get rid of them, that is, to make them be no more” (Titel, 1991, p. 75).

Even more unsettling, the increasing ambiguity of the triad of travelers, by which the roles of victim and executioners shift and are gradually reversed, rendering them undistinguishable, has been noted by the exegesis: “«The struggle with the character» could be the trademark of this novel, for which literary criticism has set in motion a vast array of decoding strategies centered around its

symbolism, most of them admitting, in various hypostases, the essentially «Sartrean fraternity of the executioners with the victim» [...]» (Cruceanu, 2001, p. 155); “*Prisoner’s Long Journey* is an un-masking strongly filtered through the interference between the oneiric and the realistic – a mix that is extremely productive hermeneutically, whose reverberations reach the characters themselves [...]. If, at first, the prisoner is very clearly differentiated from the guards, gradually the distinctions become so blurred that identity becomes ambiguous” (Murariu, 2015, p. 260).

From the outset, the rough fabric of resignation in the face of nothingness has proven permeable to myth: the evil boatman is an incarnation of Charon, the guide to the underworld; the woman carrying the infant, a recurring occurrence, not coincidentally named Mary, brings a ray of light every time she appears. However, according to Cruceanu (2001, p. 157), “as an invoked character, the mother (Maria, the woman) can hardly play the role of the one she stands in for (the father) since his first great absence in the face of the heartbreaking «Eli, Eli...» of the first Golgotha of the first Son.”

The inner monologue in the second part of the *Long Journey...* is reminiscent of Molly Bloom’s, concluding James Joyce’s *Ulysses* with a powerful affirmation of life. The failed Magi, exhausted through desacralization, in Titel’s novel are denied any revelation or salvation:

Derision of an initiatory journey, the journey of the three signifies entrance into the realm of the absurd and pushing its boundaries in search for meaning. The characters continually bear the burden of the labyrinth and always seek to face it together [...]. By choosing the theme of the journey, the author places his novel within the protected area of myth, symbolising the unidirectional human journey from birth to death. Ritualistically echoing the profound meaning of existence, the journey becomes a gnoseological act [...]. This time, however, the characters neither become inwardly richer, nor acquire any significant social status. Quite the contrary. They undergo an intense process of identity dissolution, becoming mere voices in an amorphous mass (Murariu, 2015, pp. 256–257).

However, a star appears at the end of the novel, offering some comfort to at least one of the three and, possibly, the chance of future enlightenment:

[...] at night there are also stars you can gaze at, and while watching them you no longer feel how time passes, no longer feel the night, and darkness especially –, it protects you of course, at night, the darkness and the stars so far away, all around you, at night, the darkness that protects you, you feel the rain less, feel the wind less, and I like to walk especially at night, to walk very fast, at night you can see the star, you fall, then you get up and see the star, you feel less cold [...] (Titel, 1991, p. 84).

Vintilă's commentary (2004, p. 217), however, highlights predominantly negative connotations: "The aimless journey of the three (possible) magi gives a sense of the loss of meaning in the world, speaks of the universalization of the profane, of oblivion, of opaqueness, of the individual's loneliness, of his dehumanization."

Describing the motif of the labyrinth, disseminated from Greek mythology, and tracing the forms it has taken in various historical periods and cultural areas, Santarcangeli (1974) resumes the idea that the purpose of the pilgrimage is to transfigure the pilgrim: by reiterating the labyrinthine path of the Sun or travelling the route – actual or symbolic – to the sacred city, the penitent changes or... finds himself.

Sorin Titel's characters, however, fail the test of the labyrinth. Vintilă (2004) analyses the epic of the journey in the parabolic novel, showing that, although in the first part of the book, the episodes of an initiatory scenario are easily recognizable, the journey undertaken by the small group of three inseparable characters does not align with the known values: initiatory journey, spiritual metamorphosis, path of knowledge, experimentation, learning and formative change. Moreover, *journeying* doesn't even seem to be the most appropriate term – but rather *wandering*, or *rambling*, appear as more apt expressions.

In the world of Kiš's (anti-)heroes, journeys (wanderings, futile attempts at escaping, secret missions or plunges into hell) are both

travels across space and symbolic routes (despite their non-religious nature). Ungureanu (2002) decodes the characters' journey towards the East, towards the new Centre – Moscow, the capital of the World Revolution, as a parody of an initiatory journey that ends up in torture in the Siberian camps.

The author himself undertakes a twofold journey: into the past (the volume published in 1976 includes a number of tales unfolding decades or even centuries earlier) but, on the other hand, he descends into the Dantean universe of the communist camps “not like a documentarist, but like a sculptor studying *écorchés*” (Ungureanu, 2002, p. 108).

Characters unyielding in their amoral, nuanceless stances, are monstrous because they lack flexibility and empathy, embodying a symbolic imprisonment that precludes any evolution. Kiš's ‘wandering Jews’ travel long distances, changing countries and identities, but remain unchanged; their strong convictions fail to protect them from the whirlwind of history. In the end, they become prisoners in the truest sense of the word.

The anarchist Miksha Hantesku, devoid of any trace of humanity, in *The Knife with the Rosewood Handle* devotes himself to the delusions of confusion and imposture that absurdly take human lives. His existence, marked by murder, confusion and bloodshed, makes him a good brother to the guards accompanying the unnamed prisoner in Titel's novel.

Gould Verschoyle from *The Sow That Eats Her Farrow* investigated on the boat by two companions, finds himself caught in the middle of another confusion between victims and executioners, so that all three find themselves handcuffed together. Caught between excitement and error, there are really no significant differences between them.

Chelyustnikov in *The Mechanical Lions* participates as the main actor in a mystifying scenario that mimics the sacred in a society where it has been outlawed: the St. Sophia Cathedral in Kiev, now a brewery, regains the appearance of a church in order to present a false image of religious tolerance. And this was to impress Herriot, the leader of the French radicals, a supporter of Catholicism. Playing the role of the priest does not, however, absolve Celiustnikov from years in prison.

In *The Magic Card Dealing*, the ironic title refers not to tomes of wisdom, but to the book parties of common criminals – the “social-recoverables” (Kiš, 1992, p. 63). As a metaphor for the Great Lottery, the card game corresponds to the playful, cruelty-laden manifestations of *The Prisoner's Long Journey*. In Kiš's imagined prison world, too, the game ends tragically: the loser is assigned to kill or assumes the status of an outcast. The only sacred image in the prison cells remains the mother (it is not yet known which of the players), doomed to weep, the *mater dolorosa* of a son without a trace of sanctity.

Boris Davidovich's journey, told in a realist style, ends in the crypt-prison, where the torture, both physical and psychological, to which he is subjected suggests to him that “man is nothing but a speck of dust in the ocean of timelessness” (Kiš, 1992, pp. 83–84). The confrontation between the prisoner and the interrogator Fediukin could be read as the struggle of two apocalyptic beasts, matched adversaries who recognize their similar essence:

Behind his tightly closed eyelids, along with the feeling of pain and the foreboding of defeat, hatred arose in his soul, for he had had ample time to think and to understand that Fediukin had sensed his thoughts and had decided to strike him precisely where he felt strongest: In his selfishness; because he (Novsky) had come to the saving and dangerous idea of the futility of the existence of personal suffering and suffering, this could still constitute an act of moral choice; Fediukin's intuitive genius had intuited that such an attitude spoke of a choice that therefore did not include morality, but the opposite (Kiš, 1992, p. 86).

Dogs and Books takes the form of “the amplified metaphor of the classical doctrine of the cyclical rotation of time” (Kiš, 1992, p. 113) to recall the sufferings of an innocent man in the name of faith during the Middle Ages: Baruch David Neumann refuses imposed Christian baptism, believing that “by reading many books, man gains wisdom, and reading one book leads to ignorance, which is always armed with hatred and insanity” (Kiš, 1992, p. 104). Neumann's chaotic wanderings are futile attempts to save himself, the future victim is struck by the implacable slogan of the executioners: “Seek no other way but the way we all walk” (Kiš, 1992, p. 106).

The tales included in *Crypt for Boris Davidovich* (subtitled *Seven Chapters of One and the Same Story*) supplement the information provided by the previous texts, adding new dimensions to the characters, motivating their actions and impulses. Tucan (2022, p. 231) reveals the basic unity of the book, its overall coherence and the flavour of Kiš's encyclopaedic, erudite documentarist, who meditates on the meaning of history: "By quoting imaginary or real sources, relying on history with fabulous insertions, fictionalizing the verisimilitude, he brings out from the darkness of the crypt ghosts of the same world, necessary for the second convergence, that of the characters. For the heroes of the biographies [...] almost all have the same structure." We would add that the omniscient narrator sometimes leaves room for an *unreliable narrator*, increasing confusion despite the crowding of exhaustive data.

Through the pleasure of storytelling and the study of history, Kiš seeks to legitimize a belonging, an affiliation:

In the cultural sense, "Central Europe" probably represents the desire to lay claim to the family tree of Europe, a tree whose eastern branches belong to the same trunk and are nourished by the same sap of the Middle Ages, of religion (or religions), of the Renaissance, of the Baroque; "Central Europe" also represents the legitimate desire to see this common heritage recognised, despite the differences, or rather precisely an active participant *because of them*. Because these are the differences that give it its specificity, they endow it with a particular identity in the wider context of the European entity (Kiš, 1997, p. 284).

The literature of Central Europe largely reflects attempts to exorcise the traumas of a history never forgotten:

The most obvious trait of Central European literature is its awareness of history – both as its past and as its present. [...] The political events of the decade in which the characters live, those of the authors' formative years whose imprint they bear, and even those of their parents' lifetimes, are always present in the background and lend these works a dimension rarely found in Western literature. [...] In Central Europe, time is intense, spasmodic, full of surprises, an active participant in

the story. This is because time is always associated with a danger that threatens the identity of the national community of which the writer is a part. I suppose the historical imagination always springs from collective memory and a certain sense of being threatened (Miłosz, 1997, p. 258).

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Publisher

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