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IGNÁC GASPAREC

## ON THE HISTORY OF SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURE IN SLOVAKIA

"Our position in the centre of most varied cultural endeavours the future of which will require a clearly defined attitude in the historically determined struggle of ideas, and the most topical preconditions of our cultural progress, make us examine, weigh and absorb values and also methods of international cultural workshops, take notice of, and seek for, a place of our own in the stream of cultural efforts in the world ..."

L. Novomeský<sup>1</sup>

Sociology of culture deals predominantly with the spiritual culture as a product not only of an individual spirit, but especially as a social product. From this point of view it restlessly examines the foundations of cultural production, its conditions, prerequisites, manifestations and relations to the other sides of social life. Already this brief characteristic suggests that sociology of culture is closely connected with the history of culture. It is only natural to apply a sociological approach to the history of the Slovak culture. As might be expected this can be no exhaustive treatise, but rather an outline of as yet unexamined history of the sociology of culture in Slovakia.<sup>2</sup> In this outline we will mainly make use of the results of the research in the history of our literature, because this research of our cultural past has accomplished the greatest amount of work. Accordingly with respect to the results of the historical research and the research in the history of literature, we shall deal with our problem in three sections:

1. The situation of the Slovak culture in the period of national renaissance.
2. The democratization of culture in the movement of the "Hlasisti".
3. The attitudes of the circle round the "DAV" to the cultural development in Slovakia.

### I

The most important representatives of the cultural movement in the period of the Slovak national renaissance belong to the generations called after A. Bernolák and L. Štúr. Bernolák and his followers who, as a matter of fact,

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<sup>1</sup> From the Address of the National Artist L. Novomeský at the 1st Congress of Slovak writers in Trenčianské Teplice in 1936.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Problémy sociologie kultury*. (The Problems of the Sociology of Culture). A Volume of Discussions at a Slovak seminar in Trenčianské Teplice in 1967. Bratislava 1968. (Mimeographed.)

include three generations, have a key position in the history of our national culture. This key position consists predominantly in the fundamental act of introducing our mother tongue into the functions of the Slovaks' literary language. And it was the Bernolákian movement which can be characterized by a staunch endeavour to create a national culture and to organize national forces on the basis of a common literary language and in this way help to create national unity in cultural institutions and organizations. Already in this period can be found the first efforts to develop economic and class consciousness of the people as the core of the Slovak nation; and also the first attempts to establish political rights of the Slovaks. It is the task of the historians of the Slovak sociology to explain more deeply the roots of the above mentioned processes in the period of the Slovak national renaissance in their wider social and economic connections. The Bernolákian Generations laid solid foundations for the institutionalization of the Slovak culture: first of all in the "Spoločnosť pre pestovanie slovenskej reči" (Society for the Cultivation of the Slovak language), later on in the "Slovenské učené tovaryšstvo" (The Slovak Learned Society), founded in 1789, and in the "Spoločok milovníkov reči a literatúry slovenskej" (Association of Lovers of the Slovak Language and Literature). Bernolák's idea of the independence of the Slovak nation in a wider frame of Slavs and his demand resulting therefrom to develop national culture by means of an independent literary language became the leading principle of unifying activities of all reascent generations. This principle was fully taken over by the Šturian generation which completed the national reascent process and the ideological unity of the Slovak nation.

Cultural and social activities of the revolutionary Šturian generation which represents a remarkable stage of development of the Slovak national movement, tended predominantly to help the development of the Slovak nation and to frame the programme of the Slovak national ideology. In its tasks it leaned, of course, and relied on the support of other Slav nations. The enactment of the literary Slovak language was of an undisputable cultural and political importance. The cultivation of the national culture was in the centre of staunch endeavours of this generation which being revolutionary tried to carry out the institutionalization of the national culture in a more urgent way than the Bernolákian Movement did. They succeeded in founding a rich variety of institutions, organizations and scientific institutes and enlightening societies (Sunday schools, reader's clubs, economic associations, libraries, etc.) on the platform of which Štúr and his followers carried out a progressive political, social and cultural programme with a revolutionary, anti-feudal tendency.

The integral effort to institutionalize the Slovak national culture had its climax in the foundation of the "Matica slovenská" (The Slovak Association; "matica" meant originally a diminutive of "mother", hence an association with a supporting function as to national life is called "matica" — Editors' note) as a nationwide cultural institution (founded in 1863). Collections of money for the funds of the "Matica slovenská" manifested the positive attitude of the whole Slovak public towards this institution which, as stands to reason, issued from actual needs of the Slovak society. Because of a violent interruption of its enlightening activities (in 1875) the "Matica slovenská" could not spread them to political and publishing spheres. Other national organizations (Živena, an association of Slovak women; Spoločok sv. Vojtecha; Muzeálna slovenská spoločnosť and many

others) continued its work on a smaller scale, though some of them, after a time of vegetation, were doomed too. From the individual personalities who went on working along the lines of the "Matica slovenská" let us mention D. G. Lichard, I. Liub and J. Malý - Dusarov, all of which openly proclaimed their adherence to the democratic programme of Štúr and his followers. In the close atmosphere of hungarian chauvinism, denationalization and magyarization as well as of the conservatism and passivity of the leading centre of the Slovak National Party, many Slovaks yielded to lethargy, expected salvation from abroad, being convinced that "the spirit of the time" was working for the Slovaks. However, many a Slovak of the young generation who had gone for university studies to Prague and was organized in the Slovak association "Detvan" adhered to Masaryk's realism, was dissatisfied with the state of affairs in Slovakia and criticized it. They mostly gathered round the cultural and political magazine "Hlas" (The Voice) and accordingly were called "Hlasisti".

## II

Subsequently we propose to analyse the cultural programme of the "Hlasisti" and the concrete manner in which it was put into life in the activities of the most outstanding personalities of this progressive movement. We will also analyse the pioneer work belonging to the sociology of culture of J. Lajčiak.

The programme of the "Hlasisti" reacted to social, cultural and political situation of Slovakia at that time. Accordingly, it aims in substance at three main goals: cultural, ethical and political. In a pregnant way its characteristics could be expressed as: activation, democratization and socialization. These principles are manifest in the activities of two country doctors, D. Makovický (Žilina) and Ivan Hálek (Čadca) who deserved well of the small country people through their social and cultural work among them. P. Blaho applied the same principles in his intensive economic and cultural "little work" as well as in his activities in various clubs and associations. V. Šrobár, A. Štefánek and M. Hodža had similar aims on their minds though they brought them into effect along other lines. V. Šrobár was predominantly an analyst and social theorist, M. Hodža favoured realism in cultural politics and chose his own ways, while A. Štefánek was engaged in journalism, politics, and later on, in applied sociology, in sociography, especially after he left active political activity in the Agrarian party. From other adult education workers should be mentioned Ján Kempný who, continuing the tradition of national revivalists (Andraščík, Plošic, M. M. Hodža, Š. Závodník etc.), fought efficiently against alcoholism among the village people. The activities of the "Hlasisti" caused a conflict with the older generation the consequences of which showed in their work. Through their radicalism and progressive ideas in the intentions of T. G. Masaryk they namely caused enmity of the older generation represented especially by S. H. Vajanský and the conservative top-men of the Slovak national party. By supporting the doctrine of Tolstoy as a practical philosophy which, however, opposed Christian ethical principles, and by their fight against fideism, they got in a generational conflict with the older clergymen headed by the national revivalist F. R. Osvald. When compared with the activities of the older generation, of staunch and intrepid national revivalists, the cultural programme of the "Hlasisti" was in essence their continuation. It was limited predominantly to small enlightening work consisting in the found-

ing of educational and economic associations, industrial and commercial organizations and of magazines and journals. A novelty in their cultural efforts was the emphasis on the need of specialized knowledge, of specialized organizations and of the differentiation of activities in raising the cultural level of the people's strata. In the literary and publishing spheres the "Hlasisti" applied stricter criteria of evaluation of the literary production, emphasizing, at the same time, its social function and utilitarian concerns. For their adult education practice they propagated a higher education of the people, their better instruction and information through the print, lectures, libraries and activities of various clubs. They emphasized that the cultural enlightening work is the only efficient weapon against hungarism, magyarization and denationalization which was faced predominantly by the Slovak intelligentsia. The problem of the cultural commitment of the Slovak intelligentsia and its activization for the revivalist work among the village people disquieted especially A. Štefánek and F. Votruba. Already in the first number of the magazine "Hlas", A. Štefánek proclaims the demand for a modern education of the people through the print, the people's libraries and educational associations. In an identical tenor are voiced his further contributions to journals and magazines referring to the education of the people and to the self-education of the intelligentsia. As a sociologist Štefánek was worried especially by the acute problem of illiteracy, backwardness and alcoholism. From the sociological point of view it is remarkable that the "Hlasisti" carried out a pioneer public opinion research of the subscribers of the "Hlas". It was concerned with topical problems of the spiritual and material culture of the Slovak village, especially of the activities of clubs, the structure and stratification of the population, of migration, alcoholism, the situation in handicrafts, home-made industry, the nutrition of the people and the like. The initiative for this research came from I. Hálek<sup>3</sup> who worked as a remarkable pioneer of enlightenment in Kysuce and, later on, in Žilina where he was lecturer of the town branch of the Workers' Academy for Slovakia.

The problems of the democratization and socialization of culture disquieted even F. Votruba who together with the writer J. G. Tajovský edited the valuable "Slovenská knižnica" (The Slovak Library) of both classic and popular instructive books.

Pavol Blaho,<sup>4</sup> a physician by profession, was one of the leading personalities of the "Hlasisti" who were important because of their sociological conception of the Slovak culture. Although in his enthusiasm he over-estimated the effects of enlightenment and of club activities, in his practice he sought for a synthesis of the ethical revival and the systematic enlightening work among the people. In many respects he followed the cultural programme of Štúr and his followers, especially of D. G. Lichard. Being aware of the growing power of the foreign capital, of the indebtedness of peasants, of usury, alcoholism and backwardness, he sought for a way out through cooperatives and clubs of enlightenment round which he tried to gather the youth detaching them from the village pubs in this way. The roots of disinterest of the young people in the enlightening work he

<sup>3</sup> Cf. J. Tkadlečková: *MUDr. Ivan Hálek*. Bratislava 1959.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Š. Janšák: *Život dr. Pavla Blahu. Slovenské národné hnutie na prahu XX. storočia* (The Life of P. Blaho. The Slovak National Movement on the Threshold of 20th Century), Vol. I, II, Trnava 1947.

sees in unsatisfactory education, in moral effects of magyarization and in a general disorganization. Blaho was extraordinarily interested in the folk's art which he gave an effective support and of which he made use in his work of enlightenment. Though he may have overestimated his admiration for the folk's art, he was right as to its cultural and propagating mission. The "Hlasisti's" cultural activities should be estimated positively, though they were not without defects. Positive was the fact that they worked with a well elaborated conception of their work, especially as to methodology and organization being convinced that it could help to overcome the cultural backwardness of the people. Yet, they overestimated the influence of this work of enlightenment which should have preceded political work. In their conflicts with the older generation they were rather straightforward and unjustly overlooked the merits of the older generation in preserving the Slovak culture.

An attitude of both acknowledgement and criticism as to the cultural programme of the "Hlasisti" was that of J. Lajčiak (1875—1918) in his work "Slovensko a kultura" (Slovakia and Culture<sup>5</sup>), which discloses his sociological erudition and orientation. He presents the picture of the Slovak culture in two parts: Firstly, he outlines the principles of cultural life and, secondly, he deals with its forms. He conceives of culture, in principle, in a dynamic way emphasizing that it is subjected to a constant development and fluctuation. When considering the causes of the origin and destruction of culture he keeps to the evolutionary principle. The leading idea of the Slovak cultural development, he contends, is "the fight for the Slovak culture", thus again the aspect of the social and cultural dynamics is stressed. In cultural life he finds a constant assimilation and integration of cultural products. In this connection, he emphasizes the eminently positive influence of the Czech cultural life on the Slovak national culture. In the practical part of the book Lajčiak analyses the forms of the Slovak cultural life and, as to the dominant ideas in Slovakia before 1918, he distinguishes 5 types of Slovaks: the type (1) of staunch (real) Slovaks; (2) of immature Slovaks; (3) of half-Slovaks; (4) of Slovaks loyal to Magyars and (5) of Magyarized Slovaks. Though these types are essentially true to reality, they do not express it fully and the display of such types could be widened. This assertion is also valid with respect to his characteristic of ideological trends in Slovakia: conservatism and modernism. Clericals and Old Slovaks are according to him the bearers of conservatism, while the younger generation of the "Hlasisti" (called after the review Prúdy "Prúdisti"), feminism and socialism represent modernism.

### III

After the rise of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918, the cultural life of Slovakia was predominantly determined by two models of culture: the older Czechoslovak model the representatives of which were both the older and the younger generation of the "Hlasisti", and the arising antagonistic nationalistic model which found its representatives among the members and followers of the Slovak Catholic party ("ľuďáci") and the Slovak national party ("národnári"). Side by side with these two cultural models, there is slowly growing up a third

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<sup>5</sup> 2nd ed., Bratislava 1957.

model, that of the socialistic culture, which found its protagonists in the movement of the "Davisti" (called after the review DAV<sup>6</sup>). In the following part we propose to expound in what way this third model came into being.

The problems of the "Davisti" who were condemned in the fifties as the bearers of the "bourgeois nationalism" and recently have been fully rehabilitated, are closely connected with the most progressive and most revolutionary period of the Slovak culture between the two wars. If we were to give characteristics of the "Davisti" from the sociological point of view, we could say of them that they are a crystallized group of rationally thinking communists who — even if they often had different ideas as to the social events in Slovakia and in the Republic — sought for a deeper analysis of the reality of their time, for a knowledge of its objective determinants and laws, and, accordingly, for framing views of their own as to real and concrete needs of the day. A sharp and stimulating formulation of the cultural orientation of Slovakia was attempted especially by V. Clementis, L. Novomeský and A. Sirácky. We will try to give a synthesis of their original ideas about the cultural dynamics and orientation of Slovakia. They do not simplify the problems of culture but try to define it as "a composite of the complete knowledge and all efforts of a specific epoch",<sup>7</sup> denying the existence of any general, uniform culture.

Every branch of culture must have, according to Clementis, "a social-functional task".<sup>8</sup> He rightly saw the meaning of the circulation of cultural values: "No cultural values perish so long as there is some vitality in them, but they adapt themselves... It is a reintegrating and assimilating function. However, there are cultural phenomena directly determined by revolution. Yet its definite cultural fruits will grow ripe in the far future..."<sup>9</sup> As to the character of the Slovak national culture, Clementis says that it is "closely connected with the Slovak village, its life and development"<sup>10</sup> and he denies the existence of some pure town culture. Many a sharp comment and observation belonging to the sociology of culture in Slovakia is contained in the most interesting and stimulating inquiries of the DAV on the cultural orientation of Slovakia, on the possibilities of the development of the Slovak revolutionary and proletarian literature, on the Slovak national theatre, and the like.

Other stimulating and till today topical statements from the sphere of the sociology of culture were set forth by the national artist L. Novomeský in his paper "Dnešný stav a vývoj slovenskej kultúry" (Present State and Development of the Slovak Culture)<sup>11</sup> at the first congress of Slovak writers in 1936. He stated that Slovakia and Slovaks are at the crossroads of western and eastern influences and, because of that, they should take into account the forms and functions of these cultural trends. They should examine and weigh these values

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. J. Rozner: "DAV and the Problems of Its Time" in the Volume DAV — *Spomienky a štúdie* (Recollections and Treatises), Bratislava 1959.

<sup>7</sup> V. Clementis: "Akultúrny bolševizmus" (Acultural Bolshevism), DAV 1, 1925, No. 1, p. 48.

<sup>8</sup> l. c., p. 49.

<sup>9</sup> l. c., p. 80.

<sup>10</sup> V. Clementis: "Slovenská literatúra" (Slovak Literature) in: *Vzduch našich čias*. Výber článkov, statí, prejavov a polemík (The Air of our Times. A Selection of Treatises, Essays, Papers and Polemics), Vol. 1, p. 197.

<sup>11</sup> in: *Slovenské smery* (Slovak Trends) 3, Vol. 1935/36, No. 8—9, pp. 289—301.

before they absorb and integrate them in their own culture. He saw the necessary prerequisites of a full development of the Slovak culture in the inevitable correspondence between our cultural life and the world cultural trends. And predominantly from this aspect he refused tendencies requiring a cultural autarchy and, in the interest of an optimal development of the Slovak national culture, he asked for "windows opened not only towards Europe, but towards the whole world".<sup>12</sup>

V. Clementis expressed his complete agreement with L. Novomeský's standpoint and attitude. He energetically refused the idea of isolation and of creating an original culture as well as the idea of overcoming this isolation by joining a unified Czechoslovak nation. Accordingly, he appealed to cultural workers to oppose energetically all efforts towards isolation as well as against the endeavours of "romanticists" asking that the Slovak nation should create values of its own. But he also refused rigorously the tendency to accept the surpassed conception of the Czechoslovak culture.

It is interesting to confront the attitude of the "Davisti" to national culture with the sociological views of A. Štefánek who expressed them in his essays in magazines and volumes as well as in his life-work *Základy sociografie Slovenska* (The Foundations of the Sociography of Slovakia)<sup>13</sup>. Štefánek who knew the situation of the Slovak national culture before 1918 and after it, was entitled to the statement that the 1918 revolution found the spiritual culture predominantly conservatively ecclesiastical and under the influence of hungarism and liberalism. A great part of the Slovak nation had got no education, was illiterate and was under the influence of the indigenous traditions and folkways. Consequently, he distinguishes the people's culture from the culture of gentlemen and values the former very highly. "The culture of the people is on a high level as to both moral and aesthetic values; as to its rational side, it excels in shrewd and sound peasant common sense..."<sup>14</sup> Sections of the sociology of culture in Slovakia are treated by Štefánek in other chapters of his writings too, especially in essays on acculturation, hungarism, where he analyses Slovak literature and bibliography, in the latter two cases paying attention to the social origin of Slovak writers and their social professional rank. Proceeding from Š. Janšík's essays on the history of literature, A. Štefánek distinguishes 3 types of Slovak artists: the type (1) Úprka—Jurkovič who were intimately connected with the people's art and through their talents created typically Slovak works in the sense of the people's artistic traditions; (2) the type of Andrej Kmeť, i. e. of an active national worker who worked and suffered for his nation in the hardest time; (3) of S. H. Vajanský who represented a synthesis of the writer, journalist and politician. Let us comment critically on this typology that it does not by far correspond to the much more complex reality of the Slovak cultural life from before 1918 and that a deeper analysis of the cultural dynamics would bring forth a much larger number of such distinct types.

As to Štefánek's view of the Slovak culture let us state that he remained true to his "Hlasist" programme and ideology of agrarism and, consequently, he retained his older attitudes towards cultural products: he did not acknowledge the con-

<sup>12</sup> l. c., p. 300.

<sup>13</sup> in *Slovenská vlastiveda* III, *Spooločnosť*, Bratislava 1944.

<sup>14</sup> op. cit., p. 300.



tributions of the town culture — therein he agreed with the “Davists” — and saw the foundations of the Slovak national culture nearly exclusively in the people’s culture. As an ideologist of agrarism he was always an adherent of ruralism, even in his interesting observations about the Slovak culture.

The revolutionary change of the Slovak culture, politics and economy after 1945 can be characterized as an ascending process of the socialistic culture the beginnings of which were laid by the “Davisti”. The revolutionary changes, which could be more precisely named the beginnings of the process of nationalization of the cultural front, brought about difficulties. Tendencies to individualism, to a refusal of social functions of art and of the social commitment, had to be overcome. The progressive part of our cultural “avantgarde” started bravely to create optimal conditions for the development of culture in all its sections, especially in creating new works of art which fulfilled the requirements of a socialistic culture. At the Congress of artists and scientists<sup>15</sup> L. Novomeský repeated and discussed on principle the conception of the culture of the “Davisti”, especially as to the problem of its oscillation and relations to the West and the East. Although he did not deny the fact of an unequivocality of our cultural orientation in the direction of the socialistic culture of the Soviet Union, he backed up the postulate for the development of our culture open to “fertilizing influences from any side whatever”.

In the lively discussions on the problems of our new cultural relations and new cultural orientation took part another top representative of the group of the “Davisti”, the sociologist and philosopher Andrej Širácky through his publication “Umierajúca civilizácia” (The Dying civilization).<sup>16</sup> He conceives of culture from the dynamic standpoint of marxism-leninism, i. e. as a product of a longer social development. Accordingly he conceives of culture as “an ideal process of political, economical and social tendencies and plans”<sup>17</sup> and in this sense he also conceives of the process of the “culturization of man” in the closest connection with his work. Accordingly, a new, a higher culture is created in a socialistic society.

To the sociological problems of culture A. Širácky returned later on in his most extensive work *Kultúra a politika* (The Culture and Politics, 1949). In agreement with his above mentioned considerations on culture he ranks culture in the social-ideal sphere of man and examines it in connection with the function and structure of the society, in mutual dependences of its component parts and the milieu. Consequently culture appears to be “a typically human phenomenon, synthetic, and social ideal, moral, material and technical reality and an effort to grow in the direction of a further de-biologization of man”.<sup>18</sup> Further he analyses the primitive culture, the cultural progress and regression, the possibilities and conditions of a cultural growth, cultural types, forms and areas and deals widely with the rise of culture. He acknowledges that cultures do not rise by chance nor “by miracle”, but that they are very closely connected with the social and economic basis.

Being aware that cultures do not perish entirely, but give over their heritage to other cultures and generations, he accepts the principle of the circulation

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<sup>15</sup> in Banská Bystrica.

<sup>16</sup> Petrovec 1946.

<sup>17</sup> A. Širácky: *Kultúra a mravnosť*, Bratislava 1949, p. 11.

and integration of cultural values. After an analysis of cultural phenomena he defines culture as a "social-spiritual category of a synthetic expression of material products (material culture) and of the level of ideal and ethical maturity (spiritual culture)".<sup>18</sup> And although he admits that the social and cultural development in Slovakia has a specific character, he is convinced that the specific development process of the Slovak culture can be ranked in the corresponding stages of the feudal-capitalistic development.

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After this overview of comments, considerations and ideas as to the sociological problems of the Slovak culture we can sum up by stating that these problems have always been current in Slovakia and that they are stimulating and instructive for today. Our analysis signalizes the need of a purposeful and fast evaluation of the Slovak cultural development, because our contemporary practice and theory of sociology in Slovakia is in need of such an evaluation.

## Z HISTÓRIE SOCIOLOGIE KULTÚRY NA SLOVENSKU

Príspevok PhDr. Ignáca Gašparca, ktorý svojho času prispieval do Bláhavej "Sociologické revue" a patrí do okruhu žiakov a odchovancov prof. dr. Antona Štefánka a jeho sociografickej školy, načrtáva niektoré vývinové etapy sociológie kultúry na Slovensku. Poukazuje na jednotlivé generačné obdobia a osobnosti, cez ktoré raz výraznejšie, inokedy zase pomalšie, ale predsa len sa formovala mladá sociológia na Slovensku. Autor príspevku obširnejšie sa zaoberal generáciami hlasistov a davistov a konfrontoval s ich postojmi a hľadiskami na kultúru názory a mienky dr. Antona Štefánka a dr. Jána Lajčiaka. Rozborom náhľadov a mienok na sociologickú problematiku kultúry dospel k záveru, že táto problematika bola na Slovensku aj v minulosti veľmi živá, a že je podnetná a veľmi poučná aj pre dnešok. Príspevok signalizuje potrebu cieľavedome a urýchlene pracovať na zhodnotení slovenského kultúrneho vývinu, pretože aj súčasná prax a teória sociológie na Slovensku takéto zhodnotenie nutne potrebujú.

<sup>18</sup> I. c., p. 87.

