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COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SLOVAK AND SOVIET HISTORY STUDIES IN THE YEARS 1945–1989 (INSTRUMENTALIZATION, STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT, RESEARCH TOPICS)¹

In this study, we have outlined some aspects of the broad and unresolved issue of the development of Slovak (Czech) history studies in the second half of the 20th century, a discipline which was marked by the birth and fall of one of the world's bipolarities and which also manifested itself in the academic world as a confrontation between two diametrically opposed worldviews and methodologies. From the late 1940s, the almost regular missions of Soviet Marxist historians to Czechoslovakia, especially to universities in Prague, Brno, and Bratislava, contributed significantly to the instrumentalization of Marxist-Leninist methodology in Slovak history studies. The character of these missions gradually changed. Initially, they were more didactic, methodological, and educational in nature, but later they took on the content and forms of academic cooperation at the level of research in the archives and the organization of joint conferences. From the 1960s, they were characterized by the creation and joint work of the Czechoslovak-Soviet commission of historians within the academies of sciences (followed later by the Czech-Russian, Czech-Ukrainian, Slovak-Russian and Slovak-Ukrainian Commissions of Historians). In the 1970s and 1980s, Slovak history studies gradually expanded its contacts to include cooperation with a number of Soviet universities and several departments of the USSR Academy of Sciences (especially the Institute of Slavic Studies in Moscow). We use individual examples to show how the so-called "old school of positivist historians" coped with the advent of new social conditions and with the application or rejection of the new Marxist interpretation of history. We define individual stages of development in the application of Marxist-Leninist methodology. After 1989, many, especially influential Slovak historians, pointed out and continue to point out all the pitfalls and unresolved issues in the field of knowledge and understanding of the methodology and mechanisms of the study of history in the second half of the 20th century in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism in all its manifestations and forms.

Keywords: Slovak historical scholarship; historiography; Marxist-Leninist historical interpretation; scholarly communication; Soviet-Czechoslovak scholarly relations.

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After World War II, international agreements between the superpowers created a bipolar world. Countries that fell within the sphere of influence of the USSR and began to form the so-called socialist bloc came under its direct ideological influence not only in terms of domestic and foreign policy, economic and military structure, but also in the areas of culture, education and scholarship. After 1945, therefore, young Slovak historiography was developing amid complex conditions shaped by domestic and world events, conditions which intensively influenced the transformations of our society. The generation of historians emerging at that time had to come to terms with and, in most cases, reconcile themselves to the codification of Marxism as the only binding scholarly, ideological, and methodological platform in historiography (as well as in other disciplines). It had to participate in the distortion of social and historical consciousness, a process often contrary to the ethics of scholarly work, scholarly knowledge and cognition, but contrary also to its own convictions. From the late 1940s onwards, historians began and ended their material studies, which were often based on the interpretation of archival research, with a mandatory section of quotations from the classics of Marxism-Leninism. Gradually, as time passed and the political regime in which one party played the leading role grew stronger, these quotations were supplemented by increasingly abundant opinions (prescribed by the authorities) on key events. There was an increase in the amount of distortion, misinformation, and speculation in discussions of the relationships between historical phenomena, about which no one was interested in—or allowed to be interested in—gathering objective knowledge.²

The historiography of this period was a closely monitored and perhaps the most regulated social science discipline. The topics it addressed were predetermined, and it was required to give priority to certain themes. These topics included class struggles, revolutionary struggles, progressive traditions, the history of the labor movement, and the history of the ruling party (a topic which began to receive excessive attention), while their interpretation was guided by Marxist methodology and its exceptional position in both national and world history. In the course of historical research, so-called blank spots in historical development soon emerged which were deliberately concealed and circumvented (e.g., the history of religious life, the history of churches, and several important

2 LUBOMÍR LIPTÁK, "Poznámky o historiografii novších dejín", *Historický časopis* 38, no. 5 (1990): 690.

historical figures). However, it is to the credit of many Slovak historians that they interpreted several research topics on the basis of objective knowledge, drawing on a broad range of sources. This applied in particular to older Slovak and general history, including the processes of national revival in the 19th century.³

A certain thaw or deviation from the strictly Marxist interpretation of history studies occurred in the 1960s, when reform efforts to give socialism a human face gradually increased, not only on a social level, but also in the academic world and its attempts at new methodological approaches. In 1968, even before the arrival of the allied armies of the Warsaw Pact, in an atmosphere of revival fostered by Dubček, a congress of historians was held in Martin, Slovakia. For the first time since the end of World War II, historians here spoke without external or internal censorship about all the issues and problems of dogmatically developing Marxist academic thought, its methodology, and its attempts at new methodological approaches as well as the changes necessary in the development of society as a whole.⁴ In his keynote speech at the conference, historian Ľubomír Lipták presented an excellent analysis of Stalin's concept of historical development and its abuse and adaptation to the current needs of the ruling elites. He pointed out how, in the 1950s and 1960s, Slovak historiography, as yet underdeveloped, was distorted by the Marxist concept of interpreting Slovak history, its individual stages of development, phenomena, and personalities.⁵ The paper was analytical not only in relation to the period before 1968 but also had something to say to contemporary historians.⁶

After 1968, the process of revival was halted and from the early 1970s the period of normalization saw the reintroduction of the very strict and rigorous methodological boundaries of Marxist-Leninist scientific interpretation. Ľubomír Lipták and the entire group of historians who were involved in the struggle for the de-Stalinization of Slovak historiography were ostracized by the power structures of neo-Stalinist dogmatic Marxism

3 ĽUDOVÍT HARAKSIM, "Úlohy slovenskej historickej spoločnosti pri spracúvaní novších dejín", *Historický časopis*, 38, no. 5 (1990): 685.

4 However, the materials from the conference were not published, except for the main conference paper by Ľubomír Lipták, a leading researcher at the Historical Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, in the first issue of "Historický časopis" in 1969.

5 JÚLIUS MESÁROŠ, "O zástojoch mojej generácie na povojnovom vývoji slovenskej historiografie", *Historický časopis*, 38, no. 5 (1990): 682.

6 ĽUBOMÍR LIPTÁK, "Postavenie historiografie v našej spoločnosti", *Historický časopis*, 17, no. 1 (1969): 98–118.

until 1989, especially within the framework of official history studies. While in the Czech scientific community, all the historians who had chosen to speak out against the imposition of Marxist academic theories were made redundant and forced without exception to work in manufacturing, in Slovakia, academics, including historians, were given the chance to retain their profession and work within the field they were qualified for, albeit within strictly defined limits. Most were placed as employees in libraries or regional cultural institutions. If they remained in their original positions, it was only as specialist staff without the opportunity to lecture. This is one of the reasons why, during the years of “consolidation” (the 1970s and 1980s), the activities of the illegal anti-régime intelligentsia were much more active and productive in Slovakia than in the Czech Republic.

Relaxation of the sociopolitical conditions imposed during the “consolidation” period in the 1970s and 1980s finally began during the period of perestroika in the Soviet Union. However, even at this time, academic history studies did not allow for any deviation from the Marxist interpretation. It did, however, emphasize possibilities for development and change. The 9th Congress of the Slovak Historical Society in 1986 was held in this spirit.⁷ Historical works by Slovak historians that were not theoretically based on Marxist methodology were common at the time, but in the official academic historical-scientific environment, they were considered a history that such authors understood descriptively and without the application of theory. Their works were perceived as material studies of both regional and central provenance and unsuitable for publication in the Slovak Academy of Sciences’ journal *Historický časopis* and other important academic periodicals.⁸

One mechanism for promoting the methodology of Marxism-Leninism in the fields of education, academic study and culture was the active expansion of professional contacts between academics from individual socialist countries and scholars and academic institutions in the USSR. After 1945, we see an increasing interest among Soviet academics in giving lecture tours in socialist countries.

Even before the establishment of the academic and research institutions of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences (and also of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, hereinafter referred to as SAV) in 1953, the

7 SAMUEL CAMEL, “Hlavné metodologické otázky slovenských dejín”, *Historický časopis*, 35, no. 1 (1987): 30–56.

8 CAMEL, Hlavné metodologické otázky, 31.

Czechoslovak-Soviet Institute was established in 1950 with the task of acquiring and disseminating the results of Soviet scholarship.⁹ Its platform was the periodical *Sovětská věda* [Soviet Scholarship], which was divided into several specialist sections. The history section, as part of the social sciences, was published every two months, and in his introductory letter outlining the mission of the institute and the journal, the President of the Czechoslovak Republic, Klement Gottwald stated “that [they] had the important task of mastering the results of the most advanced scholarship in the world, Soviet scholarship, and of working in close alliance with it”.¹⁰

This basic thesis was then supported in the introductory papers by one of the authorities of emerging Marxist historiography in our country, Zdeněk Nejedlý, and on the Soviet side by academician Boris Dmitrievich Grekov, who was at that time on a lecture tour in Czechoslovakia. The first issues of this periodical published the most important Marxist textbooks by Soviet historians, ethnographers, archaeologists, and others. The journal featured works in the field of Marxist methodology, translations of works by Soviet historians from specialized Soviet historical periodicals, historiographical overviews, and information on developments in the Soviet study of history. Its task was to shape Czech and Slovak scholarship in the spirit of Marxist-Leninist philosophy and methodology. Gradually, Slovak and Czech Marxist historians, who were already opinion leaders at the time, began to publish here and soon rose to leading and most important positions in historical departments at both universities and academies (a similar process can be observed in other academic disciplines).

We learn about several visits by Soviet academics to the Czech Republic and Slovakia in the early 1950s mainly from the first issues of the journal *Soviet Scholarship* and later also from other Slovak and Czech periodicals, which regularly published articles on all academic achievements or about academic events. In November 1951, Prof. Petr Nikolayevich Tretiakov,

9 See: LENKA VLČKOVÁ KRYČEROVÁ, “Studium dějin Ruska a SSSR v Československé akademii věd 1950–1969. Československo-sovětský institut a Ústav dějin evropských socialistických zemí”, *Slovanský přehled*, 101, no. 2 (2015): 319–357. A distinctive example of ideological expansion was the attempt by Soviet historians to review a Czechoslovak history textbook in 1953. See in more detail: ВИКТОРИЯ С. ГРУЗДИНСКАЯ, “В пространстве социалистической науки: обсуждение чехословацкого учебника по истории (1953 г.)”, *Электронный научно-образовательный журнал “История”* 13, no. 4 (2022): URL: <https://history.jes.su/s207987840021118-8-1/> <https://doi.org/10.18254/S207987840021118-8>

10 KLEMENT GOTTWALD, “Dopis prezidenta republiky Klementa Gottwalda Československo-sovětskému institutu”, *Sovětská věda. Zprávy československo-sovětského institutu. Oddělení historie*, 1–2, no. 1 (1950–1951): 1.

a prominent Soviet academic, visited Czechoslovakia as part of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship Days. He lectured at Charles University in Prague, Masaryk University in Brno, and the Slovak University in Bratislava.¹¹ In addition to specialized lectures on Soviet archaeology and historical science, he gave a methodological lecture at the University of Political and Economic Sciences in Prague on the topic “The significance of J.V. Stalin’s works on Marxism in linguistics for history studies”.¹² At the turn of 1951–1952, Galina Petrovna Chekanova from what was then Leningrad, a researcher at the local branch of the Institute of Slavic Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences, and Semyon Voktorovich Shukhardin, who was particularly interested in research into mining and industrial technology in Slovakia, both visited Czechoslovakia.¹³ In 1952, Ivan Mitrofanovich Klimov from Kazan State University visited Czechoslovakia and, over the course of two months, gave lectures at almost all the universities and important academic institutions in the country, including the history departments of the Faculty of Philosophy at the Slovak University in Bratislava.¹⁴ As we can read in the report on his activities, his work consisted not only of lectures, but also methodological consulting on the working methods of individual historical institutions in Bohemia and Slovakia.¹⁵ Between 1949 and 1953, Soviet historian and slavist Ivan Ivanovich Udaltsov made several working visits to Czechoslovakia. His activities and cooperation with Czechoslovak history studies contributed significantly to the beginnings of the development of post-war Czech and Slovak Slavic studies and to cooperation with the Institute of Slavic Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences and the Department of Southern and Western Slavs of the Faculty of History at Lomonosov University in Moscow. For example, one of the

11 In 1954, the Slovak University was renamed Comenius University, the name it had borne from its founding in 1919 until 1938.

12 All three lectures, as well as the ceremonial speech at the event in Banská Bystrica during the Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship Days (November 22, 1951), were published in the journal *Sovětská věda*. Tretiakov gave his first lecture in Brno, his second in Prague, and his third in Bratislava. In Slovakia, in addition to lecturing at the University in Bratislava, he visited a number of Slovak towns and villages and took an interest in archaeological field research.

13 PAVOL HORVÁTH, “Návštevy sovietskych historikov na Slovensku”, *Historický sborník*, no. 10 (Bratislava, 1952): 491–492.

14 IVAN M. KLIMOV, “Klasikové marxizmu-leninizmu o historické vėde”, *Sovětská věda, Historie*, 4, no. 3 (1954): 309–321.

15 Klimov’s lectures focused on key topics in the history of the USSR (the October Revolution, the Civil War, World War II). See: DIMITRIJ KRANĎŽALOV, KAREL HERMAN, “Přednášky docenta I. M. Klimova v Československu”, *Sovětská věda*, 2, no. 5 (1952): 685–690.

first Slovak historians to complete a postgraduate degree in Slavic studies in Moscow was Dr. Vladimír Matula. He personally met Udaltsov during his visits to Slovakia in 1949–1953 and it was from him that he received an offer to continue his studies in the Soviet Union. Matula subsequently became the most prominent figure in post-war Slavic studies in Slovakia and held a number of important academic management positions until 1989. Visits by prominent Soviet historians from various universities and academic research institutions (especially the Institute of Slavic Studies) continued intensively until 1989. However, their character and content gradually took on a professional, thematic, and research nature.

It is interesting to observe how the content focus of the periodical *Soviet Scholarship* changed in the early 1950s in terms of the authors that contributed to it over the course of the two to three years of its existence. The first two issues mostly feature lectures and translations by influential Soviet Marxist historians, many of whom visited Czechoslovakia during those years and methodically guided the future of Czechoslovak history studies in the spirit of Marxist-Leninist methodology and interpretation of history. By the fourth year of *Soviet Scholarship*, contributions to the journal came predominantly from a new generation of Czech and Slovak Marxist historians.

The work of historians of the so-called old school was not confined in Slovak and Czech historiography to the first half of the 20th century. Many of them continued to produce scholarly work for several decades in the second half of the 20th century, treading a delicate line between the firm party position and their more traditional academic practice. This was tolerated and their work published even in extremely politicized periodicals such as *Soviet Scholarship*. Their place on the history studies scene ultimately helped to reflect other approaches in Slovak and Czech historiography, especially the positivist approach. Of course, in this form, it could only be accepted in the context of research into the earliest periods of history, including antiquity and the Middle Ages, and its authors certainly could not hold any managerial or leading positions in the domain of academia or the academic community. Rather, they were academics who worked in the seclusion of archives and various regional institutions, or retired representatives of the “old school”. It should be noted, however, that since the late 1970s, Marxist works with a deep academic and research background (as if they were a syncretism of various methodological approaches), whose informative value is still valid in many respects, are still cited in academic circles today.

As already mentioned, contacts with academics in the Soviet Union were an important and integral part of the international scholarly relations maintained by the Slovak academic community in the second half of the 20th century. This is clearly evidenced not only by The Slovak Academy of Sciences Archive in Bratislava, but also by the personal collections of many Slovak academics stored here. These document such contacts and provide a wealth of study material and content about them of various kinds in a variety of fields of academic research. These range from reports of individual academic events (conferences, workshops, study tours), academic and private correspondence, professional works, reviews, assessments, and expert opinions to photographic material and memoirs or travel notes from stays in the countries of the former Soviet Union. The Archive includes personalities from most academic disciplines, from the exact sciences, the humanities and the arts. These are largely the most important personalities in Slovak scholarship, who were not only opinion leaders in their respective academic disciplines; many of them also held important positions in Slovak academia and Slovak education. In international academic communication, they were present not only as authors in professional publications but also as organizers of European and world scholarship, while quite naturally relying primarily on the Soviet academic sphere.

The very establishment of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in 1953 was clearly based on Marxist-Leninist methodology and ideology (especially in the social sciences), although many of its researchers of the older generation still approached their research tasks in a more positivist manner and in the spirit of the academic schools of the period between the wars. Their research work itself provides us with sufficient evidence of this, as they literally put a wrapping of Marxism, figuratively speaking, over goods with an old date of production. At the History Department of the Faculty of Philosophy of Charles University—the most important and influential educational and academic institution (alongside the emerging Academy of Sciences, many of whose employees also worked at the Slovak Academy of Sciences)—students continued to encounter approaches to the interpretation of history other than Marxist ones long after 1945 (we can say until the old generation of historians and professors retired). Outwardly, however, they had to maintain the so-called correct line and teach core subjects mostly according to translations of Soviet textbooks. In the 1960s, a certain change and relaxation occurred in the application of the strict Marxist interpretation of history in Czechoslovakia. This relaxation was eventually halted after “normalization” in the early 1970s, when there was

a return to the firm course of the official state line. What's more, it was in the 1970s that new institutions began to emerge, focused on strengthening Marxist scholarly methodology. However, we have several examples even from this period of how some experts of the so-called old school, who were still working in the older establishments, helped to mitigate the consequences of "normalization" in the early 1970s with their natural and academic authority.¹⁶

One such figure is Professor Branislav Varsík, who at that time was working as a non-member of the Communist Party at the Department of World History at the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University in Bratislava.¹⁷ Prof. Varsík was a great support to the Department of World History, which was officially established at the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University in 1964, and as head of the department (1968–1973) he was an important and stabilizing factor during the difficult years of "normalization". It was certainly not easy to protect a young academic discipline amid numerous political and party struggles over the authenticity and orthodoxy of people and ideas. In subsequent decades, many people took credit for saving this or that. However, Professor Varsík, a modest, principled professor of modern general history with a firm academic grounding, definitely deserved more credit than he was given later (he retired in 1974). Perhaps it was his tendency to be absent-minded and seemingly inattentive, even careless in some matters that led him to overlook the official political line, something that helped his institution survive the difficult years of "normalization" with minimal repercussions. Professor Varsík was prepared to defend high-quality academic postulates even during this period. He had grown up academically and methodologically in the tradition of objective positivist historiography that belonged to the period of the first Czechoslovak Republic, and he maintained this tradition, with minor obligatory modifications, even during the period of Marxist interpretation of history. One can agree with Ján Mylnárik's statement that it was thanks to Varsík, who guided his students in the study of older general and Slovak history in a similar spirit, that the first

16 For more information on the perception of Soviet historiography in the memoirs of Czechoslovak historians of that time, see: ВИКТОРИЯ С. ГРУЗДИНСКАЯ, СЕРГЕЙ О. НАЗАРОВ, "Вместе боролись, вместе строим!" Образ советизации и СССР в мемуарах чехословацких историков второй половины XX в.", *Диалог со временем*, no. 89 (2024): 351–367. <https://doi.org/10.21267/aquilo.2024.89.89.024>

17 MIROSLAV DANIŠ, "Branislav Varsík v kontexte všeobecných dejín na Slovensku", *Acta historica neosoliensia*, no. 9 (2006): 271–277.

two volumes of the synthetic history of Slovakia from the 1980s are solidly and professionally written and that their interpretations of history are free from deep and fundamental Marxist distortions.¹⁸

An interesting example of the old school of historians and their efforts to adapt to Marxist-Leninist methodological trends after 1945 under the influence of the new sociopolitical situation is Professor Eugen Perfetzky, a Russian post-revolutionary émigré.¹⁹ After 1945, Perfetzky worked intensively on his synthetic and academic work on the history of medieval Russia, which he intended to go into multiple volumes. In the first part, he focused on the earliest period of Russian history, approximately until the end of the 13th century.²⁰

The fact that he began to prepare this work intensively for publication and devoted himself to preparing the manuscript for printing after 1945 is also evidenced by his correspondence with Vladimir Ivanovich Picheta, an academician of the USSR Academy of Sciences, who at that time was head of the Department of Southern and Western Slavs at the Faculty of History of Lomonosov University in Moscow (from 1939 to 1947 until his death on June 23, 1947).²¹

After World War II, based on Perfetzky's more intensive communication with several historians, including those in the Soviet Union, as well as developments in postwar Czechoslovakia, he began increasingly to incorporate elements of Marxist-Leninist philosophy into his works as a methodological foundation. This Leninist philosophy, in most cases, appeared in his works only as an obligation to be in harmony with the times of which he was a part. It is not easy to understand how a historian who adhered to positivism throughout his life and not only grew up with it but also worked among such historians throughout his life could adopt such an approach. We can find such like-minded colleagues at, for example,

18 JÁN MLYNÁRIK, *Českí profesori na Slovensku I. (Českí profesori a ich slovenskí žiaci na Univerzite Komenského v rokoch 1919–1949)*. (Prague: Danubius, 1994): 175.

19 See: MIROSLAV DANIŠ, "Evgenij Julianovič Perfeckij a jeho podiel na rozvoji slovenskej historickej vedy", *Acta historica Posoniensia*, no. 29 (Bratislava: Stimul, 2015): 20–28; IDEM, "Profesor Eugen Perfeckij na Ukrajine a jeho študijno-výskumné cesty po Podkarpatskej Rusi", *Историчний часопис з богемістики і словакістики*, no. 10 (2024): 84–106; ĽUBICA HARBUĽOVÁ, „Ruskí slavisti-emigranti a medzivojnové Slovensko“, *Slovenské štúdie* 81, no. 1 (1995): 44–50; EADEM, "Jevgenij Julianovič Perfeckij", *Osobnosti politického exilu z Ruska na Slovensku v rokoch 1920–1945*, ed. Ľ. HARBUĽOVÁ (Prešov: Faculty of Arts, University of Prešov, 2015), 109–115. EADEM, *Ruská emigrácia a Slovensko. Pôsobenie ruskej pooktóbrovej emigrácie na Slovensku v rokoch 1919–1939* (Prešov: FF PU, 2001).

20 MIROSLAV DANIŠ, *Eugen Perfeckij a jeho stredoveké dejiny Rusi* (Bratislava, Hlbiny, 2024).

21 *Архив Российской академии наук*, ф. 1548, оп. 3, д. 160, л. 1–4 об.

the Department of History at the University of Bratislava: D. Rapant, B. Varsík, A. Húščava, and some Czech historians, such as V. Ondrouch and J. Macúrek). It is not easy to understand Perfetzky's stance, but it does have its own logic.

Throughout his life, Perfetzky identified with his Ukrainian-Russian identity, which he loved and was devoted to in his life and work, and he always wanted to present his findings objectively and in a scholarly fashion, based on sources. After 1945, as the victor of World War II, the Soviet Union definitively convinced Perfetzky that the direction of historical development that it, as a superpower in Europe, represented at that time was irreversible. It was not unacceptable, therefore, for Perfetzky to accept or begin to learn what Marxism was and how it explained historical development. On the contrary, he began to apply it in his works, and it was precisely his synthetic work on Russian history that became Perfetzky's first major experiment in the methodological application of Marxism. However, it must be said that this work was not well received, which was a good thing, because the work is essentially a high-quality positivist work with minor traces of Marxist interpretations, especially in the parts dealing with social unrest or social movements.

In order to understand Perfetzky's Marxism during this period, it can be useful to examine the personality of Arkady Lavrovich Sidorov, among others.²² Sidorov was one of those historians who, through visits by Soviet historians (Marxists) to individual academic institutions and universities, through his lectures, and through the establishment of academic contacts, was supposed to convince the then still relatively numerous group of so-called "bourgeois" academics to abandon their markedly positivist, interpretation of history. For example, we have a report dating from the

22 Personal relations with A. L. Sidorov in the later period (1960s) were also maintained by Prof. Samuel Cambel, professor at the Department of History, who was on a research internship at the Faculty of History, Moscow University in the spring of 1964 and devoted himself to academic problems of Soviet history, questions which were also very close to the heart of Prof. Sidorov (e.g., pre-revolutionary history of Russia and the period of the Russian Revolution). Prof. Cambel is an exemplary figure in Slovak history studies who, thanks to his firm Marxist platform, was the most important defender of the so-called "correct line in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism and the leading role of the Communist Party in society" from the 1970s until 1989, both at the university and at the Academy of Sciences (*Archív Slovenskej akadémie vied*. Fond S. Cambel. Škatuľa 14. Inv. č. 344). On Sidorov's contacts with historians from other countries of the region, see: Виктория С. Груздинская, Александр С. Стыкалин, *Будапештская осень профессора А. Л. Сидорова: советской историк в водовороте Венгерской революции 1956 года* (Саратов: Техно-Декор, 2024).

beginning of 1947 which states that Prof. Sidorov completed a study and lecture tour in Czechoslovakia. He also visited Bratislava and lectured at the University of Bratislava. In his report on this academic mission, he noted that many Russian émigrés had joined the Communist Party—for example, Eugen Perfetzky at the University of Bratislava, around whom professional forces were gathering. At that time, Professor Perfetzky was the dean of the university's Faculty of Philosophy, and we attribute his party membership to two factors. As an émigré, he feared that after the Soviet Union strengthened its position in Central Europe, he could become a target for liquidation, and at the same time, his firm belief in the power of Russia and Slavic cooperation ultimately identified with the methodology of Marxism, which was represented in academia by one of the powers that had been victorious in the fight against fascism.

In terms of the application of Marxism in Perfetzky's work, there is a certain methodological looseness and ambiguity, especially in the use of state-legal terms such as tribe, nation, state, empire, people, assembly, citizen, which he often uses interchangeably and sometimes perceives as synonyms. This is not only a result of the historiographical discourse of the time, but also a reflection of the intellectual and ideological struggle of the scholar's own identity, his human condition, and the environment in which he had lived for more than twenty years. While working with sources and relying on the research done by academic authorities of the so-called positivist type of Russian and European historiography, his arguments and logic of interpretation were of the highest quality and even came up with very interesting and original new research conclusions. As soon as he embarked on constructing a class-based and Marxist view and justification of historical phenomena, however, his arguments became static and schematic, and it even seemed as if he did not understand their essence. Fortunately, there are only a few such so-called Marxist inputs in his work on Russian history, and they do not essentially diminish the quality of Perfetzky's archival research.

The schematism of Perfetzky's Marxism is evident, for example, in his interpretation of social relations. When explaining the economic and social factors in the development of ancient Russian society, Perfetzky tried to incorporate elements of Marxist methodology into his interpretation, but he consistently retained older interpretations of the development of commercial, economic, and social relations and ties in his text. He attempts to support his points with references to Friedrich Engels' work,

but the result is that his argumentation feels contrived and distorted. Perfetzky had read Marx and Engels, as well as Lenin's work on the state, but evidently, having lived in interwar Czechoslovakia or traveled abroad in Central and Western Europe, he did not understand the mechanisms of the functioning of the social organism in the conditions of the socialist USSR and the application of Marxist ideology in practice.

In so far as it traces the journey of an excellent positivist historian towards Marxism, the aforementioned work by Perfetzky is a very interesting illustration of the transition of Central European positivist history studies towards the Marxist methodology of the interpretation of history. (There were further similar examples in the Slovak academic environment, such as Varsík and Húščava.) Such a transition from positivism to Marxism was in reality not possible, and so these historians essentially remained positivists, using a certain schema of Marxist interpretation. Perfetzky died in 1947, so he no longer had to work his way through Marxism, but the example of Varsík, who survived the entire period of the dominance of Marxist methodology, is particularly interesting. As a positivist, he occasionally included quotations from the classics of Marxism-Leninism in his texts. Since he lived to see the events after 1989, he managed for a while to return to his old interwar or, as Marxism put it, "bourgeois" positivism. One statement by the aforementioned Prof. Varsík was well known to historians of the old school, the so-called positivist-Marxists, and was characteristic of the years 1945–1989: "I'll embellish the work a little with quotations from Marx, Engels, and Lenin, and it will be fine".

The foundations of Marxist history studies were laid in Bohemia and Slovakia from the early 1950s. Creative scholarly analysis and synthesis of individual problems were replaced by quotations from Joseph Stalin and the classics of Marxism-Leninism. It was a period which saw the gradual assimilation of the theory and methodology of Marxist scholarship. This type of scholarship was much more developed in Soviet history studies after 1945 and it became a model for the development and improvement of history studies in Bohemia and Slovakia, as opposed to Western European history studies, which was considered and defined as bourgeois. However, there were a few Marxist historians who were, in some respects, acceptable to our discipline. For example, the methodology of Max Weber's history, the Annales school, etc. was respected but problematic. As early as this period, a team of researchers from the Historical Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, led by Ľudovít Holotík, were developing the theses of

the first Marxist synthesis of Slovak history. In 1955, these were published as a supplement to the periodical *Historický časopis*,²³ and in 1961, they were published in book form as the first Marxist history of Slovakia,²⁴ which was modified several times in later years.²⁵ During this period, the smuggling of unorthodox facts, ideas, and documents into the flood of official Marxist scholarship was like a small victory for the anti-régime activities of part of the historical community and provided encouragement for the future. Anti-régime historiography also existed during this period, but it manifested itself only to a minimal extent, with negligible social impact. Certain overlaps between official Marxist scholarship and the ever-persistent views of the old school and positivist approaches to research in Slovak historiography are also evidenced by a 1961 collection of papers on current issues in Slovak historiography, which were presented at the 1959 congress of the Slovak Historical Society. Alongside orthodox Marxist historians (L. Holotík, M. Gosiorovský), historians such as Varsík, Lipták, and Húščava presented their views.²⁶

The 1960s saw growing deviation from classical Marxist methodology. Historical topics began to be raised that were perceived by Marxist science as “harmful:” the issue of the so-called “Masaryk and Štefánik legends,” the establishment of the first Czechoslovak Republic and its interwar development, the Slovak State, the People’s Party and political Catholicism in 1939–1945, etc. It is interesting that it was during this period of liberalization and renewal in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic that the Czechoslovak-Soviet Commission of Historians was established in 1967 at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and the Soviet Academy of Sciences.²⁷ This was agreed upon by delegations of leading representatives

23 ĽUDOVÍT HOLOTIK A KOL., *Dejiny Slovenska (Tézy), Príloha Historického časopisu*, sv. 3, Bratislava: SAV, 1955).

24 This edition from the early 1960s was still influenced by the old school of historians (B. Varsík, D. Rapant) and thus, after the period of “normalization” in the 1970s, it became unsuitable from the perspective of the official Marxist methodology of history. HOLOTIK A KOL., *Dejiny Slovenska I.–II.* (Bratislava: SAV, 1961).

25 The last Marxist academic edition of the *History of Slovakia* was published in the early 1980s in five volumes. The final, fifth volume was published in 1985: SAMUEL CAMEL A KOL., *Dejiny Slovenska V. (1918–1945)* (Bratislava: Veda, 1985).

26 ĽUDOVÍT HOLOTIK A KOL., *Úlohy slovenskej historickej vedy v období socialistickej výstavby*, ed. L. HOLOTIK (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo SAV, 1961).

27 On the establishment of the commission and its activities, see: ВИКТОРИЯ С. ГРУЗДИНСКАЯ, КСЕНИЯ В. САК, “Комиссия историков СССР и ЧССР: специфика создания и деятельности в 1960-е годы”, *Новая и новейшая история*, no. 3 (2023): 154–168. <https://doi.org/10.31857/S013038640025914-3>

of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and the USSR Academy of Sciences in 1966, based on their experience of cooperation in the preparation of a three-volume history of Czechoslovakia, which was published in Moscow. The commission's tasks included mutual cooperation, discussions on theoretical and methodological issues of history studies, organizing conferences, research, and publishing archival documents. After the first two meetings of the commission, which were held once a year, the commission's work was interrupted due to the events of 1968 and resumed in 1971, after the "normalization" of conditions in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the return to the orthodox Marxist-Leninist political line.²⁸

During the period of "normalization" (1970s–1980s), official academic history studies returned to strict Marxist-Leninist theoretical foundations. These developed in strongly critical opposition to Western European "bourgeois" historiography, especially in terms of the interpretation of facts, their generalization, and questions of historical concepts. The year 1989 brought a significant change, an increase in the plurality of opinions and research, which is beneficial for every academic discipline, but is not a guarantee of its quality and qualitative growth. Such growth requires continual study of archives, rigorous heuristics, and interpretation based on precise knowledge of the historiography of the subject under study, with the aim of being as objective as possible and maintaining an awareness of the plurality of opinions.

In this study, we have outlined only some aspects of the very broad issue of the development of Slovak (Czech) historical science in the second half of the 20th century, a question which remains open, and which was marked by the birth and fall of one of the world's bipolarities and which also manifested itself in scholarship as a confrontation between two diametrically opposed worldviews and methodologies. There is still much unexplored material, therefore it is impossible to draw definitive conclusions and arrive at satisfactory scholarly theorems about truth and falsehood. Since 1989, many influential Slovak historians have pointed out and continue to point out all the pitfalls of such research and the questions that remain open in the field of knowledge and understanding of the methodology and mechanisms of history studies in the second half of the 20th century in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism in all its manifestations

28 Евгения А. Дудзинская, *Международные научные связи советских историков* (Москва: Наука, 1978), 101–104.

and forms.²⁹ As an example, I can cite the fact that post-socialist society, which survived almost half a century in the whirlwind of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy, after breaking free from its shackles, does not even bother to teach Marxism-Leninism as a compulsory subject in higher education institutions with full methodological seriousness, and makes no effort to understand either any of its objective causes or the consequences that it brought and which are still evident in many ways in our society. These consequences are still firmly ingrained in the subconscious of post-socialist societies, as is the idea that extreme forms of political systems are a constant danger not only for the former Eastern Europe but for the entire global world.

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29 For example: J. BAĎURÍK, "Historik, jeho tvorba a problémy na prelome tisícročia", *Historický časopis*, 50, no. 1 (2002): 27–33; V. BYSTRICKÝ, "K niektorým problémom vývoja historiografie na Slovensku v 90. rokoch 20. storočia", *Historický časopis*, 50, no. 1 (2002): 10–19; I. KAMENEC, "Niekoľko poznámok o schopnosti (neschopnosti) k sebareflexii alebo naša nepripravenosť k polemickým diskusiám", *Historický časopis*, 50, no. 1 (2002): 19–24; V. VARINSKÝ, "Aktuálne problémy slovenskej historiografie po novembri 1989 (Kontroverzie z pohľadu ľudackej emigrácie)", *Historický časopis*, 50, no. 1 (2002): 34–39.

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