
Regime Preferences in Communist Czechoslovakia and the Narrative on the Slovak National Uprising

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Abstract:

Most of the participants in the Slovak National Uprising (SNP) were fighting for the ideals of democracy and freedom, for the defeat of fascism and Nazism and for the new Czechoslovak Republic with equal status for the Slovak people within it. They could not have foreseen that communist totalitarianism would be established after the war, one that would try to use the Uprising as a precursor for the socialist revolution (Fremal 2010: 359). The Communist Party, with the support of historians, utilised the legacy of the SNP to justify its political actions. Czechoslovak identity was also constructed through the image of the SNP, whose annual celebrations provided the communists with the opportunity to interpret the legacy of the SNP in various forms. This work deals with the way the communists interpreted the SNP in order to convince the public that this was a people's Uprising intended to lead to social equality and the eventual acceptance of communism in Czechoslovakia in the years 1947, 1948 and 1954.

Keywords: Slovak National Uprising, communism, propaganda, historical memory, national identity

Introduction

The Slovak National Uprising (SNP, or Uprising) played an essential role in Slovak history. For this reason, its celebration was also important as a symbolic confirmation of Slovak statehood (Naxera & Krčál 2016: 84). Public memorial celebrations represent a part of political culture, an instrument for strengthening power, which serves to reproduce fundamental societal values (Michela & Kšiňan 2012: 8). The importance of a suitable and desirable perception of an event, such as the SNP, plays an essential role in national mythology. It forms specific cultural ideas and thus strengthens the existing political order. Instrumental handling of history and the use of

variously interpreted historical events is typical of all kinds of regimes and political actors (Naxera & Krčál 2020: 7). It only makes sense that the Uprising became a significant event, which the Communist Party tried to use to promote their own political goals.

Author analyses the narrative of the Slovak National Uprising in two Czech communist daily newspapers *Rudé Právo* [Red Truth] and *Práce* [Work]. During this research, the author relied on contemporaneous documents obtained from the archives of the National Library of the Czech Republic in Prague. Thematically, this study builds on the work of Elena Mannová (2008): ‘*Slovak National Uprising and political memory*,’ Adam Hudek (2010) ‘*The most political science. Slovak historiography between years 1948 – 1968*’ and Miroslav Michela & Michal Kšiňan (2012): ‘*Slovak National Uprising*.’ But it falls within a set of works on the SNP which also include those of Jan Rychlík (2015), Matej Berlanský (2017), Vilém Prečan, Vladimír Naxera & Peter Krčál (2016), Karol Fremal (2010) and others. This research is a fractional one and requires completion with the analyses of the next periods of the communist’s governance.

Changes in the myth

If we agree on Barthes’ (1991: 128) claim that the very principle of myth is transforming history into nature, we must look for this transformation in the everyday narrative. Narrative, in Goffman’s understanding, refers to the structured meanings within a story, which have a sense of sequence and causality and are strongly influenced by ideologies (Longhurst et al. 2008: 34). Studying the narrative in the ideological press is, therefore, a way of describing the exact process of change from narrative to myth.

The years chosen for research were ones where several significant events took place. The first was the implementation of the communist worldview into Czechoslovak science, where history was intended to become a pseudoscience serving the interests of the ruling Communists (Hudek 2010:10) following the votes in Czechoslovakia in 1946 and subsequent communists takeover in 1948. The second was the trial and subsequent execution of the Uprising heroes. Participants in the Uprising, communists, Laco Novomestký and Hustáv Husák, were arrested in 1951. Rudolf Slánský, the SNP’s hero, promoted by the communists, was executed in 1952. The death of the president Klement Gottwald (1953) and subsequent weakening of his personality cult meant a change in the communist interpretation of the SNP’s heroes. Elena Mann (2008: 216-219) sees two milestones in the SNP’s interpretation in the 1940s and 1950s. The period of the

first myth lasts until 1948 (communist takeover in February 1948). The heterogeneity of the organisers resulted in a contrasting version of its meaning. The period of the first myth was formed on the idea of the unity of the anti-Nazi resistance what contributed to the national identity construction. Because some participants in the Uprising were persecuted, they were removed from the public image of the SNP. The second stage after 1948 started a new myth in which the ‘*theological concept of the road to a happy socialist future*’ was promoted, at the beginning of which stood the SNP and the liberation of the ČSR (Czechoslovak Republic) by the Soviet army. Adam Hudek (2010: 148) places this change in the year 1952, in which the communist idea of the history of Slovakia was ‘*comprehensively sketched*’ for the first time. The 10th celebration of the Uprising in 1954 was pompous, and the Central Committee of the Communist Party guided the entire preparation (Mann 2008: 2019). Hudek (2010: 153) claims that communist ideology marked the SNP and the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet army as the beginning of a national and democratic revolution. The years 1947, 1948 and 1954 will thus reveal the most significant changes in the narrative, when the interpretation of this event was significantly formed, from the pluralist concept to the unified, communist-controlled story of the path to a happy socialist future.

Choice of Methods and the analysed units

The reason for this work is to complete the research on SNP with the content analysis of the daily press in communist Czechoslovakia. One of the primary tasks that the representatives of communist parties had to resolve in the interest of promoting communist ideology was taking control of public opinion, which meant controlling media production. In the interests of spreading the new social model, all types of media, including print, were therefore now given the task of spreading propaganda. They were to become institutions of education, persuasion, and enlightenment (Bednařík et al. 2019: 221-251).

The goal of this scientific research is to describe the narrative on the SNP in the articles published in the years 1947, 1948 and 1954. The author uses the comparative-historical method, considering the record of the SNP in 2 dailies. The daily newspaper *Práce* was published by the Central Union Committee and individual trade unions of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement by the Práce Publishing House since 1945. The Communist Party published *Rudé právo* from 1920, and for many years it was the leading political daily of the KSČ. As the coding

unit the author chose a single text. A text is editorial content, photographs, announcements, notes, and other formats present in newspapers which are directly relevant to the issue of the SNP, together 187 units. The comparative unit was a period of three days: one day before, the day of and one day after the celebrations of the anniversaries of the SNP in Czechoslovakia in 1947, 1948 and 1954.

The research question is: How did the narrative on the Uprising during the monitored period change?. This question leads to the aim of the paper: to identify the narrative changes in the published articles of the chosen period. The author answers these questions through comparison in three comparative categories identified in the pre-research: historical misinterpretation, political strategy, and the SNP's heroes. The sub-question: Which topics resonated in the presentation of the SNP in individual years?

The period of the first myth

1947: Political strategy

The event that significantly influenced the newspaper narrative on SNP in 1947 was the Košice Manifesto, approved at the first meeting of the Czechoslovak government on 5 April 1945 in Košice. The Košice Manifesto declared the status of Czechs and Slovaks in the joint republic as having equal rights and value according to the principle of equal with equal and described the Soviet Union as the most important foreign ally (Vlček et al. 1945). In the 1946 elections the winners were: The Democratic Party in Slovakia and the Communist party in Czech lands. The election results forced Slovak communists to change their minds about the Slovaks' equal status in the state. The Slovak Communists modified their position from equal to equal and as supporters of Prague centralism hoping that a strong Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS) would ensure their status in Slovakia (Kováč 2010: 242). KSS must defeat the opposition represented by Democratic Party before usurping the power from Democrats. The political strategy of 1947 consisted of few steps: warn against the enemy, establish enemy, defame the enemy.

Warn against the enemy

The Chairman of the Slovak Trade Union Committee František Zupka claimed that *'the primary goal of the Uprising was the establishment of a new Czechoslovak Republic without the German and Hungarian fifth column and the exploiters, without national, economic and social*

oppression, crises, unemployment and poverty' (Zupka 1947). Laco Novomestský leading the department of education and enlightenment argued that *'Czechoslovak unity would be best served by foregoing attempts to return to the understanding of Czechoslovak nationality from the pre-Munich republic'* (Novomestský 1947). In this sense Uprising was a kind of vindication for the betrayal of the Czechs that was the creation of the Hitlerian Slovak State in 1939. Laco Jašík, Deputy General Secretary of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement in Slovakia, argued that *'the Slovak nation had never betrayed the Czechs. The betrayal was made by irresponsible individuals for whom thousands of the best Slovak men had laid down their lives'* (Rudé právo 1947e). Deputy Chairman of the Slovak National Council (SNR) Karol Šmidke pointed at *'Slovak circles which are insubordinately hindering strong recovery and economic reconstruction'* (Rudé právo 1947c). The SNP fighters were represented by Colonel Milan Polák, saying that *'the Slovak uprising was an explosion of the will of the majority of the nation, in an attempt to achieve a reckoning with the Germans'*, but adds that *'the purge had not been fully completed'*. Also, the mayor of the Czech Sokol Community¹ agreed with the statement (Práce 1947). In *Rudé právo*, an anonymous reader expressed *'the necessity of building from the outcome of the Uprising and bringing a complete victory for the ideas and spirit of Slovak heroes and Czechoslovak patriots'* (Rudé právo 1947b). Complete victory means revealing enemies.

Establishing and defying the enemy

In the print press of 1947, one can already see signs of preparations for the communist's takeover by establishing and defying enemies. General Secretary of the KSS Štefan Baštovanský returned to the process with Jozef Tiso. He associated Democratic Party with his person saying, that *'the political rehabilitation of many proponents of the fascist regime and allowing their re-entry into public life are early signs of a future, miles distant from the principles of our revolution and (mean) abandoning the ideals of Uprising.'* The argument was an open attempt of the KSS to ignite division within the election winner Democratic Party, whose Catholic wing had not agreed with the execution of Tiso. He also enumerated the areas in which part of the opposition failed: the rejection of the nationalisation of the economy, intentional delays in land reform, insufficient goodwill in the organisation of supply and delivery shortcomings. Baštovanský (1947: 3) pointed the finger *'on one part of the National Front who has chosen to take the path of destructive*

¹ Sokol is a Czech sports association that has been banned during the World War II

politics and apparently failed to be bound by the blood-signed postulates of the liberating struggle. The distribution of supplies was the responsibility of the Commissioner of Supply for the Democratic Party, Kornel Fila. Martin Kvetka was Commissioner for Agriculture and Land Reform. Both were eventually replaced in November 1947 at a state meeting of the National Front (Kováč 2012: 245). A summary of the communist strategy in fulfilling the legacy of the SNP is the speech by Prime Minister Klement Gottwald. According to him, the Uprising led to the creation of *‘a united Czechoslovak Republic as a state of two equal nations, a genuinely democratic expression of popular will in the state, for the social development and prosperity of Slovakia and cooperation with the other Slavic nations’* (meant Soviet). And he did not forget to draw attention to the actions of the supporters of Vojtech Tuka and Josef Tiso, who *‘are impeding the further development of Slovakia,’* which leads to the next task to free Slovakia from *‘anti-state elements’* (Gottwald 1947). According to the General Secretary of the Communist Party Rudolf Slánský, SNP was *‘characterised by its Slavic spirit, the spirit of warm friendship with the Soviet Union.’* He also called for the removal of opponents of Czechoslovakism, critics of national committees and opponents of nationalisation (Slánský 1947).

1947: Historical misinterpretation – communist’s leading role and Soviet contribution

The communist’s intention to take over the power from Slovak Democrats needed to be implemented in the historical interpretation of Uprising. The development of the historical depiction in the context of Uprising starts at lunch (it is not said where) where Klement Gottwald informs those present (it is not said who) that *‘Moscow had precise information about the preparations and progress of the Uprising.’* He also adds that *‘the Soviet government and army took measures to provide help.’* And he further emphasises that *‘this help cost the Russian people 80,000 deaths.’* This article also displays agitation for Stalin, saying *‘he personally ordered the Dukla offensive’* (Rudé právo 1947a). It can be assumed that this lunch was part of the ceremonial awarding of honorary citizenship to Stalin and Roosevelt because there is a short note about the event above the article. The affirmation is a typical example not so much of twisting the history, but rather of its concealment. The contributions of the USSR to the liberation of Czechoslovakia are, of course, undeniable. Still, in this historical context, all mention of the resistance movement and official government recognition in London are purposefully left out. This propaganda version of history also leaves out the involvement of Soviet Russia in the too

early commencement of the SNP and in essence its failure when the Russians supported the resistance fighters in their fight against the Germans. Quite the contrary, the plans of the Uprising were most endangered by the uncoordinated groups of resistance fighters (supported by the USSR), who were destroying transport infrastructure and most importantly blocking railway tunnels, significantly reducing the future effectiveness of the Slovak Army (Rychlík 2015: 260). Major Mikuláš Langer remembered the role of the Red Army, but also the allies. The evidence is in the note by Foreign Minister Andrey Yanuaryevich Vyshinsky, addressed to the Czechoslovak government on 22 September 1944, where he says *'the Soviet government has seen the contributions of the Slovak people against Hitler's usurpers and taken measures to provide help to Slovak partisans and soldiers'* (Langer 1947). Deputy Chairman of the SNR, Karol Šmidke declared, that *'the Slovak Communist Party was the only central and single-minded national political organisation in the country to fight for the liberation of Slovakia'* (Šmidke 1947). In the first studied period of the daily newspapers, the contribution of the exile government falls into the background being replaced with the Communists and Soviet Army.

1947: Heroes in the Uprising

The heroes of SNP did not play an essential role in the political strategy these days. The authors or heroes of the articles were still direct participants in the Uprising. Only one worthwhile mention indicates upcoming heroes fabrication in 1948 - designation of Jan Šverma as a Slavic politician who was able to *'bridge the gap between those Slovaks who wanted to preserve Slovak independence and those who represented the opposite position'* (Rudé právo 1947d).

1948: Political strategy

The most important historical event was the so-called Victorious February 1948, which resulted in a "takeover of power" in the Czechoslovak state by the communists. After the takeover, the official story of the SNP was modified, with key actors pointedly erased from the narrative, as were politics of the Democratic Party: Ján Ursíny (prisoned), Jozef Lettrich and Matej Josko (both emigrated after the turnover), partisan commanders Jozef Trojan (1949 arrested, 1953 executed), Viliam Žingor (1949 arrested, 1950 executed) as well as many others (Valko 2014: 311-312). The SNP become above all a "communist uprising" (Kšišan 2012: 22-23). In this period, the political strategy concerning the SNP is more unified than in 1947, even though the

political rules for SNP celebrations were only published in 1949 (Mannová 2008: 218). Newspapers show a trend of reducing the importance of the battles themselves while emphasising the ideological construction of the communists as the primary organisers of the events and cover the abandoned idea of equal to equal marred by centralisation. Centralisation was presented as the state bonding, merging for the strengthening the nation and the real wish of Slovakian. The second strategical point was the justification of the imprisonment and trials with the SNP's heroes or communist opposition for their anti-state activities.

Spirit of merging

In the first place communists' set on the examples of institutional merging. The Slovak National Council issued its Ceremonial Declaration in which they promised '*to act as safeguards of progressive and popular traditions*' and declared that '*The People's Democratic Czechoslovak Republic is the only home of the Slovak nation*' (Práce 1948b). To remove all doubts that the KSS was on the same side, Štefan Baštovanský (1948: 1) added that the '*idea of Czechoslovak statehood has been blessed with the common blood that had been spilt.*' Ludvík Svoboda, the Minister of National Defence and participant in the Uprising stated that '*the political programme of the Uprising was executed to its fullest degree when the principle of the equality of the Czech and Slovak nations was realised in a single country*' (Rudé právo 1948a). Celebrations of the Uprising took place together with the merging of a resistance group in Slovak Košice, '*for the purpose of more fruitful cooperation and the strengthening of the February victory of the labouring class and working people*' (Práce 1948a). In Prague, the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Union of Youth (SČM) accepted the recommendation to connect with Slovak Union of Youth (SSM), following the outstanding example of the Soviet Pioneer movement (Rudé právo 1948d).

Anti-state elements

It is further possible to notice the continuation of the trend of searching for public enemies, again to legitimise the February takeover while "explaining" the need to remove the inconvenient elements: pharisees, traitors to the people, capitalist exploiters, etc. This line also includes a justification of the execution of Tiso, which in 1947 was part of the struggle between the Slovak Communists and the Democratic Party associated with Slovak Catholics (Kováč 2012: 243).

Karel Šmidke continues with the enemy-searching he began in 1947, by criticising the creation of a ‘*civic bloc made of former bourgeois parties from the times of the First Czechoslovak Republic.*’ These factions were ‘*overlooking the deeply social character of the Uprising in an attempt to destroy the revolutionary nature of the Slovak nationalist movement*’ (Šmidke 1948). Štefan Baštovanský had no qualms in calling out these enemies whose interests went against those of the people, saying these ‘*Lettrich-Ursíny reactionary capitalist elements were only mooching off the national Uprising*’ (Baštovanský 1948). Klement Gottwald brought this entire line-up of national enemies to close with the words: ‘*the legacy of the SNP commands that we stand guard and mercilessly crush every attempt at the anti-state and anti-national reaction to break up the unity of the state*’ (Rudé právo 1948a). The reformed Slovak National Council (SNR) undertook ‘*never to become an instrument against the people's interests, but instead to protect and execute the ideals of centuries of struggle, the ideals of democracy, progress and fated brotherhood of Czechs and Slovaks, the principles which had just been set out in Košice*’ (Rudé právo 1948b). However, politicians agreed on one thing. They awarded all credit for the liberation of the republic to the Soviets.

Two above mentioned political objectives were followed by misinterpretation in order to highlight the role of communists and the USSR in the Uprising narrative.

1948: Historical misinterpretation on heroes

The role of the advocate of new heroes was played by Slovak editor and later also historian Juraj Fabián who opened the door for new heroes. He emphasised the role of Klement Gottwald, ‘*who organised help for the Slovak rebels from the USSR,*’ and Rudolf Slánský, who utilised ‘*his rich political and military experience in managing the resistance movement in the main partisan headquarters.*’ And he is also not remiss in recollecting Jan Šverma and his historic speech in the SNR, where he emphasised ‘*the state of affairs in the republic at the time, as enshrined in the Constitution*’² (Fabián 1948a). In a different article, Juraj Fabián describes the press and radio of the SNP and names the illegally published communist press. Among others the cultural and political daily review New Word, whose publisher and the main editor was Chairman of the Board of Commissioners Gustav Husák (Fabián 1948b). The article of the journalist, Václav Slavík, together with photographs of Klement Gottwald and Jan Šverma at Moscow airport,

² Meaning equal with equal

confirms this arrangement. The text conveys the feelings of Klement Gottwald: *‘As he looks into the camera lens, says goodbye to his foremost colleagues who he is sending to the uprising headquarters as political representatives of the KSČ.’* The author further explains the role of Rudolf Slánský, Jan Šverma and the commander of the Czech army (not named). He *‘suggested joining the military with the partisans and supported further organised resistance’* (Slavík 1948). The second line of the historical depiction led by the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners Gustáv Husák not only highlights the work of communists but completely rejects the role of the foreign resistance in the SNP. He stated that *‘the Czechoslovak émigré army in London failed to help the heroic battle of the Slovak people either politically or militarily’* and he carries on, saying that *‘its intrigues only served to impede the domestic and foreign resistance during this most heroic of periods’* (Rudé právo 1948c).

The result of this period narrative was the myth when the Uprising was organised by the Czechoslovak communists (mostly Gottwald, Slánský, Šverma, Husák) and led by Soviets.

The period of the second myth

The early fifties witnessed a struggle for the competence between Czech and Slovak communists within ČSR. The leadership in Prague considered Slovakia to be an area where the revolutionary consciousness of the working class is not sufficient. Every attempt at autonomy was considered a manifestation of Slovak bourgeois nationalism and punished (Rychlík 2015: 394). Communist Gustáv Husák (imprisoned) and Karol Šmidke (relieved of political positions) also became its victims in 1951. The close co-worker of the Klement Gottwald and the SNP’s hero Rudolf Slánský was, after a fabricated trial, executed in 1952. Czechoslovakia also experienced the economic difficulties associated with central planning.

Furthermore, in 1953, a currency reform was carried out. The reform angered workers who lost their savings (Kováč 2012: 265). From an international viewpoint, the critical event was the Cold War, plans for the establishment of the Warsaw Pact (ČSR entered on 14 May 1955) and the negotiations of the European Defence Community (EDC) being discussed in that time at the French parliament, despite it not being ratified.

1954: Political strategy

The Uprising celebration in 1954 was organised under the control of communists. On the front pages of both, the event is described almost artistically, colourfully, with emphasis on the public reaction and atmosphere: flags are flying in the wind, music is playing, the crowd breaks into enthusiastic cheers, the president's speech is interrupted by passionate cries of *'Long live the Soviet Union!, Long live peace!... tens of thousands of people on Stalin's square express their gratitude and love to their Soviet brothers'* (Rudé právo 1954b).

In 1954 the ČSR was under the control of Soviet Union. Communists agenda in press promotes the alliance with Russia sealed by blood and conceals the situation in Slovakia by highlighting higher living standards in the country. The old heroes were replaced by hard-working national heroes coming from the nation.

The brotherhood sealed with blood

The political line of the alliance sealed with blood includes the speech of President Zápotocký, who reminisced about the *'breathless interest and sympathy with which the Slovak people witnessed the struggles of the Soviet people.'* Ignoring the fact that no joint Communist Party of Czechoslovakia had existed at the time of Uprising he stated that *'people did not trust the reactionary Hlinka or Hitler circles. They trusted the Soviet Union, believed in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, which had stood at the forefront of every battle.'* He pointed to the émigrés as traitors, who *'as paid mercenaries of American imperialism, were betraying the Slovak people. Every sincere citizen of our republic must condemn imperialist war carried out with the participation of the West German mercenary army'* (Zápotocký 1954: 1,3). This statement intentionally connected the negative connotations of the word German with the imperialist enemy, to point out that the enemies standing against the USSR were essentially following the footsteps of fascists. Especially moving is the story of a mother (and member of the Unified Agricultural Cooperative - JRD), who lost her son in the war. But thanks to the liberation by Soviet army *'she gained thousands of new sons.'* As in many other texts, this story follows the narrative of the changes that happened in a village after liberation. *'The blood of her son Ondra was not spilt uselessly'* (Kišová 1954). This friendship sealed with blood was also appropriately valued by the Slovak National Council (SNR), who expressed *'gratitude for the terrible (Soviet) sacrifices that we had to thank for our freedom and the ability to build socialism in a prosperous*

Slovakia. The SNR further promised ‘*to protect brotherhood like our own eye, to ensure world peace and happiness of the entire human race*’ (Rudé právo 1954a). The protection of brotherhood also means facing common enemies.

Imperial enemies

The Slovak Trade Union Committee Chair, František Zupka, states that ‘*the peace policies of the USSR have been whipping the imperialists into a rage*’ (Zupka 1954: 1,5). The Prime Minister Viliam Široký described ‘*the impending danger from imperialist circles in the United States, who had resumed a policy of violence, provocation and aggression, German militarism, and Nazism.*’ None of them had any doubts that the issue at hand was the destruction of the Czechoslovak Republic (ČSR) and the subjugation of its peoples (Široký 1954: 3-4). However, the propaganda was not restricted to defending it against threats and also included positive examples. One of them is Ladislav. The man who leaves his hometown to go to America ‘*and returns with greying hair to find the landscape has been transformed.*’ In a letter from an American friend, he hears that America is fraught by unemployment and that life is hard. The author ends the story by stating that 30 years ago, ‘*Ladislav thought he was heading to the promised land, only to discover a real one back at home*’ (Paľo 1954).

The legacy of the SNP leads to the socialist competition

Political strategy grew into an economic agenda, where the legacy of the SNP is now associated with socialist competition and the overall economic and cultural growth of Slovakia. Individual examples are highlighted, such as how the previously small Baťa settlement had ‘*grown into the modern socialist town Partizánske, proudly carrying the name of the resistance fighters to the occupation*’ (Vranovský 1954a). Viliam Široký also devoted his speech to economic growth, evaluating the role of the Uprising as a ‘*mass revolutionary people’s movement, leading to the unparalleled economic and cultural development of Slovakia. The progress that the Slovak people with the help of their Czech brothers had been carrying out for ten years*’ (Práce 1954b). First Secretary of the Central Union Committee Josef Tesla proclaims that ‘*fulfilling the legacy of the SNP means dutifully carrying out the tasks set out by the KSČ.*’ The primary means of their fulfilment is socialist competition (Práce 1954c). And the development of Slovakia closed Pavel Vranovský ‘*ecstatic about the surprise which the reader must feel seeing tractors under the Tatra*

Mountains' (Vranovský 1954b). This prosaic statement is accompanied by the map of the industrial buildings constructed during the Five-Year Plan, with the text interspersed with the verses of the poet Ján Kostra.

1954: Heroes in Uprising

The heroes in 1954 were the people from the nation, the fighters for their homeland carried out great deeds and continue to do so in their honest work. An example is a story about Bolek, whose combination harvester broke down. In frustration, he remembered another situation he experienced. At this time, as a young military chauffeur of the 1st Czechoslovak Army Corps in the USSR, he was driving his car through the Carpathian woods at night when someone shot through his tyre. Bolek did not hesitate and replaced the tyre under enemy fire. And so Bolek repairs the axle on his combination harvester on his own. After winning the competition, he is awarded a new Russian combination harvester (Vondra 1954: 3). The significant role in narrative was played by the miners because the ČSR experienced lack of the coal: *'The anniversary will also celebrate the Slovak miner's foreman by mining 30% coal over the approved plan.'* In his letter to trade union heads, he writes how he needs more workers, that the pay is good and how he is building a house at home and looking to buy a motorbike to fulfil his childhood dream (Práce 1954a). The storyline of the ordinary heroes – soldiers – loyal workers is exemplified by a tale of a Slovak shepherd from the Low Tatras, who is having a conversation with students from Prague. He reminds them that there are *'no more loyal friends in the world than the Soviet people.'* He remembers the resistance fighter Nikolaj, who threw himself in front of a German shot which was about to hit the shepherd, sacrificing his life. At the end of the narrative, he openly admits he is *'envious of the youth living in Prague,'* but that *'the only way to repay Nikolaj for his love and sacrifice is to surpass the quotas of sheared wool'* (Šimonek 1954: 7).

1954 Historical misinterpretation

In 1954 there is no doubt that the KSČ was led by the SNP together with the USSR partisans. The historian from the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAV) reaffirmed that *'the Czech and Slovak peoples had shaken off the hated yoke with the help of the Soviet people. After years of violent separation, they could finally permanently unite'* (Tibenský 1954: 2). The true story of the liberation brought the narrative of Piotr Alexejevič Veličko. The

former commander of the Slovak Partisan Brigade appreciates the exceptional assistance of the Slovak people ‘*who made it possible to bring together in the mountains a brigade of 3,000 men ready to go to their deaths*’ waiting when the brigade marched out, fully armed with Soviet weapons (Veličko 1954: 3).

Conclusion

Despite all the propaganda surrounding the SNP during the communist period, the SNP was only declared a state holiday by the Slovak National Council as late as 1992 (Popelková 2014: 34) and to this day there is no consensus among historians as to the history of events associated with the Uprising.

The research besides the acknowledgement of already well-known facts brings the narrative on Czechoslovakism, which researchers do not devote much attention. In 1947 the Communists convinced Slovaks that the legacy of the SNP is primarily a unified Czechoslovak nation and not two of its components, the Slovak and Czech, as was set in the Košice Manifesto. In 1948 the Slovak fighters disappeared and were replaced by communists’ heroes. In 1954 the press responded to Slovak dissatisfaction with the power arrangement (centralised in Prague) with the narrative of idyllic expansion of the country achieved thanks to the help of Czech brothers. To confirm the unity of the Czechoslovak nation, the Communists forcefully inserted into the otherwise Slovak national story firstly a strong Czech communist involvement, later the famous Soviet victory. The Slovak story was thus suppressed, and the Slovak public was systematically led to the obligation to feel gratitude to the Czech and Soviet brothers. Based on the analysis, the author agrees with the opinion of Jan Rychlík (2018: 169) that the separation of Czechoslovakia came as a result of the lack of a solid Czechoslovak identity. At the end it should be expressed, that misusing the Uprising’s legacy by communists to convince Slovaks to the idea of common centralised state, together with the frequent changes of the narrative had played a significant role in the widening of the gap between both nations.

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