



SLOVAK THINKING ON TRANSLATION – A POLITICAL-SOCIAL-CULTURAL REFLECTION

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Abstract

The article offers a political-social-cultural reflection of the development of Slovak translated literature and Slovak thinking on translation. The year 1945 was a turning point for the development of culture and translated literature in Slovakia. The conditions for translation production and theoretical thinking on translation development were being created, but on the other hand, ideological and political effects on translation production were starting to emerge. The article specifies several milestones between 1945 and the present that have shaped and influenced Slovak society as well as translated literature on socio-political, cultural, and literary levels. The particular periods looked at are the 1940s and 50s, the 1960s, the 1970s, and the 1980s and 90s.

Keywords: Geopolitical Changes, Political-Social-Cultural Reflection, Slovak Thinking on Translation, Slovak Translation Production

ÇEVİRİ ÜZERİNE SLOVAK DÜŞÜNCEİ – POLİTİK-SOSYAL-KÜLTÜREL BİR YANSIMA

Öz

Makale, Slovak çeviri edebiyatının gelişiminin ve çeviri üzerine Slovak düşüncesinin politik-sosyal-kültürel bir yansımasını sunmaktadır. İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nın sona erdiği 1945 yılı, Slovakya'da kültür ve çeviri edebiyatın gelişimi için bir dönüm noktasıydı. Çeviri üretiminin ve çeviri gelişimi üzerine kuramsal düşüncenin koşulları yaratılırken, çeviri üretimi üzerinde ideolojik ve politik etkiler de oluşmaya başlamıştır. Makale, 1945 ile günümüz arasında, Slovak toplumunu ve sosyo-politik, kültürel ve edebi düzeylerde çeviri edebiyatı şekillendiren ve etkileyen birkaç kilometre taşı ortaya koymayı amaçlar. İncelenen belirli dönemler 1940'lardan 1950'lere, 1960'lar, 1970'ler ve 1980'lerden 1990'lara uzanan dönemlerdir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Jeopolitik Değişimler, Politik-Sosyal-Kültürel Yansıma, Çeviri Üzerine Slovak Düşüncesi, Slovak Çeviri Üretimi

Introduction

The nature and development of fiction are significantly influenced by translated literature, which has an irreplaceable position in the development of any national culture and literature. We need to realise that the importance of translation for the further development of national culture

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is still not sufficiently appreciated. The reason could be that research into translation and its history has not dealt with this phenomenon sufficiently. Translation's ability to influence the way certain topics are written about or processed, even in the original language, is not addressed enough.

Research on the history of translation needs to be prioritised more in the modern era. We are experiencing globalisation's effects and witnessing the migration of many ethnic groups, their cultures, and customs. All these changes, including the geopolitical developments, are so significant that we are not even aware of their effects on national cultures. We might soon discover that there is only one global culture, rather than multiple national ones. Research into literary translation, according to Katarína Bednárová, "is undoubtedly a core element for a people's cultural identification (and as part of it, of course, national literature) – the choice, quality and quantity of translated literature is, to some extent, a signal to the outside world" (Bednárová, 1995: p.51). In this context, it is important to realise that linguistic barriers, particularly in the case of small literatures, make it difficult to demonstrate the level a country has reached and the maturity of its literature and culture through its translations. "In the European context, a so-called small literature and culture draws attention to itself through literary translation and can send out signals about itself through the reception of external stimuli" (Bednárová, 1995: p.51). Slovak culture and literature is one among them.

The development of Slovak translated literature and Slovak thinking on translation has gone through various difficult stages. It should be noted, however, that Slovak thinking on translation has also been appreciated internationally.

The year 1945, the year associated with the end of WWII, was a turning point for the development of culture and translated literature. On the one hand, the conditions for translation production and theoretical thinking on translation development were being created, but on the other hand, ideological and political effects on translation production were starting to emerge.

We can specify several milestones between 1945 and the present that have shaped and influenced Slovak society as well as translated literature on socio-political, cultural, and literary levels. The particular periods looked at are the 1940s and 50s, the 1960s, the 1970s, and the 1980s and 90s.

1. The 1940s and 50s



1.1. The Political-Economic Situation

In the first years after the end of WWII, i.e., from 1945 to 1948,² decisions about the nature of the republic and its direction were made. Slovakia had to choose between the West and the East, which naturally influenced the direction of Slovak culture.

In February 1948, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia came to power. The politically monopolistic Communist Party started to make decisions not only about the economy but also about societal events, people’s lives, and future. Using a variety of methods, including dismissals, (forced) labour camps and banning their children from university studies, it got rid of its critics and dissenters. Opponents were pejoratively labelled as class enemies in the ideal classless society that the communist propaganda portrayed. There was a period of collectivisation (peasants had to turn over their land to the state, which led to the formation of unified agricultural cooperatives farmed collectively) and nationalisation (the state confiscated people’s businesses and property). When the borders of Czechoslovakia were closed by communist authorities in 1948, the issuing of passports and visas was ceased. Private international travel, even to what were known as communist countries, was prohibited until 1953. The economy was built and managed centrally according to the Soviet model. Emphasis was placed on heavy industry, especially armaments.

Stalin’s death caused a turning point occurred in 1953: political tensions gradually eased in the Soviet Union and later in Czechoslovakia, too.

1.2. The Situation in Translation

In the post-war era, under the newly emancipated circumstances, it was necessary to introduce the world’s literary heritage to the Slovak reader. They also needed to be acquainted with the rapid development of other national literatures. Despite the state’s struggles with the challenging economic situation brought on by post-war reconstruction and the building of a new economic base, it created conditions for the development of publishing and printing activities. Translations of the world’s classics were published soon after the liberation. A new generation of translators, consisting mostly of authors and philologists, as well as self-taught translators, began

² Slovakia was a part of Czechoslovakia at this time. This common state of Czechs and Slovaks was established on 28 October 1918, as one of the successor countries after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.



to emerge. The translation of Italian literature was revived, following in the tradition of translating French literature. Because Germanophone literature was considered a taboo topic³ after 1945, following WWII and Germany's defeat, it is understandable that our approach to German literature and culture after WWII was uncertain. We did not publish many translations of classic or contemporary German literature between 1945 and 1949. When N. Kocholova and V. Kochol's translation of Thomas Mann's⁴ two-volume novel *The Buddenbrooks* reached Slovak readers in 1948, it was a significant breakthrough. English and American literature increasingly came into the picture, and among the Slavic literatures, there was a revival of interest in Polish and other Slavic literatures. Programmatically, however, classic Russian literature, Soviet literature, and the literature of what was known as the socialist bloc began to simultaneously dominate the Slovak translation production of all publishing houses after 1945. In addition to excellent translations of high-quality literature, however, this also resulted in a large number of mediocre and below-average works and their weaker translations. No other literature had as much space in editorial plans as Russian literature. No other literature was published in such a high number of titles and editions as this one. There were even special editions oriented towards Soviet literature from some publishing houses. In the period between 1945 and 1949, translations of the works of classic Russian 19th-century writers (A. S. Pushkin, J. M. Lermontov, N. V. Gogol, I. S. Turgenev, L. N. Tolstoy, I. A. Goncharov, F. M. Dostoevsky) were published. It should be noted that the translations of these authors' works followed Slovak translation traditions. The development of literary translation also benefited from the new socialist state's generous editorial policy. The state built a network of publishing houses and the book market, and it created the ideal organisational, social, and creative conditions for the development of translated and national literature.

Translation theory did not develop as an independent discipline prior to 1945. The issue of national literary production was at the centre of attention of the majority of literarily oriented intellectuals, from the point of view of authors, as well as critics, historians, and educators. The gaps of untranslated works of world literature during the interwar period in Czechoslovakia were filled by high-quality Czech translations. This played an important role in the development of Slovak culture, which was influenced by two factors after 1945: 1. the establishment of state,

³ See also: Žitný, M. 1993. Deutschsprachige Literatur in der tschechischen und slowakischen Literaturwissenschaft nach 1945. In *Slovak Review*, 2, 1993, No 2, pp. 236–249.

⁴ In 1933, Thomas Mann left Germany to emigrate to the USA via Czechoslovakia.



centrally coordinated publishing houses, whose task was to make both domestic and translated literature available, and 2. the dynamic development of the Slovak language in all domains.

Orientation towards literature written in Russian also required the training and further education of Russianists. Russian was taught as a compulsory foreign language in all Czechoslovakian schools from 1949 on. It was also the intermediary language for translations of non-Russian Soviet literature. Language clubs, seminars and long-term and short-term trainings were organized as well, where the transcription of foreign names and titles into Slovak was established, the function of ungrammatical elements in translation was defined and gaps in terminology were filled. The development of editorial and translation activities after 1945 was unprecedented in the history of our country.

While the intuitive and naturalising method of translation still more or less prevailed in prose translation in the 1940s, there was a significant shift in the approach to translation in the 1950s. In this period, the principles of modern translation were formulated as the need for a conscious approach to translation. At seminars and training sessions, translators discussed terminology concerns, defined the role of non-grammatical elements in translation, and searched for models for fixing the transcription of foreign names and toponyms (Bednárová, 1995: p.52).

In 1950, a translation of Mikhail Sholokhov's novel *And Quiet Flows the Don* [Тихий Дон] was published in Slovak. One of the most significant prose works of Soviet literature set among the Don Cossacks, it won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1965. The novel was translated into Slovak by Zora Jesenská (1909–1972), and although she received various awards for this translation, it was not well received by the community of experts, who criticized its excessive use of dialect elements, use of older translation approaches, excessive expressivity by means of national, lexical, phraseological, and syntactic features leading to the folklorisation or even naturalisation of translations. They also criticised her use of one of the Slovak dialects to replace the Don dialect, which shifted the Don Cossacks to the backward and linguistically archaic Slovak countryside in terms of both geography and character. However, Zora Jesenská's naturalisation can be justified by her strong tendency to protect her native language from foreign elements. She was also criticised for stylistic-lexical shifts in the translation, caused by her typical search for Slovak equivalents of Russian realia. The heated discussions about the translation of Sholokhov's novel and its translator led to the gradual formation of the programme of an emerging Slovak translation school. This phenomenon will be discussed later in the article.



It was necessary to create theoretical concepts not only for the development of translation practice but also for the training of future translators. The position of the translator in society and their participation in the literary process are also factors in the development of theoretical thinking on translation, which is why the first translation organisations started to emerge.

The first theoretical generalisations were undoubtedly innovative. There was no comprehensive translation theory; however, the positive aspect of this early period of Slovak translation was its focus on practice, its use in further translation activity and its inspiring nature in terms of thinking on translation and concretisation of translation.

Analyses of current translation production in the Slovak cultural context have also demanded the application of translation theory in the form of a systematic, comprehensive translation method. It was through this method that the Slovak school of translation⁵ (SST) was born. Often referred to as a creative method, the ‘school’ is as something open-ended and still in progress; after all, its formulation over forty years ago did not put an end to thought on translation. The accepted method was seen as an universal, generational dogma. Later, this method began to be referred to as the Slovak translation ‘school’. This designation applied above all to the field of literary translation. The school is described as a complex of techniques giving rise to a creative method which became the predominant, most productive, and characteristic approach for a certain period of development.

The thought behind Slovak translation ‘school’ was not random. There is a history to its origins, and it took decades to fully take shape. The aforementioned Zora Jesenská’s translation of Mikhail Sholokhov’s novel *And Quiet Flows the Don* (Tichij Don) featured translation strategies and solutions that inspired major discussion. In the 1982 book *Translation Contexts* (Kontexty prekladu), excellent translator of Russian Ján Ferenčík evaluated the work of Jesenská’s and its influence. Based on this evaluation, he formulated six principles of the school: the principle of textual completeness, the principle of semantic equivalence, the principle of formal equivalence, the principle of good Slovak, the principle of semantic equivalence's primacy over formal equivalence, and the principle of a conceptually unified translation, which governs all the principles.

⁵ The Slovak school of translation should not be seen as a collective organisation following a certain binding programme. It is “a set of activities leading to the most dominant, productive, and characteristic creative method of a certain period. In our case, it attained the character of a norm, and it was also voluntarily accepted into the field of published literature. Mainly for fiction and drama, but also for poetry (at least to the extent that its non-observance or rejection is seen as deviation from the standard).” Ferenčík, J. 1982: p.53.



2. The 1960s

2.1. The Political-Economic Situation

As a result of Stalin's death, the political situation in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) changed, which allowed Czechoslovakia to experience political relaxation, including the partial rehabilitation of some political prisoners. The conditions gradually improved, which led to the Prague Spring of 1968 and Alexander Dubček's introduction of "socialism with a human face".⁶ The USSR and its Warsaw Pact allies were highly critical of these changes and sceptical of the events in Czechoslovakia. The USSR sought to stop the democratisation process, but Czechoslovakia did not give into their pressure. The Warsaw Pact states' invasion of Czechoslovakia, officially called "fraternal international aid", began on the night of 20–21 August 1968. It was supposed to reverse the country's political course and put an end to the hope for "socialism with a human face". All the countries of the Warsaw Pact⁷ except Romania took part, i.e., the USSR, Hungary, Poland, and the GDR. Although the Czechoslovak authorities refused to mount armed resistance, unarmed citizens spontaneously blocked Soviet tanks in many places. By tearing down signposts and street names, they attempted to stop them or at least slow them down. According to the latest research, the occupation caused at least 108 deaths in Czechoslovakia, 37 of them in Slovakia, and hundreds were seriously wounded. On 16 January 1969, at around 1:30 p.m., Ján Palach, a history student at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague, protested against the troops' occupation by setting himself on fire in front of the National Museum in Prague. After a few minutes, passers-by managed to extinguish the flames. Palach, unfortunately,

⁶ The idea of **socialism with a human face** was to democratise the communist system. This included the abolition of censorship, the freedom of travel, the authorisation of non-communist organisations, efforts to equalise the status of Slovaks in the common state, the improvement of the situations of religious institutions, and the ongoing rehabilitation of victims of the 1950s regime.

¹⁰ The Warsaw Pact was a USSR-led military alliance of Central and Eastern European states (Albania, Bulgaria, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, Hungary, the GDR, Poland, and Romania). Signed in Warsaw on 14 May 1955, it was formed in opposition to the US-led NATO. Albania ceased its participation in Warsaw Pact activities in 1962, and on 13 September 1968, as a protest against the USSR invasion, the country withdrew from it completely. Due to the political changes in Eastern Europe, at the end of 1989 the Warsaw Pact lost its purpose. On 25 February 1991 in Prague, the six member states' ministers of foreign affairs and defence signed a treaty abolishing this military alliance. They also decided that each country had the right to join a military alliance of its choice and agreed on bilateral mutual relations. The former Warsaw Pact members Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic joined NATO on 12 March 1999. In March 2004, they were followed by Slovakia, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, and Slovenia.



died at 3:30 p.m. at the General University Hospital in Prague, but justified his actions in several letters written before his death. Hundreds of thousands of people attended his funeral.

The occupation halted the process of democratisation and slowly started the era known as normalisation. All the achievements of socialism with a human face were thus abolished. The resistance of the population waned; the majority of them gave up all political resistance and became completely passive.

2.2. The Situation in Translation

The political relaxation and democratisation of society during the “Golden Sixties” allowed the translation of both contemporary and classic Western literature. Furthermore, this period is known as a renaissance in the translation of the European poetic avant-gardes, especially surrealism. Despite the dominance of Russian and Soviet translations, it was possible to publish works by authors such as A. Solzhenitsyn, B. Pasternak, and G. Aygi, who were banned in the USSR.

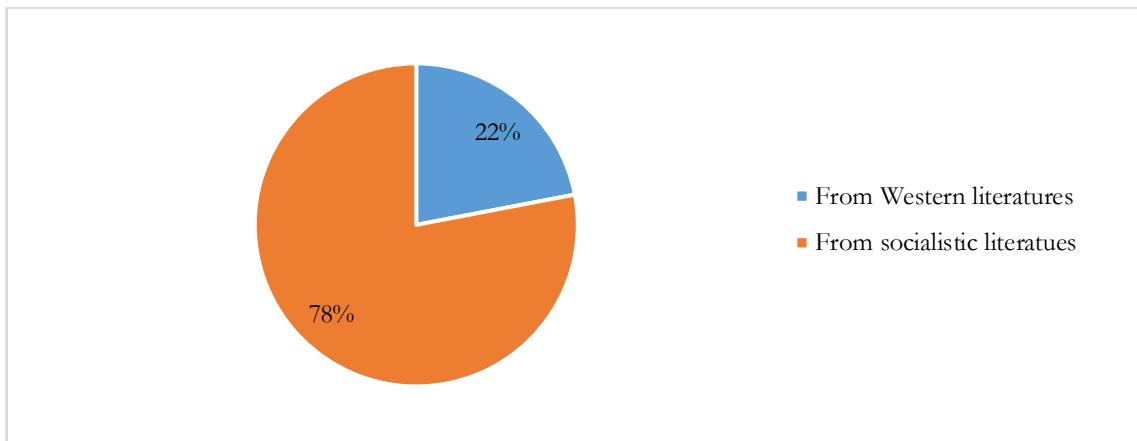
In 1965, the periodical *Revue svetovej literatúry* [World Literature Review] was established. The motto of the first issue was *A window wide open to the world*. It was the only journal in history dedicated exclusively to the translation of literatures of other nations. The aim of the journal was to present Slovak translations of previously untranslated works of foreign authors, mainly of the 20th century. In addition to excerpts from works, it also contained reviews, author profiles, literary criticism, and information about current world literary and cultural events. It also offered interviews with translators and information on translated literature, initiated new translations and, by reviewing books from abroad, promoted the reception of foreign literatures. In European terms, the journal was unique. Since 1965 it was published continuously until Slovakia’s economic and political situation put an end to its production in 2018. It helped to improve the quality of Slovak translation, influenced Slovak thinking on translation and cultivated society, as well as popularising literatures and cultures of other nations during its more than fifty-year existence. Since 1967, the Jan Hollý Award for the Literary Translation of Prose and Poetry has been granted. Thanks to this unique prize, literary translators gain visibility, and the importance of literary translation is emphasised.

In 1968, the conference *Translation as Art* was held in Bratislava attended by James Holmes who prepared the proceedings’ publication under the title *The Nature of Translation* (1970). In

addition to other, the publication included an article by eminent Slovak translation and literary scholar Anton Popovič under the title *The Concept of Shift of Expression in Translation Analysis*.

In order to fully understand translation production, we need to point out the relationship between Russian/Soviet literature and foreign Western (American, English, Italian, Spanish, Swedish) and Eastern (Soviet, GDR, Polish, Hungarian, Yugoslavian, Bulgarian, Romanian) literatures in the period between 1945 and 1968. In this period, the total number of translations was 4,470, of which 3,485 were translations of so-called socialist literatures. The specific number of titles translated from the individual national literatures of the Eastern Bloc are as follows: Russian and Soviet literature → 2,040; GDR literature → 417; Polish literature → 381; Hungarian literature → 329; Yugoslavian literatures → 150; Bulgarian literature → 92; Romanian literature → 76. There were 985 translations from Western literatures, including American → 338, English → 339, Italian → 211, Spanish → 57 and Swedish → 40. Therefore, 994/4,470 or 22.2% of the total translation production was from Western literatures. The ratio of socialist literatures is then 3,485/4,470 or 78%. American literature represents 347/4,479 or 7.8% of the total translation production.⁸ These statistics, though they could be considered rather approximate and illustrative, can nevertheless serve as an indicator of Slovak translation production's acceptance of foreign literatures from the perspective of ideological compatibility.

Figure 1. Statistics of the total translation production



⁸ Based on the research of Stanislavová, Z., Drzewiecka, G. L. 2017, p. 245.

Figure 2. The specific number of titles translated from the individual national literatures of the eastern bloc

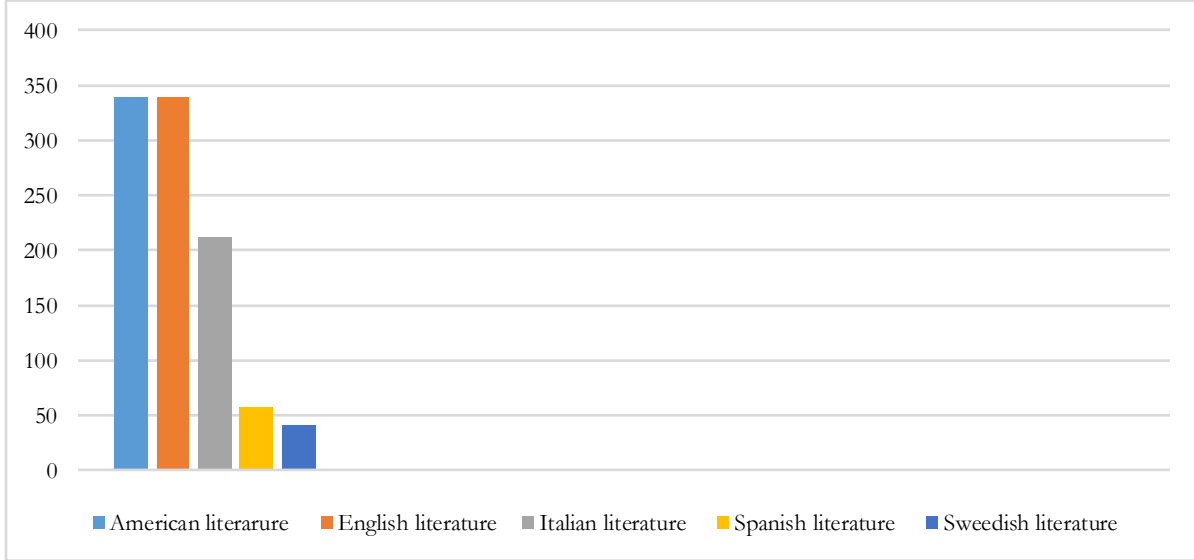
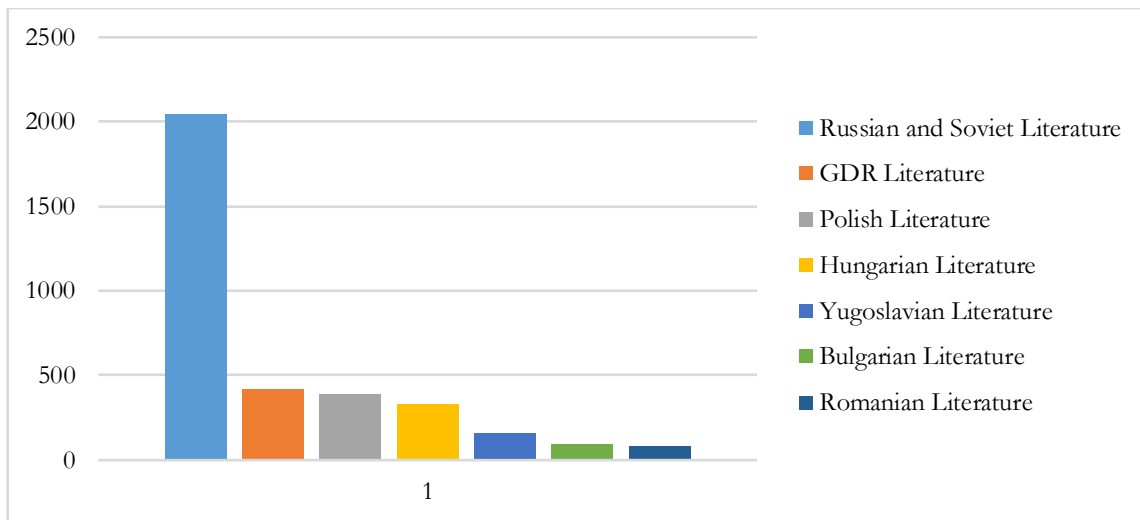


Figure 3. The specific number of titles translated from western European countries and the USA



3. The 1970s and 80s

3.1. The Political-Economic Situation

After the Warsaw Pact troops' invasion, the normalisation era began. Although it was a milder form of oppression of communism's opponents than Stalinism in the 1950s, there were



many persecutions, dismissals and bans of holding office, mainly for those who disagreed with the invasion. Their children could not study at universities, for instance. Despite all this, the 1970s were also a time of major achievements for Czechoslovakia: the construction of the motorway network, the Prague metro, a gas transit pipeline, large panel housing estates and the first Czechoslovakian astronaut, Vladimír Remek, embarking on a space flight aboard a Soviet spacecraft in 1978. Dissent and non-governmental organisations such as Charter 77 were gradually developing during this period. Charter 77 criticised the government for failing to implement the human rights provisions of a number of international treaties. The regime responded by imprisoning opponents and creating the so-called Anti-Charter, a declaration signed by artists who officially declared their support for the regime.

3.2. The Situation in Translation

As noted above, the era we are discussing was one of normalisation. This affected the entire society and culture, including translation production. Unwelcome translations were put into library warehouses, their translators into factory warehouses. Publishing houses and unions carefully selected and approved who could and could not translate and what could be translated.

Non-conforming translators were not allowed to translate and were excluded from public, social and cultural life. They could not be spoken or written about publicly, they could not involve themselves in public life, their translations were moved from libraries and bookstores to vaults and library warehouses. The banned works had to be re-translated in some cases. Many of the non-conformists published under pseudonyms or the names of colleagues and friends, who, by lending their names, risked their own careers. Determining translations' authorship is therefore rather difficult. In the rehabilitation period after 1989, many of these translators returned, while others did not live long enough to see it. A similar fate befell the aforementioned translator Z. Jesenská, who publicly criticised the policy of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Warsaw Pact invasion. She protested by resigning from the Communist Party. Despite these events and her hatred towards the Russians as occupants, she remained a Russophile and an admirer of Russian literature and art. Her translations ended up in vaults and library warehouses. At that time, it became clear that, without her modern translations of classic Russian literature, the Russian classics would suddenly disappear from modern Slovak, and therefore it was necessary to re-translate them.

“It should be noted, however, that in spite of this dark side of translation, which significantly marked the Slovak political situation, literary translation reached high qualitative level



in this period. This was abundantly supported by the reflection on translation in journals and theoretical discourse” (Bednárová, 1995: p.33).

The dominant conception of Slovak thinking on translation is **shift**, later becomes shift in translation. Popovič (1970: pp.78–87) mentioned the idea of a shift for the first time in his essay *The Concept ‘Shift of Expression’ in Translation Analysis*. Up to that point, differences between the source text and its translation had only been assessed empirically and subjectively, though a certain amount of subjectivity is doubtlessly still present in Popovič’s shifts. Nonetheless, the concept of shift of expression is an attempt to objectively determine and give a name to what is lost and gained in the translation process. It allows us to delineate translation approaches more precisely, label differences between the original and the translation, even identify the styles of individual translators. And to this day it enables us to investigate oft-disregarded equivalence, given that shifts of expression are used in order to attain equivalence at the higher level of the text. Shifts can thus signalize equivalence between the source and target texts, emphasizing the fact that the term is not restricted to describing “negative” changes occurring during the translation process; it also aims to describe the broadest possible array of phenomena that occur when textual-cultural material is transferred from one culture to another. Popovič divides shifts of expression in translation into constitutive shifts, individual shifts, retardation shifts, negative shifts, thematic shifts, generic shifts and rhythmic shifts (1983: p.196). Popovič also developed the communication theory of translation. The theory’s predominant concept is the text, both the original and the translation. It uncovers itself as an intersection of two axes: the operative/pragmatic and the communicational/iconic, that is to say reflective axis. This perception of the text allowed Popovič to create a model where translation is regarded as one of various modes of communication. The communication theory of translation is based the rudimentary communicational rule of three: author—text—recipient. Popovič expanded it into author1—text1—recipient1 (the primary act of literary communication) → author2—text2—recipient2 (the secondary (meta) act of literary communication), resulting in a model that allows us to evaluate the presence of both the author and the reader in the text. Keep in mind that the presence of the author refers to all factors projected in the text that are connected to the author’s idiolect. Later developments in literary communication theory consider the reader's presence in the text: their experience of reading the text, their past reading experience, and their taste. Popovič’s translation model is a model of primary and secondary communication insofar as it acknowledges a two-fold projection of the reader in the text: first in the original, i.e. the source text, and then in the translation, i.e. the target



text. Furthermore, we cannot omit Popovič's understanding of translation as intercultural communication, through which he introduced the following concepts: interspatial factors in translation, cultural factors in translation, cultural creolisation in translation, temporal cultural factors in the translated text and domestic culture in translation. In defining these concepts, he drew on those conceived by Russian semiotician Yuri Lotman. Popovič's theories have been criticized for being too theoretical and not offering 'instructions' on how to translate. He responds to such objections in *The Theory of Literary Translation (Teória umeleckého prekladu)* by saying:

“...it is not my intention to offer a ready introduction to translation practice, nor to the ‘art’ of translation. Between the theory and practice of translation, there may be many ‘mediating’ factors that open up avenues in both directions” (Popovič, 1975: p. 9).” (Author's translation)

To his own defence, he adds that “theoretical preparation has yet to do a single translator any ‘harm’” (Popovič, 1975: p.10).

To summarize Slovak thinking on translation we need to emphasize the role of the Summer School of Translation (SST), founded in 1975 by Anton Popovič. With its almost fifty-year tradition it has influenced the formation and further development of Slovak thinking on translation, university training of translators and interpreters, the translation process and the process of publishing and editing. Furthermore, both the translation community and professional translators have gradually become aware of the SST. Throughout its history, the SST's nature and organisation has changed. The European Commission Directorate-General for Translation, for instance, is a frequent co-organiser nowadays. The SST has addressed various translational issues over the years (i.e., theoretical, methodological and didactic aspects of university-level translator and interpreter training; communicative, literary and stylistic issues of translation; critical interpretation of source and target texts; translation of poetry, drama and scholarly texts, including the natural and social sciences; translation of specialised texts; translation of literature for children and young adults; the theoretical preparation and practical training of interpreters). It is attended mainly by academics, including translation theorists and teachers, as well as professional translators, publishers, editors, and students. They share knowledge and experience from their professional practice and the most recent research findings in translation and interpreting theory.

4. The 1980s and 90s

4.1. The Political-Economic Situation



Despite the heavy industrialisation and maximum level of employment in the 1980s, production efficiency was low. The USSR was one of the country's main trading partners and suppliers of raw materials. In 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the "era of perestroika"⁹ began. In the late 1980s, after perestroika was imposed and conditions in the USSR improved, other socialist states experienced the easing of state control as well.

The Czechoslovak economy suffered during the 1980s. It was a period of deep crisis. However, since the communists kept the crisis a secret and artificially prolonged it, it was not outwardly apparent. The former engines of the economy, i.e., the mining, arms and chemical industries, were now dragging it down. There was no private sector and free market; the whole economy was planned centrally.

On 17 November 1989, a rally to celebrate Students' Day was held in Prague, as it was every year. There was a clash between students and police, who used water cannons and batons against the demonstrators.

This led to the strike of the majority of Czechoslovakia's universities, as well as artists and performers. The students and artists demanded that the state be led by wise and competent people, because service to citizens is supposed to be the highest moral obligation of politics and politicians. Moreover, they demanded the abolition of the Communist Party's leading role enshrined in the Constitution of Czechoslovakia. On 10 December 1989, President of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic Gustáv Husák resigned in response to further demonstrations. His successor was dissident author Václav Havel. This period is known as the Velvet Revolution. Not only did Slovak society rapidly change after November 1989, but Slovaks also gained their own state in 1993. It should be noted that this was a choice made by politicians. The majority of Czechoslovakia's population was opposed to the division of the common state, which would have been reflected in

⁹ Perestroika (term from Russian) – the introduction of democratising elements into the USSR's political system, the decrease of the Communist Party's control over public authorities, economic reforms to increase labour productivity and the population's living standards, the allowance of private ownership of enterprises in services, manufacturing and foreign trade, the relaxation of press censorship and freedom for dissidents and political prisoners. The aim of Gorbachev's foreign policy was to strengthen ties with the West. The British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, the chancellor of West Germany Helmut Kohl, and US president Ronald Reagan were among the prominent Western politicians he established close relationships with. The most significant change in foreign policy came from Gorbachev's announcement in 1988, where he declared that the USSR would allow Eastern and Central European countries to decide their own affairs. This resulted in the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe in 1989. Gorbachev received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1990.



a referendum, had one been held. In order to avoid such an event (unwanted by politicians), the division of the republic was approved by a constitutional law on the division of the federative Czechoslovakia. However, the whole process was peaceful, without any violence, which is why it is regarded as a model “velvet divorce” around the world.

The Slovak economy has been transforming since 1990. It has now been 30 years since 1 January 1993, when the Slovak Republic declared independence, and nowadays the majority of people in both countries consider it positive. In addition to economic and political transformation, the division assigned another task to both successor states – to build their own independent countries. Foreign investment gradually began to flow into Slovakia, our foreign indebtedness was reduced, and the profitability of the business sector increased. Slovakia’s cheap but well-educated labour force attracted foreign investors. In 2004, Slovakia joined both the European Union and NATO. In December 2008, it entered the Schengen Area, and in 2009 it adopted the Euro.

4.2. Slovak Thinking on Translation and the International Context

However, Slovak thinking on translation was developed in the 1970s and 80s, but we must note that at that time the works of theorists reflected the influence of Soviet structuralism and literary communication on one hand, e.g., works by semiotician Lotman, as well as the influence of Jakobson’s theories of translation. In addition, it was in close connection with translation practice (considering the global geopolitical and linguistic circumstances during the time in question), it by no means emerged in a vacuum. Slovak translation theorists were in active contact with leading figures of the field in other countries and most likely helped lay the foundations of descriptive translation studies (nowadays an increasingly overlooked branch of the field).¹⁰ Popovič, the leading figure of translation studies research, closely cooperated with significant Czech translation theorist Jiří Levý, who had greatly influenced his thinking on translation studies, especially with his work *Umění překlada* (The Art of Translation, 1963). Besides the influence of Levý, works by Popovič also reflected Western translation studies, namely Nida, Holmes and J. C. Catford. While it is difficult to trace the exact history of the contacts between Slovak thinking on translation and the field in other countries, certain common features are clearly evident.

¹⁰ In his article “Anton Popovič’s contribution to translation studies” (2009), Jaroslav Špírk gives a rather thorough overview of Popovič’s contact with translation theorists from other countries. The present article is directed towards finding Popovič’s possible place among these figures.



Perhaps one of Anton Popovič's greatest contributions to international translation studies is his concept of translation shift. In this case Popovič was clearly influenced by the essay *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, where author John Catford (1965: p.103) defines shifts as "departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL to the TL" and distinguishes two basic types: category shifts and level shifts. Level shift occurs if a SL item at one linguistic level has a TL translation equivalent at a different level, whereas category shift is deliberately limited to ranks below the sentence. Category shift is further divided into structure-shifts, class-shifts, unit-shifts (rank-changes) and intra-system-shifts. It is immediately clear that Catford's shifts remain at a purely linguistic level, which Popovič described as "constitutive shifts" while taking the general concept of shift much further. Reflecting on the tension between the source-culture system and the target-culture system, Catford (1963: p.79) says that the translator resorts to shift "because he is endeavouring to convey the semantic substance of the original in spite of the differences separating the system of the original from that of the translation...". Thus, Popovič views the text within the wider contexts of its micro- and macrostylistic construction.

So is there anything other than Levý and Popovič in Slovakia? Yes, there is. Although their theories are still valid, they need to "refurnished" in order to suit a new situation.

At the moment, the research in translation studies in Slovakia is conducted mainly by four Slovak universities (the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University in Bratislava, the Faculty of Arts of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra, the Faculty of Arts of University of Matej Bel in Banská Bystrica and the Faculty of Arts of Prešov University in Prešov) and the Institut of World Literature of the Slovak Academy of Science in Bratislava. At the moment, new topics are being explored, such as the sociology of translation and translation criticism (M. Andričík, M. Djovčoš, I. Hostová, A. Valcerová, M. Kusá, E. Gromová, M. Gavurová and others), the application of shifts in the translation of non-literary texts (V. Biloveský) and audiovisual translation (E. Janecová); scholars are openly and critically discussing issues such as problematic aspects of intercultural communication (A. Keníž, A. Hut'ková, Z. Bohúšová, L. Vajdová) and ideology in translation (K. Bednárová, M. Kusá, A. Keníž); and interdisciplinary cooperation in research on specialized texts teaching (V. Biloveský, M. Bachledová, M. Laš). This is to say that the situation is far from critical, and we Slovaks cannot complain of a lack of stimuli in the field of translation studies.

Conclusion



Slovak thinking on translation is based on the internationally renowned tradition of Czech-Slovak thinking on translation. However, we should bear in mind that it is not a closed system. On the contrary, it is an open, dynamic, and evolving system that supports both new research initiatives and the needs of translation practise, operating on the principle of internal complementarity. It responds flexibly to the translator's position, role and needs in the ever-changing translation market of the 21st century. Moreover, it reacts to the increasing requirements placed on the translator's personality and to the advances in CAT tools.

According to research of the current translation market, the market requires creative translators (*bomo translator*) who are able think both analytically and critically, are technologically competent and can work in teams. "The translator's personality is like a mosaic, refined by time and practise, made up of a multitude of pebbles. It should be viewed holistically as a collection of fragments, each with its own quality and *raison d'être*"¹¹ (Rakšányová, 2002: p.42).

Contemporary Slovak thinking on translation is a modern field attempting to encompass everything. The aim of the translation process should be the production of high-quality translations that not only resonate with the target audience but can also impact the development of the national literature that is its source.

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¹¹ Author's translation.



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