

*Oryginalna praca badawcza*

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## **ONE ‘METHOD’, DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES? SOCIALIST REALISM IN SLOVAKIA AND POLAND. AN ATTEMPT OF COMPARISON**

Key words: socialist realism, *sorela*, Polish art, Slovak art

Słowa kluczowe: socrealizm, *sorela*, sztuka polska, sztuka słowacka

The author of this article, aims to undertake two parallel tasks: first of all to compare Slovak art of *sorela* with the Polish variant of socialist realism, and to define its status and participation in the visual arts of Czechoslovakia. These are all issues regarding the specificity, local or national character of the art of that time<sup>1</sup>. The subjects of this analysis are: the reception of socialist realism, organization of artistic life, and briefly subject of works the "method" in Slovakia and Poland.

### **Beginnings and reception. Structures of artistic life**

The shape and internal structure of the field of art – using the term coined by Pierre Bourdieu – was influenced by the political difference in the status of Poland and Slovakia, which, after a brief period of nominal independence between 1939 and 1945, *de facto* as a satellite state in alliance with Nazi Germany, functioned within a federation,

<sup>1</sup> An inversion of Piotrowski's theory of the global character of socialist realism, see P. Piotrowski, *Czy realizm socjalistyczny był globalny?*, [in:] idem, *Globalne ujęcie sztuki Europy Wschodniej*, Poznań 2018, pp. 87-106.

with the government of President Edvard Beneš<sup>2</sup>. Formed in February 1946 Bloc of Slovakian Fine Artists (*Blok slovenských výtvarníkov*) was incorporated into the Central Bloc of Artists of the Czechoslovak Republic (*Ústřední blok výtvarníků Československé republiky*)<sup>3</sup>. At this time, contacts with the West were still alive<sup>4</sup>, and relative pluralism was therefore guaranteed on the one hand by the activity of the pre-war classicists of modernism and the young artists processing its experiences, mostly after studies in Prague, Vienna, stays in France and on the other: by the activity of groups of artists – as Alexandra Kusá emphasizes – educated locally at the Slovak Technical University (*Slovenska vysoká škola technická*) whose style was close to realism, such as: Ctibor Belan, Jozef Fabíni, Jozef Majkut, Mária Medvecká, Vladimír Vestenický<sup>5</sup>.

The situation in Poland at the same time was also characterized by the coexistence of various trends; colourists constituted a dominant force but abstraction, surrealism or cubism were also present. Stanisław Teisseyre – previously associated with the avant-garde movement and after a colourist, an editor of “Przegląd Artystyczny” – became the president of the Association of Polish Artists (ZPAP). Modern circles also began to form: Group of Young Fine Artists in Kraków supported by the theoretician Mieczysław Porębski, in Łódź centered around Władysław Strzemiński, in Warsaw the Club of Young Artists and Scientists<sup>6</sup>. Bolesław Bierut’s speech at the opening of a radio station in Wrocław (November, 1947) foreshadowed the coming changes in culture: stressed that the nation had the right to demand from artists the kind of art which expressed *enthusiasm and faith in victory*<sup>7</sup>. In 1948 the great propaganda Exhibition of

<sup>2</sup> About the first post-war years of Czechoslovak history: J. Tomaszewski, *Słowacja*, Warszawa 2011, pp. 153-194.

<sup>3</sup> Cf.: T. Hylmar, *Od Bloku ke Svazu, Cesta ke vzniku jednotné organizace Československých výtvarníků v roce 1947*, “Umění” 2016, no. 2, p. 175.

<sup>4</sup> An exhibition of Spanish artists of école de Paris (Umění republikánského Španělska. Španělští umělci pařížské školy) shown at the Prague Manege, I-II 1946 r. (F. Boreš, Ó. Domínguez, J. González, G. Parra, J. Palmeiro, J. Peinado, P. Picasso); one of the last acts of the official avant-garde life was an exhibition of Czechoslovak art (Art Tchecoslovaque 1938-1946) at Paris’s Galerie La Boétie in mid-1946, with the participation of eight Slovak artists: Ladislav Guderna, Vincent Hložník, Josef Kostka, Peter Matejka, Eugen Nevan, Ervin Semian, František Studeny, Ernest Zmetak; see: A. Kusá, *Prerušená pieseň: výtvarné umenie v časoch stalinskej kultúrnej praxe 1948-1956*, Bratislava 2019, p. 82; *Art Tchecoslovaque 1938-1946*, Paris 1946.

<sup>5</sup> A. Kusá, *Prerušená pieseň. Sprievodca výstavou 29. jún 21. október 2012*, Bratislava 2012, p. 18; we can add that the Romanian-born Viliam Chmel, whose style was close to expressionism, was also a graduate of a technical school – also shaped artistically by his study trips around Europe; L. Guderna studied at the local School of Arts and Crafts and at the SVST, and completed his education at the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade.

<sup>6</sup> Here in 1948 an exhibition of young Czechoslovakian fine arts was presented; P. Skarupsky, “*The War Brought Us Close and the Peace Will Not Divide Us*”: *Exhibitions of Art from Czechoslovakia in Warsaw in the Late 1940s*, “Iconotheca” 2016, 26, pp. 104-105.

<sup>7</sup> As cited in: E. Kal, „*Tego się nie krytykuje, na kogo się nie liczy*”: *Polska krytyka artystyczna okresu realizmu socjalistycznego*, Słupsk 2010, p. 50.

the Recovered Territories (July-October) demonstrated the usefulness of the avant-garde art – and even the colourist option (Jan Cybis's panneaux) – for social tasks. Part of the event was the World Congress of Intellectuals for Peace, with the participation of Picasso and Léger, and was accompanied by an exhibition of French art. The last episode of free artistic life was the Exhibition of Modern Art in Kraków (autumn 1948), just before the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) became united (December 15), seizing power<sup>8</sup>. Ultimately, at the General Assembly of ZPAP in Katowice (27-29 June 1949), socialist realism was recognized as the official, binding "method"; it changed in the statute of ZPAP, which was taken over by Juliusz Krajewski<sup>9</sup>.

The exhibition "Paintings of National Artists of the USSR" (*Obrazy národných umelcov ZSSR: Aleksandr Dejneka, Aleksandr Gerasimov, Siergiej Gerasimov and Arkadij Platov, April 1947*) can be considered a prelude of (Czecho)slovakian art<sup>10</sup>. The post-war system was formed by the events of "the victorious February" (*Vítazný február*) 1948 and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) taking over the power<sup>11</sup>. After Beneš's resignation, Klement Gottwald became Prime Minister and was appointed President in June. Stalinisation, which began at that time, involved the introduction of socialist realism as the official "method"; a hard line for cultural policy was drawn at the Ninth Party Congress at the end of May 1949. The general, official communization strategies were similar in both countries, although the details differed: a coup d'état in Czechoslovakia, a "mild revolution" and a regrouping of forces in Poland. At the Congress of National Culture (Prague, April 1948) the *Manifesto of Socialist Humanism* by Slovak artists, expressed hope for a processual development of art that took into account the achievements of the past; *nota bene*, it was not included in the official publication<sup>12</sup>. Bratislava's different stance was said to be the result of

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, p. 59-65 (chapter: „Avant-garde and social service: around the Exhibition of the Recovered Territories and I. Exhibition of Modern Art”).

<sup>9</sup> A. Vetulani, *Zwizzek Polskich Artystów Plastyków*, [in:] *Polskie życie artystyczne w latach 1945-1960*, A. Wojciechowski (ed.), Wrocław 1992, pp. 109-116.

<sup>10</sup> A. Kusá, *Prerušená pieseň...*, 2019, p. 82; eadem, *Stratégie veľ'kých výstav a ich podiel na formovaní umenia "sorely"*, "Ars: Časopis Ústavu dejín umenia Slovenskej akadémie vied" 2007, 40 (1), p. 71. The exhibition opened in Prague with the participation of the host ministers and representatives of the USSR aroused expectations and curiosity, a promise of novelty and an alternative to modernity; it was also supposedly meant to show the Soviet reality which had been an inspiration for, among the others, L'udovit Fulla; see: K. Bajcurová, *Balancing absolute Painting" and Reality. L'udovit Fulla and the Paradoxes of Slovak Modernism*, [in:] *A Reader in East-Central-European Modernism 1918-1956*, B. Hock, K. Kemp-Welch, J. Owen (eds), London 2015, p. 156 (note 42).

<sup>11</sup> On the actions that preceded it, the provocations of the communists and the purges and repressions after the "victory" see: Ł. Kamiński, "Zwycięski luty". *Komunistyczny zamach stanu w Czechosłowacji*, "Biuletyn IPN" 2008, no. 3, pp. 68-73.

<sup>12</sup> The Manifesto is also mentioned by Z. Rusinová, *The Embodiment of Communist Utopia. Socialist Realism in Slovakia, 1948-1956*, [in:] *A Reader in East-Central-European...*, p. 427, note 3; eadem, *Súdržka moja vlast': Vizuálna kultúra obdobia stalinizmu na Slovensku*, Trnava 2015, pp. 353-354.

personal differences and the actions of a communist with an avant-garde past, Laco Novomeský (Commissioner of education, science, and arts) in 1950 accused of bourgeois nationalism<sup>13</sup>. At the First Congress of Slovak Artists (March 1949), all Bloc organisations were dissolved and assigned to the Association of Czechoslovak Artists with Ladislav Čemický as president of the Slovak section<sup>14</sup>.

Art Schools were important organs in the implementation of the "method". The Festival of Art Schools in Poznań (October 1949) was supposed to demonstrate the necessity to reform art education; the main objective was to condemn the dominant idea of autonomous art, the colourist method of teaching, and the elimination of Western influences. The enthusiasm and naivety of the youth used to propagate the idea of communism; the criticism of Andrzej Wróblewski and his Self-education Group's concept of "direct" realism showed that the communist authorities had their own vision of art. New curricula were introduced in 1950, with an emphasis on drawing, figure studies, multi-figure compositions, applied arts; ideological subjects were included, the knowledge of current world art was cut. Open-air painting in State Agricultural Farms and cooperation with the industry were organized. There were also structural changes, such as the merging of the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków and in Warsaw with the State Higher School<sup>15</sup>. The changes were also connected with exclusions: e.g. in Warsaw, Artur Nacht Samborski left the post, Cybis was dismissed, and the new rector Franciszek Strynkiewicz resigned; in Kraków Tadeusz Kantor was dismissed<sup>16</sup>. The PZPR Central Committee made decisions regarding appointments to more important posts. Similar changes were introduced at other PWSSP; in Wrocław Stanisław Dawski resigned from his position of rector<sup>17</sup>, in Łódź W. Strzemiński was dismissed from the

<sup>13</sup> Full biography, analysis of pre- and post-war activities, with theoretical concepts and documentation: L. Perný, *Kultúrna revolúcia Laca Novomeského: Ladislav Novomeský o kultúre, umení a politike*, Bratislava 2017; on the attitude to the visual arts pp. 35 onwards.

<sup>14</sup> A. Kusá, *Podiel inštitúcií na formovaní umenia socialistického realizmu v 50. rokoch 20. storočia*, "Ročenka Slovenskej národnej galérie v Bratislave / Jahrbuch der Slowakischen Nationalgalerie in Bratislava / Yearbook of the Slovak National Gallery in Bratislava" 2007-2008, p. 22; more about the congress at Hotel Tatra in Bratislava: Z. Rusinová, *Súdržka moja vlasť...*, pp. 356-358; see also: A. Hrabušický, *Medzi socialistickým realizmom a bruselským snom*, "Ročenka Slovenskej národnej galérie v Bratislave / Jahrbuch der Slowakischen Nationalgalerie in Bratislava / Yearbook of the Slovak National Gallery in Bratislava" 2007-2008, pp. 27-28; about SČVU and Tvar Cooperative, see: V. Vaculová Repová, *Od ideologie k trhu*, "Profil. súčasného výtvarného umenia. The Contemporary Art Magazine" 2020, no. 1, pp. 146-147.

<sup>15</sup> W. Włodarczyk, *Socrealizm: Sztuka polska w latach 1950-1954*, Kraków 1991, pp. 80-91; idem, *Akademia Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie w latach 1944-2004: Sto lat Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 85-134.

<sup>16</sup> Cf.: *Nowocześni a socrealizm*, Vol. I, J. Chrobak, M. Świca (eds), Kraków 2000, p. 166.

<sup>17</sup> S. Świsłocka-Karwot, *Sztuka we Wrocławiu w latach 1945-1970: Artyści, dzieła, krytycy*, Wrocław 2016, p. 65.

position of professor<sup>18</sup>. The effects of the reform were monitored by the nationwide exhibition "Youth Fights for Peace" (October 1950).

The Higher School of Visual Arts (VŠVU) in Bratislava did not have to undergo reforms for the sake of Socialist Realism because it was prepared for them; although efforts related to its creation began just after the war, it was established in June of 1949. It was Novmésy's ambition and constituted one aspect of his plan of building a national culture<sup>19</sup>. Ján Mudroch became the first rector of the three-faculty school; supported by Novomésy, he had to resign after the politician's accusation. The second workshop of painting, was headed by Ľudovít Fulla, removed in 1952. Desider Milly became another rector, quickly replaced by the painter Ján Želibský, who was followed by Josef Kostka; from 1959 the school was headed by Vincent Hložník. So a similarly party-guided, universal system of punishments and ennoblements was at work here; probably similar was the enthusiasm and activity of youth, organizing exhibitions and participating in them, competitions, brigades and agitations.

## Exhibitions

The first, crucial event for the implementation of the "method" in Slovakia was the Fourth All-Slovakian Exhibition (*IV. Celoslovenská výstava umelcov*) in 1949, which was accompanied by a catalogue with an introduction by Čemický<sup>20</sup>. Collective exhibitions were also shaped by state order. The so-called target actions (*úlohové akcie*) were organized by the Central Czechoslovak Artists' Union, assigning themes and setting deadlines; the artist received a six-month stipend for the realization of the project and the progress of work was monitored at every stage<sup>21</sup>. A less oppressive form were the "generic targets" for which artists were free to choose from themes set by the authorities. Exhibitions entitled "Harvest of Art" (*Výtvarná úroda*) referring to the ethos of agriculture gave the creative process the honourable dimension of producing essential goods, or perhaps, conversely, (de)valourised it by equating it with manual labor. The harvest could take the form of paintings or sketches made at workplaces in steel

<sup>18</sup> And the best known, due to the film *Powidoki*, directed by Andrzej Wajda (2016)

<sup>19</sup> Almost at the same time the Slovak National Gallery and the Higher School of Music were founded and the city theater has become a national theater; cf. B. Tribulová, *História*, [www.vsvu.sk/sk/o-nas/vsvu/historia/](http://www.vsvu.sk/sk/o-nas/vsvu/historia/) (access: 12.12.2021).

<sup>20</sup> A. Kusá, *Prerušená pieseň...*, 2019, p. 133; see also: Z. Rusinová, *The Embodiment...*, p. 417; the exhibition was organized by the Czechoslovak Union; the texts were also written by a poet Vítězslav Nezval and a communist-musicologist Zdenek Nejedlý.

<sup>21</sup> On the process of creation and verification of works: A. Kusá, *Prerušená pieseň...*, 2012, pp. 39-40; more on it: N. Gažovičová, *Úlohové akcie a VSŽ (budovanie členskej a tovarovej základne – umelecká prevádzka po roku 1948)*, [in:] *Po moderne. Metropola východu (1945-1989): Zborník prednášok k výstave*, P. Tajkov, D. Kenderová (eds), Košice 2019, pp. 43-51.

mills and mines, construction sites, agricultural cooperatives (JRD) etc<sup>22</sup>. At the first (*Výtvarná úroda, 1950/1951*, December 1950-January 1951) a curiosity of sorts was Medvecká's almost four-meter-wide triptych *The Orava dam (Oravská priehrada 1950)*, now only known from reproductions and press reports (Fig. 1)<sup>23</sup>. The second "harvest" (1951) consisted of works by such artists as: Belan, Bedrich Hoffstädter or Július Bukovinský<sup>24</sup>, also "modernists" like Miloš Alexander Bazovský, Martin Benka or Fulla<sup>25</sup>. Medvecká's *Delivery of the Quota in Upper Orava (Odovzdávanie kontingentu na Hornej Orave, 1951, OGD)* was an example of how Soviet models were adapted.



Fig. 1. Mária Medvecká, *Orava Dam – triptych / Oravská priehrada – triptych*, 1950, oil/canvas, width approx. 400; as cited in: *I. přehlídka československého výtvarného umění 1949-1951. Katalog výstavy*, Praha 1951, p. 18

Exhibitions on construction sites, in "places of action", i.e., creative "residences" (artists' stays) were specific to *sorela*<sup>26</sup>, e.g. *The Friendship Railtrack (Trať družby)*, to which the exhibition was dedicated, organized in a gallery in Košice (August 1953). The participants included artists such as Andrej Doboš, Jozef Fabini, Július Jakoby and

<sup>22</sup> JRD (Jednotné roľnícke družstvo), the equivalent of the Polish Agricultural Production Cooperative), both of which were modelled on the Soviet kolkhozes.

<sup>23</sup> The title according to Z. Rusinová, *The Embodiment...*, p. 422. The full list of participants available in the catalogue: *Výtvarná úroda 1950*, Praha 1950; see also: A. Kusá, *Stratégie veľkých výstav...*, p. 75.

<sup>24</sup> See: *Výtvarná úroda*, Praha 1951.

<sup>25</sup> Their presence resulted from a different strategy than before, namely the division into national sections, exhibited separately and interchangeably presented in Czech and Slovak centres. The Slovak "minority" had to be complemented by works that had not been previously exhibited; A. Kusá, *Strategie veľkých výstav...*, p. 76.

<sup>26</sup> Example of such a state-wide exhibition can be seen in the exhibition entitled "Visual Artists at the Construction Sites of Socialism" in the Manege in Prague at the turn of 1952 and 1953; see: *Výtvarní umělci na stavbách socialismu 1952-1953*, Praha 1952.

Julius Nemčík<sup>27</sup>. The interdisciplinary exhibition "Literature and Visual Arts in the Service of Building Socialism" (*Literatúra a výtvarné umenie v službách budovania socializmu*) in Košice organized in November, 1954 had similar participants<sup>28</sup>. E.g. in Poland were held "1 May Exhibitions" in the ZPA District.

The most important, from the perspective of the Marxist dialectic of struggle, was the national "showrooms" in both countries. In Czechoslovakia that took place in a symbolic and prestigious place: the Riding-Hall at Prague Castle (*Jízdárna Pražského hradu*)<sup>29</sup>. A historical character was the exhibition "Czechoslovak people and their country in life, work and struggle" (*Československý lid a jeho kraj v životě, práci a zapasu*, May 1949). Paintings and sculptures from 1918-1949, selected as an anticipation of socialist realism – the oeuvre e.g.: Cyprián Majerník (died in 1945), M. Benka, L'udovit Fulla, from the generation of modernists – within the framework of "formulating of a new past"<sup>30</sup>, were meant to confirm the continuity and vitality of the realist tradition.

In May of 1951, the 1st Exhibition of Czechoslovak Fine Art 1949-1951, was opened under the patronage of "comrade" Gottwald. Out of over two hundred participants of the exhibition, Slovaks were a negligible minority, and they included the jurors, e.g.: Hoffstädter, Nemčík, Dezider Milly, Ján Želibský, Kostka, Rudolf Přibis, Fraňo Štefunko<sup>31</sup>. One of *sorela's* researchers explains political biases as a motivation behind the Czech critics' unfavorable attitude toward the supposedly backward Slovak art, a fact which was blamed on Novomeský who was ousted from power. The Czechs had already carried out a target action – visibly giving them a sense of superiority – which in Slovakia did not take place until 1951. It also talks about ambivalence or even schizophrenia that characterises the entire cultural policy, created by and to suit the dissatisfied authorities<sup>32</sup>. It should be added, that the struggle of opposites was an organic part of the essence of the method, according to the simplified dialectical theory; *sorela* art **had to be** in a process of constant

<sup>27</sup> The reconstruction of the railroad line from Čierna by Tisou to Žilina (1951-1955); the exhibition afterwards it was moved to a stand in Ružin and – at the beginning of 1954 – to Bratislava; see: Z. Rusinová, *Súdružka moja vlasť...*, pp. 275-276; cf.: *Trat' družby vo výtvarnom diele*, Košice 1953; A. Kusá, *Prerušená pieseň...*, 2019, pp. 241-242.

<sup>28</sup> Currently: East Slovak Gallery in Košice (Východoslovenská galéria, Košice) created in 1951 – under the name of Provincial (Krajská galéria); data on the exhibition: *Literatúra a výtvarné umenie v službách budovania socializmu*, Košice 1954.

<sup>29</sup> See: A. Breuerová, J. Frejtichová, *Můj rok 1949*, Brno-Praha 2019, p. 61.

<sup>30</sup> „Formulovanie novej minulosti“: A. Kusá, *Prerušená pieseň...*, 2012, p. 17; eadem, *Prerušená pieseň...*, 2019, pp. 216-217; Slovaks were also a negligible minority among 26 jurors: Alžbeta Güntherová-Mayerová (theorist) and: Štefan Bednár, L. Čemický, B. Hoffstädter, J. Kostka, Jan Mudroch; see: A. Kusá, *Stratégie veľkých výstav...*, p. 74 (note 47).

<sup>31</sup> Full list of participants: *I. prehľadka československého výtvarného umění...*

<sup>32</sup> A. Kusá, *Stratégie veľkých výstav...*, p. 77.

movement and development<sup>33</sup>. In the catalogue of the exhibition, they reproduced the well-known triptych by Medvecká, *Still Life (Zatiši)* by Nemčík, and the sculpture by Kostka<sup>34</sup>.

In Poland one of the first thematic was the Nationwide Exhibition of Portraits of Work Leaders (CBWA Zachęta, 1949 and 1950)<sup>35</sup>. Portraits of this type can be seen as one of the symbols and idioms of Socialist Realism: the identification of art with propaganda, folklorism, derivation from Soviet models – the idea of the miner Alexei Stachan – the myth of the positive hero, typicality, etc., like by Aleksander Kobzdej *Portrait of Bronisława Urbanowicz* (1950, MNW)<sup>36</sup>. The portraits of the leaders were also shown at other exhibitions, such as the painting by Juliusz Studnicki *Gertruda Wysocka* (1950, MNW), the embodiment of the fight for peace<sup>37</sup>, from the exhibition "Visual Artists in the Fight for Peace" (November, 1950).

The most important of these were the All-Poland Fine Art Exhibitions (OWP), organized with similar energy and selection strategy by selection, but in a more neutral space (MNW or Zachęta)<sup>38</sup>. The first OWP (in March 1950) combined the formula of "showrooms" with the generic target action. Artists were offered scholarships for field trips to places of "work and social life" and advances for the completion of works, the sketches of which were first presented to the Qualification Committee. Current topics were also given, such as: revolutionary movement, building a new system, everyday and social life of working people<sup>39</sup>. 628 nearly 400 artists were selected out of three

<sup>33</sup> One might add, jokingly, that the end of history would not be announced until the 1990s by Francis Fukuyama – in a completely different point: that of Western liberal democracy F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York 1992.

<sup>34</sup> *I. přehlídka československého výtvarného umění...; Oravská priehrada – triptych Medvecká's repr. p. 18, Zatiši by J. Nemčík – p. 24; see: Katalog výstavy „I. přehlídka československého výtvarného umění 1949-51“*, "Moderní Dejiny" 20.2.2013, scan 19, 30, 39, [www.moderni-dejiny.cz/clanek/katalog-vystavy-i-prehlicka-ceskoslovenskeho-vytvarneho-umeni-1949-51/](http://www.moderni-dejiny.cz/clanek/katalog-vystavy-i-prehlicka-ceskoslovenskeho-vytvarneho-umeni-1949-51/) (access: 14.12.2021). Kostka's sculpture mistakenly under the title of Družstevníčka (literally: Cooperative member) – the correct title: *Radost* (SNG). Družstevníčka is the title of a plaster sculpture from 1952 (SNG); repr.: A. Kusá, *Prerušená píseň...*, 2019, p. 575.

<sup>35</sup> *Polskie życie artystyczne w latach 1945-1960*, t. 3: *Rok 1949*, A. Straszewska, A.A. Szablowska (eds), Warszawa 2012, p. 185; „Przegląd Artystyczny” 1949, no. 7-8-9, p. 13.

<sup>36</sup> The full title: *Bronisława Urbanowicz, a model student-employee of the Gdansk University of Technology*, see: *II Ogólnopolska wystawa portretów przodowników pracy i racjonalizatorów. Katalog wystawy, 21 VII-15 VIII 1950*, Warszawa 1950, cat. no 13; repr.: [Cyfrowe MNW, cyfrowe.mnw.art.pl/en/catalog/451722](http://Cyfrowe MNW, cyfrowe.mnw.art.pl/en/catalog/451722) (access: 14.12.2021).

<sup>37</sup> Repr.: J. Studnicki, *Gertruda Wysocka – przodownica pracy*, repr.: *Socrealizm blisko i daleko – galeria I*, [artdone.wordpress.com/2016/06/05/gerard-singer/juliusz-studnicki-gertruda-wysocka-przodownica-pracy-1950-mnw-national-museum-in-warsaw/](http://artdone.wordpress.com/2016/06/05/gerard-singer/juliusz-studnicki-gertruda-wysocka-przodownica-pracy-1950-mnw-national-museum-in-warsaw/) (access: 14.12.2021).

<sup>38</sup> CBWA Zachęta – Central Office of Art Exhibitions – was established in 1949; only the first edition OWP was presented in the National Museum in Warsaw (MNW).

<sup>39</sup> See: *Komunikat ZG ZPAP i Protokół z zebrania Komisji Kwalifikacyjnej I OWP*, [in:] K. Czerni, *Nie tylko o sztuce. Rozmowy z profesorem Mieczysławem Porębskim*, Wrocław 1992, pp. 198-201; J. Starzyński, *Wstęp*, [in:] *I Ogólnopolska Wystawa Plastyki. Katalog*, Warszawa 1950, pp. 7-13.

thousand submitted works. The doyen Wojciech Weiss received the highest prize for his painting *Manifesto*. There were exhibitions by both colourists such as Cybis, Eugeniusz Eibisch, Czesław Rzepiński, Zbigniew Pronaszko, Studnicki, recent modernists (Marek Włodarski, A. Kobzdej), as well as traditionalists and proponents of socialist realism (Helena and Juliusz Krajewski, Włodzimierz Zakrzewski), who have submitted self-criticism at the ZPAP Convention<sup>40</sup>. Representatives of all options were rewarded, but Cybis's condemnation proved that not every formula of soc-colourism would be accepted by the authorities<sup>41</sup>.

In October 1951, a meeting was convened at the State Council – one which, according to Wojciech Włodarczyk – closed the "heroic" period of Polish Socialist Realism; the documents show that the authorities appreciated the merits of the colourists, while Socialist Realism by the "Krajewski group" was considered superficial and declarative<sup>42</sup>. The distribution of awards at the 2nd OWP (from December 1951) already suggested the coming changes; the colourists, including Eibisch and the "Sopot School" were gaining in importance (Fig. 2)<sup>43</sup>. Various reckonings, not yet affecting the essence of the system, were made at the Fifth Congress of ZPAP (at the turn 1951/1952); Porębski took over the editorship of "Przegląd Artystyczny" from Krajewska. The third OWP (at the turn 1952/1953) was meant to be the result of both a modification of cultural policy, as well as an assumed change in art. The supposed liberalisation of criteria meant, e.g. the abandonment of a list of topics; however, those topics were emphatically suggested, like the 6-year plan and the Constitution of the People's Republic of Poland (1952). In an attempt to revive painting, works from an exhibition of contemporary French art presented in Warsaw<sup>44</sup>. Admission to the exhibition was still determined by criteria such as the works' ideological content, subject

<sup>40</sup> The Congress was attended, among others, by the Soviet and Czechoslovak delegation; on this occasion, a text by the Czech critic was published, see V. Šolta, *Wasze doświadczenie pomoże nam*, "Przegląd Artystyczny" 1954, no. 5-6, pp. 53-57.

<sup>41</sup> About selection and rejected paintings: A.A. Szablowska, "Salon odrzuconych" I. *Ogólnopolskiej Wystawy Plastyki w 1950 r.*, "Biuletyn Historii Sztuki" 2017, no. 3, pp. 567-608.

<sup>42</sup> W. Włodarczyk, *Socrealistyczny epizod. Warszawa 1933-Moskwa 1958*, [in:], *Warszawa-Moskwa / Moskwa-Warszawa 1900-2000. Katalog wystawy*, M. Poprzeczka, J. Jowlewa (eds), Warszawa 2004, p. 67; idem, *Socrealizm...*, p. 10; let us add that it was then that Eibisch delivered his famous speech about the beautiful garden of art trodden by barbarian bulls (clerks-dyletants) and the disastrous state of visual arts; see E. Kal, „Tego się nie krytykuje...”, p. 83.

<sup>43</sup> At the 2nd OWP, the first prize was not awarded, the second in the painting section went to the team of: Krystyna Łada-Studnicka, Teresa Pągowska, J. Studnicki, Stanisław Teisseyre, Józefa Wnukowa, Jan Wodyński, Hanna Żuławska, Jacek Żuławski, for the painting *Manifestacja 1-Majowa 1905 r.* (1951, oil/canvas, 300 x 557; MNp); individual Teisseire, Eibisch, Wojciech Fangor and several distinctions. On the painting and its criticism see: E. Kal, *Malarstwo gdańskie 1945-1959: Ludzie, słowa i obrazy*, Słupsk 2009, pp. 54-58.

<sup>44</sup> A biased show (spring 1952) organized by the French Communist Party of works by so-called progressive artists, including Picasso's *Massacre in Korea*; see K. Zychowicz, *Paryska lewica*

matter, and form. Prizes, mainly for portraits, went to colourists: Studnicki, Eibisch, Pronaszko and Krajewski.



Fig. 2. Krystyna Łada-Studnicka, Teresa Pągowska, Juliusz Studnicki, Stanisław Teisseyre, Józefa Wnukowa, Jan Wodyński, Hanna Żuławska, Jacek Żuławski, *1st May Manifestation 1905 / Manifestacja 1-Majowa 1905 r.*, 1951, oil/canvas, 300 x 557; MNp; as cited in: E. Kal, *Malarstwo gdańskie...*, p. 54

The grassroots attempt to correct the system and to counterattack can also be traced in Czechoslovakia at about the same time. Changes had already been announced at the 2nd All-State Conference of Czechoslovak Artists (October 1951 and July 1952). It did not yet lead to an expansion of the boundaries of the method, but there were shifts in the Union (ČSVU) and the editorial board of the journal “Výtvarne umeni”, several artists were rehabilitated (e.g. Benka, Milly), sectarianism and doctrinaire attitude were condemned<sup>45</sup>. In October 1952, in Bratislava, the 7th All-Slovak Exhibition was opened, which Zora Rusinova called a milestone on the road of the struggle for new art; exhibited works created as a result of target action and the best of those works were to represent Slovakia at a national exhibition. Awards on behalf of the government were given to, among others: Medvecká for *Children of Peace (Dieti mieru)*, Benka for the painting *Past and Present (Minulosť a súčasnosť, 1952, SNG)*, L’udovit Križan for *Harvest (Žatva, 1952)*, and B. Hoffsädter for *Landscape of the Liptov Hills (Liptovské hole, 1952, SNG)*<sup>46</sup>. During discussion of artists and critics (with Marian Vaross)

w stalinowskiej Warszawie: Wystawa współczesnej plastyki francuskiej w CBWA w 1952 roku, Warszawa 2014, pp. 27-42 especially.

<sup>45</sup> And members were divided by profession: architects and visual artists; A. Kusá, *Podiel inštitucii...*, p. 23.

<sup>46</sup> Z. Rusinová, *Súdržka moja vlast’...*, p. 372. The author also mentions the prize-winners J. Nemčík for the painting *Revolt in Krompachy (Krompašská vzbuřa)*, the sculptor Frano Stefunko for Bohúň

the commission's work and evaluation criteria were criticized and artists were for superficiality and pretending, etc<sup>47</sup>. Being access for the Slovak exhibition could have been facilitated by artists following the "wright way" or a declaration of not supporting the so-called bourgeois nationalism, personified by Novomeský. Nina Gažovičová pointed out, participation in the exposition was financially supported, guaranteeing the participation of Ferdinand Hložník, M.A. Bazovský or Jan Hala<sup>48</sup>. Despite all the obvious differences, the exhibition in Bratislava seems to have some analogies with the slightly later, 8th Exhibition of Gdańsk District: expectations for the group ("Sopot School"), the propaganda status that the authorities and critics media applied to local or regional events and accusations against artists were similar: avoiding "monumental" themes or focusing too much on landscape painting<sup>49</sup>.

In Bratislava, the central activities were reflected in a meeting of the Slovak section of the Union's activists in February 1953<sup>50</sup>. The 2nd Czechoslovak exhibition (*II. PČVU 1951-1953*), opened in May 1953, took place in a different situation after the death of Stalin (5 March) and Gottwald (14 March, 1953), the creation of a separate Ministry of Culture<sup>51</sup> and the beginning of the so-called new course under the presidency of Antonín Zápotocký<sup>52</sup>. There were only six Slovaks in the jury (Marian Vaross, Hoffstädter, Benka, Kostka, Milly and Pribiš); with the of more than 320 artists, the Slovak representation was similar to the previous one; however, the participation of, for example, L. Guderna might have indicated movements within the field of art<sup>53</sup>. *The critics*

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(portrait of the painter Peter Michal Bohúň) and J. Kostka for the sculpture *Spółdzielnica (Družstevníca)*, according to the catalogue presented at the 1st. Czechoslovakian Exhibition.

<sup>47</sup> The discussion of the exhibition is detailed in: A. Kusá, *Prerušená pieseň...*, 2019, pp. 235-238.

<sup>48</sup> N. Gažovičová, *Úlohové akcie...*, p. 46.

<sup>49</sup> The researcher emphasises that the 7th Slovak exhibition was the first one about which extensive texts were published in "Výtvarné umění"; A. Kusá, *Prerušená pieseň...*, 2019, p. 235; about the 8th exhibition in Sopot, a text in the form of a dialogue in the national press, see E. Grabska, R. Zimand, *Rozmowa o "szkole sopockiej" (na marginesie malarstwa na VIII wystawie okręgu gdańskiego ZPAP)*, "Przegląd Artystyczny" 1953, no. 4, pp. 32-43; more on this subject: E. Kal, *Malarstwo gdańskie...*, pp. 73-77; the exhibition was held in August-September 1953.

<sup>50</sup> At which architect Martin Kusý (Vice-President of the SČVU) repeated the accusations voiced by the state authorities and proposed a reorganisation of the commissioning system A. Kusá, *Podiel inštitucií...*, p. 23; Z. Rusinová, *Súdružka moja vlast'...*, pp. 375-376, A. Kusá, *Prerušená pieseň...*, 2019, pp. 255-256.

<sup>51</sup> Created from the Ministry of Education, Science and Arts (Ministretstvo školství, věd a umění) – headed by Zdeněk Nejedlý since 1948; see: *Dějiny Ministerstva kultury, Ministerstvo kultury České republiky*, web.archive.org/web/20080424084810/http://www.mkcr.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=1839 (access: 14.12.2021).

<sup>52</sup> On the details of the 'new course' policy e.g. A. Kusá, *Prerušená pieseň...*, 2019, pp. 250-253; J. Tomaszewski, *Słowacja...*, pp. 212-215.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *II. přehlídka československého výtvarného umění 1951-1953: Jízdárna pražského hradu – katalog: květen-říjen 1953*, Praha 1953.

were pleased that the withered formalism disappeared from the exhibition halls, but they still observed the influence of formless impressionism and the lack of joyful optimism – which was so necessary for the builders of the five-year plan<sup>54</sup>, and judged the landscapes – according to Marek Krejčí – as an escape from political figurative compositions. Based on the essence of the "method" imposed – critics in both countries discussed very similar expectations, contradictions, and confusion.

It is worth also juxtaposing the anniversary, national exhibitions concerning the war and the fight against fascism of and took place in the post-Stalinist, focusing on its contradictions and absurdities. "Ten Years of the Polish People's Army in the Visual Arts" (Zachęta, October-November 1953) comprised mostly painting, the theme itself imposed the still postulated multi-figure compositions. However, the main prizes were awarded ex aequo to Michał Bylina for his battle scenes (*Lenino* 1953, MWP) and Eibisch for his post-impressionist triple portrait, titled and format like the military scene (*After Promotion*, 140x210). The second prize went to young Gdańsk painters – Władysław Jackiewicz and Bohdan Borowski – for their joint composition *Sappers on the Vistula River*, with the vast landscape and group of figures in the background.

In Slovakia in 1954 the propagandist setting and the importance of the exhibition "The Slovak National Uprising in Visual Arts" (*Slovenské národné povstanie vo výtvarnej tvorbe 1944-1954*) stemmed from the fact that the uprising ensured Czechoslovakia's accession to the victorious camp over Germany in 1945 and strengthened the alliance with the USSR, with all its consequences. The exhibition with more than 250 works had a two-part character; in the historical part (1944-1953), the "formalist" and "forgotten" artists, such as C. Majerník, works showed the importance of the theme in Slovak iconography<sup>55</sup>. The contemporary section consisted mainly of works created as a result of a national competition. The highest grade went to F. Hložník for his series of paintings about the uprising, the second prize to Mudroch for his multi-figure painting *Kill Him! (Mor ho!)*, 1954, lost – whose central figure of a girl with a rifle can also be seen in the independent portrait *Guerrilla girl on guard at Rozsutec (Partizanka na strazi pod Rozsutcom)*, 1954, SNG); Hoffstädter's Liptov landscape, almost devoid of staffage, was quite exceptional<sup>56</sup>. Most paintings – as A. Kusá notes – were in the

<sup>54</sup> M. Krejčí, *Rok 1953 ve výtvarném umění*, [in:] *Osm let po válce. Rok 1953 v Československu*, J. Petráš, L. Svoboda (eds), Praha 2014, p. 215.

<sup>55</sup> *Slovenské národné povstanie vo výtvarnej tvorbe 1944-1954*, P. Biednik, Š. Bednár, K. Vaculík (eds), Bratislava 1954; August-September 1954 in Bratislava on Šafařík square (Šafaříkovo námestie), later relocated to Prague and Brno.

<sup>56</sup> While transporting the painting from Bratislava, the painter had an accident and died in hospital. The undamaged landscape was placed in the exhibition with a wreath and a black ribbon, which, as the researcher writes, strengthened the emotions of the exhibition; A. Kusá, *Prerušená pieseň...*, 2019, p. 269 (the title *Liptovská krajina is given here*) see also ibidem, p. 560 (the title *Liptovské hole is given here*).

spirit of the allegorical-realist tradition, both kitsch and valuable works<sup>57</sup>. Many awarded works included examples of "solid socialist realism of the Soviet type", (by Medvecká, Julius Balogh, Gejza Szalay, and others).

Almost simultaneously in Poland (June-September, 1954)<sup>58</sup>, the fourth – as it later turned out – last of the soc-exhibitions, preceded by the Session of the Council for Culture and Art, dominated by a discussion concerning cultural policy, hasty criticism etc. At the end of the session, minister Sokorski declared a turn in cultural policy and a revision of the criteria, but he – namely: socialist realism – was to remain unchanged<sup>59</sup>. According to the dialectic, the exhibition was supposed to be interpreted as evidence of clear progress and of another stage in the achievement of full socialist realism. However, this was contradicted by both the repertoire of works and the laureates: Eibisch for quasi-portrait in the soc-post-impressionism *Lenin and Spójnia* (1st prize), Krajewska (*Funeral of a Partisan*), Hanna Rudzka-Cybisowa (*Portrait of Dunikowski*) and Andrzej Strumiłło (*Our Land*), winners of second prizes<sup>60</sup>. Despite the predominance of landscapes, genre scenes and portraits, the exhibition was considered a progress in achieving the so-called realistic synthesis, the antithesis of formalism, schematism or naturalism. A lot of attention was paid to young artists, seeing in them the potential for shaping synthetic-realistic form and enthusiasm, also expressed in texts<sup>61</sup>.

Another Socialist Realist exhibition was to be a presentation of young art "Against War, Against Fascism" – called the Arsenal – as part of the 5th Festival of Youth and Students in Warsaw (July-August, 1955)<sup>62</sup>. The exhibition turned out to be a symbolic

<sup>57</sup> A. Kusá, *Prerušená pieseň...*, 2012, p. 73; the latter, The last winter (Posledná zima, 1955, SNG) was created a year after the initiative and presented at the Third Czechoslovak Exhibition.

<sup>58</sup> Just after the exhibition "Czechoslovak Visual Art of the 19th and 20th Centuries", which was presented at the Zachęta (April-May 1954); of works by nearly 70 artists included works by merely a dozen Slovaks, from contemporaries such as Belan, Hoffstädter, Medvecká, Vestenický, Mallý, and sculptures by Štefunko and Kostka; see: K. Vaculík, *Słowackie sztuki piękne w przeszłości i terażniejszości*, [in:] *Czechosłowacka sztuka plastyczna XIX i XX wieku*, V. Novotný, J. Tomeš, J. Loriš, K. Vaculík (eds), Praga 1954, pp. 70-83.

<sup>59</sup> About the session of the Council and the ZPAP Congress after the exhibition and discussion about the exhibition, see: E. Kal, „*Tego się nie krytykuje...*”, pp. 149-155.

<sup>60</sup> „Spójnia” was a student organization at the Jagillonian University for which Lenin gave a lecture in 1914. in Kraków; third prizes went to: Studnicki for his landscape (*Mill on the Radunia River*), Zdzisław Głowacki (*Collective Portrait*) and Marian Malina (*Housewife*).

<sup>61</sup> Celnikier's voice, for example, was typical: demanding party-oriented, socialist-realist, avant-garde art, see I. Celnikier, *Postimpresjonizm i ideowa awangarda (Artykuł dyskusyjny)*, "Przegląd Kulturalny" 1954, no. 40, p. 3.

<sup>62</sup> A demonstration of the superiority of socialism over capitalism, and the peaceful coexistence of the two systems Cf. e.g. The opening ceremony of the 5 WFYS in Warsaw. 1955, a movie with a commentary in Russian, 1,51', [www.youtube.com/watch?v=jYn90Z5Hw7g&t=111s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jYn90Z5Hw7g&t=111s) (access: 16.12.2021).

end of the socialist method in art and an anticipation of the political "thaw"<sup>63</sup>. Some works were shocking in their expression, deformation, and anti-aestheticism (Waldemar Cwenarski, Jan Dziędzióra, Hilary Krzysztofiak), existential fear, pessimism and commonness (Franciszek Starowieyski, Wróblewski). After years of censorship and the prevailing pathos-driven and heroic approach, there suddenly appeared images of trauma, the Holocaust, death and humiliation (Bartłomiej Kurka, Marek Oberländer), The Slovak exhibition on the anniversary of the SNP and the Arsenal indicate some affinities. Both were thematic with related themes and acted as catalysts for change, although they were intended as the result of a political-propaganda commissions.

Just as in Poland before the 4th OWP, attempts at reform without undermining the essence of the system determined the discourse around the 3rd. Czechoslovak art exhibition (Slov.: *III. prehliadka československého výtvarného umění*, May-September, 1955)<sup>64</sup>. In a certain sense, it was a consequence of the previous one. Of nearly 900 works, a set from the SNP exhibition, augmented by more recent works<sup>65</sup> served as a distinctive symbol of Slovak identity. In the evaluation by Czech critics shift in emphasis – from the declarative "right subject" to the form of the work – can be seen as symptomatic of the pre-"thaw" revision of the system<sup>66</sup>. At the end of 1955, an exhibition of art of the previous decade began (*Deset let československé lidově demokratické republiky ve výtvarném umění: Sochařství, monumentální umění a kresba*, December 1955-February 1956)<sup>67</sup>, the significance of which – despite all the differences – can

<sup>63</sup> The exhibition is considered a symbolic turning point in the history of Polish art; there is talk about the "Arsenal generation" and the "Arsenal circle"; see: *Krąg „Arsenalu 1955”*: *Malarstwo, grafika, rysunek z Muzeum Okręgowego w Gorzowie. Katalog wystawy*, J.A. Zieliński (ed.), Gorzów-Warszawa 1992; A. Osęka, *Poddanie Arsenalu: O plastyce polskiej 1955-1970*, Warszawa 1971.

<sup>64</sup> Participants included, among the others: Július Balogh, Benka, Čemický Belan, Doboš, Guderna, F. as well as V. Hložník, Hoffstädter, Fero Král', František Kudláč, Medvecká, Mudroch, Nemčík, Maximilián Schurmann, Martin Tvrdoň, Vesteňický – after: A. Kusá, *Prerušená pieseň...*, 2019, s. 272; see also: *III. prehliadka československého výtvarného umění*, Praha 1955.

<sup>65</sup> The motif of the uprising did not exhaust the repertoire of themes; for example, Martin Benka – already a national artist – presented a landscape with figural and architectural staffage, and the title *Construction of a Brickyard in Diviaki (Výstavba tehelne v Diviakoch*, 1953, PGU) can be considered declarative.

<sup>66</sup> Czech critics singled out the woodcuts by V. Hložník's *Road to Liberation (Cesta k oslobodeniu*, 1955) and Belan's *The final Winter (Posledna zima*, 1955), but they judged one version of Balogh's *SNP Proclamation (Výhlasenie SNP II*, 1954) to be inept and schematic; M. Lamač, *Figurální thema na III. přehliadce našeho výtvarného umění*, "Výtvarná práce" 1955, 3, pp. 3-4; cited after A. Kusá, *Prerušená pieseň...*, 2019, p. 480.

<sup>67</sup> For exhibition data, see: *Deset let československé lidově demokratické republiky ve výtvarném umění: Sochařství, monumentální umění a kresba*, Praha 1955. Report on the opening of an exhibition in the series, see: *Archiv ČT24 Umělci a totalita*, www.ceskatelevize.cz/ivysilani/10

also be compared to the Arsenal. Karol Vaculík, now advocated a broad formula of realism<sup>68</sup>, and the set included e.g. works by M.A. Bazovský, with simplified form and existential content, or decorative compositions from the 1940s by L. Fulla. There was also of examples of the expressive work of Majerník (died 1945) and the "national in content" paintings of Mally (died 1952). The 9th All-Slovak Exhibition (*IX. Celoslovenská výstava*, December 1955), which was held at the same time in Bratislava, confirmed the desire to revise the criteria, revealed fatigue and abandonment of large-scale themes, and was instead dominated by landscapes, which, as the researcher notes, proved to be the most enduring motif of the *sorela* convention<sup>69</sup>.

The 4th Exhibition of Czechoslovak Fine Art (*IV. přehlídka československého výtvarného umění*, December 1959 – February 1960), be considered a symbolic closing of the era of soc-exhibitions, there were no beneficiaries of *sorela*<sup>70</sup>.

**Themes and images** require a separate study, because they express both the universality of the "method" and the local idiom, as portraits of Stalin or presidents, from the painting by Guderna to Z. Pronaszko. Most themes are "common places", but a "framework theme" creates a space filled with specific content<sup>71</sup>. For example, the motif of a tractor, a symbol of progress, was interpreted differently by modernist or avant-garde painters (Guderna, Henryk Stażewski), colourist (Janusz Strzałecki), and (soc)realists (Krajewski, Zakrzewski, Čemický) (Fig. 3, 4). Industrialization and urbanization were the subject of "real allegories" by Benka, Nemčík, František Kudlač and others (Fig. 5). In Poland it was related also to the subject of the reconstruction of the country and the development of the so-called Recovered Territories (Fig. 6). Building was a metaphor for new life, youth and enthusiasm and Nowa Huta: a combine and a city in the neighbourhood of the noble city of Kraków became a symbol of the new: man, system, lifestyle, culture (Fig. 7).

116288585-archiv-ct24/213411058210006/obsah/244120-deset-let-lidove-democratickeho-cesko-slovenska-ve-vytvarnem-umeni-1956 (access: 16.12.2021).

<sup>68</sup> A. Kusá, *Stratégie vel'kých výstav...*, p. 81.

<sup>69</sup> In his introduction to the catalogue, M. Váross blamed the artists for them, and not, as the researcher writes, those who pushed the doctrine, because then he would have had to point the finger at himself; A. Kusá, *Prerušená pieseň...*, 2019, pp. 275-277.

<sup>70</sup> The exhibition in the riding hall of Prague Castle, and Manege was visited by a total of over 75,000 visitors; Slovakia was represented by Bazovský, Fulla, Guderna, F. and V. Hložník, Alojz Klimo, Kudlač, Matejka, Milly, Mudroch, Nemčík, Július Szabó, Želibský and also young artists like Oľga Bartošíková, Michal Jakabčic, Vladimír Kompánek; A. Kusá, *Stratégie vel'kých výstav...*, p. 80; eadem, *Prerušená pieseň...*, 2019, pp. 274-275; *IV. přehlídka československého výtvarného umění*, Praha 1959, www.dum-umeni.cz/iv-prehlicka-ceskoslovenskeho-vytvarneho-umeni/t6512 (access: 16.12.2021).

<sup>71</sup> About "framework theme" see: J. Białostocki, *Teoria i twórczość: O tradycji i inwencji w teorii sztuki i ikonografii*, Poznań 1961, p. 160-162.



Fig. 3. Ladislav Guderna, *Handing over the tractor / Odovzdávanie traktora*, 1950, tempera/ card, 52,5 x 100,5, SNG; as cited in: A. Kusá, *Prerušená pieseň...*, 2019, p. 546



Fig. 4. Janusz Strzalecki, *Preparation for ploughing at Kolibki State Agricultural Farm / Przygotowanie do orki w PGR Kolibki*, 1951, oil/canvas, 110 x 140, MNSz, photo. G. Solecki; courtesy of the National Museum in Szczecin



Fig. 5. Martin Benka, *Past and Present / Minulost a súčasnosť* (fragment 1952, oil/ canvas 40,7 x 50; Zvolen city; the frame from the documentary Martin Benka, directed by Ján Beer, Bratislava: Stúdio umeleckých dokumentarných filmov, 1953; [www.youtube.com/watch?v=EoPjacCO8hw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EoPjacCO8hw) (access: 15.12.2021)



Fig. 6. Henryk Stażewski, *On Integrated Lands / Na scalonych ziemiach*, 1951, oil/canvas, 130 x 93, MNSz, fragment; as cited in: S.P. Kubiak, *Daleko od Moskwy. Gérard Singer i sztuka zaangażowana*, Szczecin 2016, p. 108



Fig. 7. Andrzej Wróblewski, *Fajrant w Nowej Hucie / Knocking-off time in Nowa Huta*, 1954, oil/canvas 140 × 198; [starakfoundation.org/pl/kolekcja/fajrant\\_w\\_nowej\\_hucie\\_1954](http://starakfoundation.org/pl/kolekcja/fajrant_w_nowej_hucie_1954) (access: 15.12.2021); Starak Collection © Andrzej Wróblewski Foundation; courtesy of the Andrzej Wróblewski Foundation / [www.andrzejwroblewski.pl](http://www.andrzejwroblewski.pl) (access: 15.12.2021)

Examples of various monumental compositions – besides triptych by Medvecká – are: the “historical” painting of the “Sopot collective” or the decorative-propaganda design of Benka’s theater curtain<sup>72</sup>. The most important difference (but not the only one) in soc-iconography is the expanded cult of the Slovak National Uprising (*Slovenské národné povstanie*, SNP) in *sorela*, with almost complete silence concerning the Warsaw Uprising in Poland (also in August 1944). This point also needs to be analyzed.

Summarising the comparison of socialist realism in Poland and *sorela* in Slovakia, we can observe that – despite the difference in political status – they share a number of parallels, connected with the political situation in the so-called Eastern Bloc, the structure of artistic life, including the mechanism of granting concessions for being a part in it and exclusion from it, the artists’ attitudes, the themes and styles of their works, etc. On the other hand, it was the difference in the political system and the course of internal intra-party and socio-economic events, and – above all – the difference in artistic tradition that generated differences in exhibition policy

<sup>72</sup> Reproduction and description of the painting at *Databáze českého amatérského divadla*, [www.amaterskedivadlo.cz/main.php?data=opona&id=793](http://www.amaterskedivadlo.cz/main.php?data=opona&id=793) (access: 20.09.2021).

and commissioning strategy, and in detailed thematic and iconographic solutions. The common experiences influenced different formations and generations in different ways. It can be said that the Slovak "Generation 1909" went from modernism to *sorela*, while the Polish "Arsenal Generation" went from socialist realism to modernism<sup>73</sup>.

Coincidentally, while I was working on this text, an exhibition was opened at Zachęta art gallery entitled "Cold Revolution. Societies of Central and Eastern Europe in the Face of Socialist Realism, 1948-1959". The Slovak National Gallery was one of the partners of the event, and among the exhibits, the paintings by L. Guderna's (*Soldiers in the Club Room* and *Farewell*)<sup>74</sup> clearly stand out. This article may constitute a supplement of the issues addressed by this project, bringing closer – as if through a magnifying glass – the fragment of the area affected by the Cold Revolution.

## ABBREVIATIONS:

MNp – Muzeum Niepodległości w Warszawie / Museum of Independence in Warsaw

MNSz – Muzeum Narodowe w Szczecinie / National Museum in Szczecin

MNW – Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie / National Museum in Warsaw

MWP – Muzeum Wojska Polskiego w Warszawie / Polish Army Museum in Warsaw

OGD – Oravská galéria v Dolnom Kubinie / The Orava Gallery in Dolny Kubin

PGU – Považská galéria umenia v Žiline, Žilina / The Museum of Art in Žilina

SNG – Slovenská národná galéria, Bratislava / Slovak National Gallery, Bratislava

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<sup>73</sup> Generation 1909 – Conscience of the Epoch (Generácia 1909 – Svedomie doby) is the title of the exhibition organized by Karol Vaculik and Ludmila Peterajová (SNG, 1964); to it refers the project by Alexandra Kusá and Alexandra Homol'ová (SNG, June 2020-January 2021); see: *Generation 909,76. Exhibition, Term, Interpretation (Generácia 909,76. Výstava, pojem, interpretácia)*, [www.archinfo.sk/kalendarium/generacia-909-76-vystava-pojem-interpretacia-14035.html](http://www.archinfo.sk/kalendarium/generacia-909-76-vystava-pojem-interpretacia-14035.html) (access: 10.12.2021); about "Arsenal Generation" see above.

<sup>74</sup> *Zimna rewolucja. Społeczeństwa Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej wobec socrealizmu, 1948-1959*, curators: Joanna Kordjak, Jérôme Bazin, cooperation: Michał Kubiak, [zacheta.art.pl/pl/wystawy/cold-revolution](http://zacheta.art.pl/pl/wystawy/cold-revolution) (access: 15.12.2021); lecture by A. Kusá, *Who is afraid of Sorela?/ Kto sa boí Sorely*, [tl-ph.facebook.com/zacheta/videos/2867654453489760/](https://www.facebook.com/zacheta/videos/2867654453489760/) (access: 15.12.2021).

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Summary

**One 'method', different experiences?  
Socialist Realism in Slovakia and Poland.  
An attempt of comparison**

The study is probably the first attempt at comparing socialist realism in Poland and Slovakia, countries of different status during the time of the so-called Soviet bloc. It covers the period from approx. 1948 to approx. 1956 (when N. Khrushchev at the Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union initiated the "Taw"). It compares the beginnings and the way of introducing the "method" and the course of artistic life, the role of institutions (associations, universities) and, above all, the organization of exhibitions. There are numerous similarities within the so-called artistic field, but differences also exist. The common topics and style of work – for detailed analysis – are indicated: portraits of heroes, industrialization, symbolism of tractor, building and reconstruction, etc., and the main iconographic difference – theme of the Uprising.

