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The „Slovak Question” in Early Alexander Matuška’s Works

ABSTRACT

The presented thesis deals with the issue of the “Slovak question” in early Alexander Matuška’s works of 1930s. The author has in mind that A. Matuška’s attitude towards the Slovak question was shaped by his contacts with the Czech intellectual elite during his studies at the Charles University in Prague (1928-1934). She comes out of an assumption that the “Slovak question” has mainly a cultural character in early A. Matuška’s works.

In the first part of the thesis, the author tries to show the character of the discourse on the “Slovak question” in 1930s. By researching debates on the “Slovak question” in representative cultural journals of the time, the author tries to point out that the “Slovak question” debate was not only about the emancipation of a the Slovak nation, but also about the modernization of the Slovak society. A. Matuška’s early works are interpreted as a part of this effort.

Both the second and the third parts are devoted to those aspects of A. Matuška’s early works that the author considers as the critic’s proposals for the modernization of the Slovak society. The second part is focused on his rejection of the romantic paradigm of the Slovak culture and on the A. Matuška’s refusal of the then views on the past. The third part examines the Czech influence on A. Matuška’s early essays. A. Matuška identifies a romantic paradigm in the Slovak Conservative nationalistic environment, as well as the symbolic significance of Jozef Miloslav Hurban and Svetozár Hurban Vajanský, whose activities gained them a permanent, unchanging, and therefore rigid status in the national consciousness. From A. Matuška’s point of view, the way to modernize Slovak cultural identity is to „Europeanize” Slovak mentality through the influence of the Czech intellectual environment. In the third part, therefore, the author compares the concept of culture (presented by F.X. Šalda, a Czech literary critic) and A. Matuška’s progressive concept of Slovak identity.

A. Matuška’s position is a direct response to cultural events of that time. As a matter of fact, the critic rejects those cultural phenomena which hindered the Slovak cultural development during 1930s. That’s why, in the fourth part, the author concentrates on A. Matuška’s polemics against plagiarism and emphasises critic’s attitudes to cultural phenomena of that time. Matuška’s juvenile critical gesture is interpreted as a part of the Left discourse structure.