

## The Competent Overview and Synthesis of Czech (Slovak) Polish Studies

Roman BARON, Roman MADECKI, Renata RUSIN DYBALSKA a kolektiv, 2023: *Česká (a slovenská) univerzitní Polonistika do roku 1939. Od polonofilství k systematickému bádání o dějinách polského jazyka a literatury*. Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny a nakladatelství Historický ústav AV ČR.

[Roman BARON, Roman MADECKI, Renata RUSIN DYBALSKA et al., 2023: *Czech (and Slovak) University Polonistics until 1939. From Polonophile to systematic research on the history of the Polish language and literature*. Prague: Lidové noviny Publishing House and Publishing House Historical Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic.]

In 2023, when Czech Polish studies commemorated the centenary of its institutional university activity, the middle and younger generation of Polonists came up with a key publication that is important not only for Czech Polonistics, but also for Slavonic studies, linguistics, literary criticism and cultural studies as such. The truth is that Czech Polonistics has some unpaid debts towards itself. The last comprehensive, real Czech history of Polish literature by Karel Krejčí was published in 1953, after which only overviews followed as part of a wider range of publications, dictionaries or partial studies (Jarmil Pelikán, Krystyna Kardyni Pelikánová, Ludvík Štěpán, Roman Madecki and others). Nowadays, this debt has been gradually repaid, and the resolution of new generations of Czech Polonists is perhaps a guarantee that this activity will continue; after all, this monograph is proof of that. The authors created a concept of the history of Czech Polish studies and called it “university”, but the overall thematic scope, as they write in the introduction, had to be much broader, because Czech Polonistics, more or less specialized, has been cultivating Czech Polish studies in the Czech environment in essence – with a certain hyperbole – since the 18th century, if we leave aside the relations between the two literatures, which go back to the beginnings of belles lettres and reach even the oldest stage of Slavonic national literatures—i.e., the Cyrillic-Methodius period. That is why I would not choose a title with the word “university”, even though I understand that one of the reasons was the centenary of institutional Polonistics: science is developing on various levels, and pre-university Czech Polish studies were also at a solid level. In the opening part of the publication, the editors mention the Marian Szykowski Prize and Szykowski himself, who founded the first independent department of Polish language and literature in Prague during the first Czechoslovak Republic with the help and on the initiative of significant Czech professors-slavists, and explain the concept of the book and its structure. The terminus ad quem is the closure of Czech universities by the German Nazis by order of Konstantin von Neurath, protector of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, on November 17, 1939; the terminus a quo cannot be precisely determined, as it stems from the beginnings of Polish – Czech contacts, which go back to the deep Middle Ages. The institutional beginnings are connected with the academic year 1923-24, when the Department of Polish Language and Literature was founded in the Czech part of Charles University, and Polish language lecturers were established at Masaryk University in Brno and Comenius University in Bratislava.

The authors are rightly referring to the historical, ethnic and mainly linguistic proximity of the West Slavonic complex, and within the framework of the interpretation of Polish – Czech language relations they demonstrate language influences and borrowings that initially went

from the Czech language to Polish, later, especially in the Renaissance-Humanist period, from Polish into Czech. It can be said that Polish language influences were absorbed by Czech in waves or in stages; a huge wave appeared in the years of the Czech national revival and was also a consequence of Czech polonophilism. In the case of the influence of Czech, which in the past became a prestigious, perhaps even a fashionable language that also prevailed at the Polish royal court, the treatise Łukasz Górnický *Dworzanin polski/The Polish Courtier* from 1566 is usually mentioned (the Czech translation is from 1977, translated by Jaroslav Simonides). Around the same time, Jan Blahoslav spoke positively about Polish in his *Gramatika česká/The Czech Grammar* (1571) and highlighted the Polish influence in the church in particular. Velešlavín Czech adopts a number of Polish words, and Czech writing is also influenced by Polish literature: as seen in Bartoloměj Paprocký from Hlohov's works; Polish influences appear in Jan Amos Komenský's writings because of a long stay in Lešno; and later in Antonín Jaroslav Puchmajer's works, as demonstrated by the founder of independent Czech university Polish studies Marian Szyjkowski. It is necessary to appreciate the clarity and factual richness of the interpretation on this part. The influence of Polish is also manifested, and sometimes predominantly, in Czech translations from other literatures, which continues the national revival in the case of Josef Jungmann, who, for example, relied on the Polish translation of Jacek Idzi Przybylski when translating Milton's *Paradise Lost* – in addition to relying on the German translation; similarly, the influence of Polish appears in Jungmann's *Czech – German Dictionary*.

On the whole, Polish studies developed within the scope of comparative Slavonic studies (Dobrovský, Šafařík, Jungmann, Hattala, Hanka). There were entire comparative writings, as in the case of Šafařík's philologically conceived history (*Geschichte der slawischen Sprache und Literatur nach allen Mundarten* von Paul Joseph Schaffarik), works of lexicography or Polish grammar, such as in Hanka's; here perhaps Marian Szyjkowski judged too harshly. Less well known is the share of F. L. Čelakovský, which is connected with his activities in Vratislav/Wrocław and Prague. A number of aspects of Czech – Polish relations in this period were discussed by Krystyna Kardyni Pelikánová, a Polonist from Brno, in addition to the already mentioned M. Szyjkowski. Since the 1860s, regular Czech university Polonistics has been developed by full professors, Slovak linguist Martin Hattala and Henryk Suchecki. A special chapter is made up of Polish language lecturers Josef Kolář, Adolf Černý, Teofil Kowalski, Bohumil Karel Vydra, author of *Polish – Czech Dictionary* (1947) and *Czech – Polish Dictionary* (1953) and textbooks, which, however, already belong to the period after the Second World War.

An important part of the monographic volume is the chapter on polyglots and polonophiles, which includes, for example, František Vymazal (1841-1917), František Alois Hora (1863-1916), Josef Boleslav Podstránecký (1815-1893), the physician prof. Karel Chodounský (1843-1931), Vilém Vočadlo (1846-1913), son of associate professor of French philology Jan Vočadlo and father of the world-famous Anglicist Otakar Vočadlo, Josef Paulík (1860-1907), Josef Furech/Fuhrig (1898-1936), Emerich Čech (1870-1951), the well-known chemist Emil Votoček (1872-1950), Franciszka Sawierska, Ignác Kaczor and Ladislav Ptáček alias Vladislav Strnad. They were often experts in other things as well, natural scientists, teachers and high school professors who studied Polish as a hobby. The core of the further interpretation are Czech philologists for whom Polish and Polish literature were only one field of research: Jan Gebauer, Martin Hattala, Vladimír Čihák, Jan Máchal. In order not to overwhelm our report on this key work on the history of Czech Polonistics until the end of the 1930s, we will only mention philologists more loosely connected with Polish studies – František Pastrnek, Emil Smetánka, Jan Jakubec, Jiří Polívka, and Matija Murko.

The second chapter deals with the development of Czech and Slovak Polish studies in the years 1923-1939—i.e., the final stage of this stimulating work. The emergence of successor states after the defeat of the Central Powers—i.e., Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, a restored Poland,

etc.—meant a significant boom for Slavonic studies in general and also for Czech Polonistics. The creation of the Slavonic Institute in Prague and its publishing activities devoted to questions of Slavonic philology were also connected with this. Another centre of Polonistics was Charles University. The activities of Marian Szykowski, whose Prague research and academic career are described in detail here, including his appointment as a professor at Charles University, were of founding importance. Lectures in the framework of Polish studies before Szykowski's arrival and later are discussed here ex post, especially with regard to his pioneering work *Polská účast v českém národním obrození/ Polish Participation in the Czech National Revival* (vol. 1 1931, vol. 2 1935, vol. 3 was censored and the author did not agree to the publication, and therefore this work was published only after the war, and the author dedicated it to Helena Teigová, who was the translator of his “second trilogy” dealing with the Czech reception of the works by Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki and Zygmunt Krasiński).

The authors devote significant space to the critical response to Szykowski's work on Polish participation in the Czech national revival, which was recognized, laudatory, but also critical. Among the reviewers were, among others, Arne Novák, who came up with probably the most profound reflection of the book, and of course even at that time the young associate professor (docent) Karel Krejčí (1904-1979), who later built Prague Polish studies, to whom another sub-chapter of the publication is dedicated, and who more strongly integrated Polonistics into the Czech, Slavonic and European framework. The authors also rightly noticed Krejčí's methodological shift from Szykowski towards the sociology of literature and comparative studies.

Of course, the continuation of Polish language lectures was also important. The first lecturer at the newly established Department of Polish Language and Literature at Charles University was Miroslav Zelenka (1896-1957). Of interest is his life spent in Poland, where he was born, and in Moscow, where his mother worked for some time; he was a diplomat and taught various courses at the faculty, in which the number of participants grew rapidly at certain times, and he created several publications, among which stand out Polish texts for students of Slavonic philology and, of course, the article “Memories of Polish Emigration in Moscow”. Another lecturer was a Polish woman from Lviv, Izydora Šaunová, maiden name Horowiczová; the famous translator Vlasta Dvořáčková was once her student. At Masaryk University in Brno, which was officially established by a law of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1919, there could not be an academic tradition of Polish studies like in Prague, but there were old Polish – Czech relations associated with the city—for example, with Eliška Rejčka/Richenza/Rykša Elžbieta and the regional governor Jindřich of Lipá; there were visits by Polish kings and queens; there were also sadder things, such as when Polish insurgents were imprisoned in Špilberk/Spielberg, among whom were representatives of the nascent Ukrainian national movement. Some Poles, on the other hand, found refuge in Brno from persecution in their homeland—e.g., Aleksander Zawadzki (1798-1868), professor of physics at the University of Lviv/Lwów/Lemberg and dean of its Faculty of Arts, who was demoted for supporting radical members of the academic community in Lviv/Lwów/Lemberg. In Brno, he became vice-chairman of the natural science section of the Moravian-Silesian Society for Ploughing, Natural History and Homeland Studies, and later also vice-chairman of the Nature Research Society in Brno (Naturforschender Verein in Brünn), where the creator of the theory of heredity and founder of genetics Johann Gregor Mendel (1822-1884), delivered his first lecture about his discovery. Zawadzki died in Brno and is also buried here. Leaving aside the various translations from Polish in Moravian journals, there is mainly the activity of the polyglot František Vymazal with his anthology of Czech translations of Slavonic poetry, the second volume of which is dedicated to Polish poetry (1878). The authors of the treatise also mention the activities of the Polish association in Brno Ognisko Polskie (Polish Centre). Polonophile activity was also associated with František Alexander Zach (1807-1892); after the First World War there was a Polish – Czech club, which was active until the beginning of the Second World War in 1939. The founders of the Brno University Slavonic

Philology, abbreviated as the Slavonic Seminar, which was the founding workplace not only of the Faculty of Arts, but of the entire Masaryk University, were professors Václav Vondrák, Stanislav Souček, Arne Novák and extraordinary professor František Trávníček, later Jiří Horák, Frank Wollman, and Roman Jakobson – they all took Polonistics into account in their lectures.

The authors deal in detail with the content of the lectures of these Slavists; Poland from the historical point of view were dealt with by Josef Macůrek. In the Seminar the system of language lecturers was represented by Alois Gregor (1888–1971), a grammar schoolteacher at the Girls' Real Gymnasium in Brno, later a Czech language lecturer (from 1931/32), in the years 1946–1959 an associate professor/docent for Czech and Slovak languages. The Russian courses were led by Václav Petr (1848–1923), later from 1923 by Sergij Vilinskij (1876–1850); the Serbo-Croatian lectureship was provided by Arthur Kallus; in 1923, the Polish language lectureship was established with the lecturer Maxmilián Kolaja (1883–1966), who continued his activities after the reopening of Czech universities after 1945. A probe into the post-war development of Polish studies at the Masaryk University, renamed the Jan Evangelista Purkyně University (after all, the latter also had a significant impact on Czech-Polish relations, as evidenced by the monographic study of Jarmil Pelikán, 1928–2017, *Purkyňova spolupráce s Polákyl/Purkyně's Cooperation with the Poles*, 1990), showed that even in the most difficult times Brno Polonistics were preserved though within different organizational units.

Quite organically, the interpretation of the history of the Czech Polish studies also includes the development in Slovakia, where the situation was more complicated: the Comenius University in Bratislava, founded in 1919, began working in 1921 in very modest circumstances, and built Slavonic studies with Czech professors, with the exception of Jozef Škultéty, headed by Miloš Weingart and Albert Pražák. From the treatise we learn the well-known fact that Weingart's disciples were the Slovaks Ján Stanislav and Šimon Ondruš. The connections between Czech and Slovak university Slavonic studies, including Polonistics, are obvious, and in different periods they both functionally complemented each other; from this point of view, in a book on the history of Czech Polish studies, the excursions on Slovak development are very important. Slavonic studies in Bratislava not only had a significantly lesser tradition, but also a less extensive range of fields not only than at Charles University, but also than at Masaryk University. No less significant is the initiatory role of the future leading Brno Slavist and comparatist Frank Wollman, who obtained an associate professor/docent position in Bratislava and later became an extraordinary professor there, even before his appointment as a full professor in Brno. In 1924, he travelled to Poland and tried to build a network of Slavonic language lectureships in Bratislava similar to that in Prague. After his departure to Brno in 1928, he built Slavonic literary scholarship and comparative studies there and continued to do so in other contexts after 1945.

A problem in this part of the text is the explicit failure to mention Wollman's folklore collections published in the 1990s, though they are also mentioned in the reference to Hana Hlůšková's publications. This is probably the weakest point of this monographic study: especially in the general subjects of secondary literature, we find a lot of white space—i.e., a number of important items, even if they are not directly Polonistic, but contextually Slavonic, and this applies to most of the thematic sections; I would say that this high quality monographic, multi-layered, research-intensive work has some biographical slips in the data that are omitted—e.g., some editors' names are not mentioned here, a whole new edition and an important study elsewhere. As the development after 1945 showed, Polish Polonistics more intensively mediated the influence of Polish literary scholarship on Slovak and also on Czech literary scholarship: for example, the Slavists-comparatists from Brno contributed to the only European genological journal (dealing with the history and theory of literary genres) in Europe since its inception in 1958, but “genology” as a special discipline was at first theoretically and

historically commented upon, analyzed and developed in the Czechoslovak environment by the Slovak Polonist Jozef Hvišč (1935-2023).

What, on the other hand, increases the quality of the publication is another part, which is presented in the first chapter, "*The First Textbooks and Translations*", including language textbooks, attempts at the synthesis of literary history and translations from Polish literature. There is also a high-quality overview of Czech-Polish cooperation and Polish clubs and organizations in various Czech and Moravian cities, especially in Prague—e.g., Ognivo (1869-1871), Stowarzyszenie Polskie w Pradze/Polish Society in Prague (1880-1884) Ognisko Polskie w Pradze/Polish Centre in Prague (1881-1912), Klub Polski w Pradze/Polský klub v Praze/The Polish Club in Prague (1887-1940), Společenský česko-polský klub v Praze/The Social Czech-Polish Club in Prague (1909-1938), Akademické kolo přátel Polska v Praze/The Academic Circle of the Friends of Poland in Prague (1924-1933), in Brno this was Ognisko Polskie/Polská beseda/Polish Centre and, generally speaking, also the associations for the support of war refugees (1914-1918) and student associations, including the Czech-Polish Club in Brno (1925-1939). The activity of the Czech – Polish Club in Moravian Ostrava (1929-1940) was also significant, although probably its situation was most difficult due to the vicissitudes of Polish – Czech relations in the given area. The activity of these associations also shows that the Czech-Polish, or Czechoslovak-Polish relations were not idyllic, they were often contradictory and sometimes even tragic.

If the first three chapters were devoted to the evolution of Czech-Polish relations and especially academic Polish studies in the Czech lands and Slovakia, and the fourth chapter deals with textbooks, attempts at linguistic and literary synthesis and associational activities, the fifth, extremely valuable, contains literary portraits of important Czech Polonists, polonophiles and generally people active in the sphere of learning about Poland, its life and its spiritual products. These are personalities with whom the reader gradually became acquainted in the first three chapters of this rare monographic study. Among other things, there are very well-crafted, truly detailed literary portraits with very important data about their lives and works, including secondary literature, awards, activities in scientific societies, etc. Jan Evangelista Purkyně, Jaroslav Goll, Jan Máchal, Jiří Polívka, Marian Szykowski, Jiří Horák, Frank Wollman, Julius Heidenreich-Dolanský, Karel Krejčí appear here again. In the *Spiritus movens* section there are, among others, Dominik Alois Špachta, František Alois Hora, František Vymazal, Edvard Jelínek, Adolf Černý, Maxmilián Kolaja, Iza Šaunová, maiden name Horowicz, translators include, among others, František Kvapil, Bořivoj Prusík, Emanuel Masák, polyglot Otto František Babler, Helena Teigová, maiden name Pešlová.

The sixth chapter of *Místa posledního odpočinku českých Polonistů a polonofilů z pohledu historika*/The Last Resting Places of Czech Polonists and Polonophiles from a Historian's Point of View is originally conceived. Its authors Artur Patek, Roman Baron, and Roman Madecki divided it into "The Cemeteries as a Historical Source, The "Reading" of the Last Resting Places and The Attempt at Documentation" with photographs of these places of worship. The conclusion of Roman Baron and Roman Madecki and English and Polish summaries together with a list of abbreviations, a list of authors and portraits, sources of pictorial accompaniment, sources and literature and a name index close the entire book. In addition to the high value of the publication as a whole, regardless of minor critical remarks, it is necessary to highlight some authors who are mentioned for individual texts, even at the risk of omitting someone. They are mainly the chief authors Roman Baron, Roman Madecki and Renata Rusin Dybalska, who covered the main parts of historical, linguistic and literary studies, wrote the largest, literally gigantic volumes of the text, but also others—e.g., the author of excellent treatises on literary history Michala Benešová; Zuzana Obertová, who explored and comprehensively dealt with Polonistics at Comenius University, Bratislava; Martyna Radłowska-Obrusník, who

described the genuine Way of the Cross of the Czech-Polish Club in Moravian Ostrava; as well as a substantial number of authors of the portraits that are given in a special list. Regardless of the succinct English and Polish summaries, I would warmly recommend the main authors and editors of the present publication to ensure a translation of the book, not only into Polish, which sounds logical, but also into English, as it is a matter not only of general Polonistics, but also of general Slavonic studies.

*Ivo Pospíšil*

Institute of Slavonic Studies  
Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University  
Ivo.Pospisil@phil.muni.cz

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