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## Michal Miloslav Hodža: his national-emancipation and political initiatives<sup>1</sup>

The professional ambition of the study is to present the ethnic-emancipatory and national-political initiatives of Michal Miloslav Hodža, one of the representatives of the Slovak national movement in the revolutionary years of 1848-1849, co-creator of the modern literary Slovak language project and author of *Matora* – the most extensive poetic work of political content in Slovak literature. The study is divided into four relatively separate parts. The first of them follows the educational path of M. M. Hodža to humanism, national-revivalist consciousness and theoretical reflections on issues of a natiological nature. The second part deals with Hodža's complicated process of looking for a modern form of the Slovak literary language. In the next part, the national-political activities of M. M. Hodža in the revolutionary years of 1848-1849 are analysed. The last part of the study is a political-science interpretation of the literary work *Matora* which represents the key life balance of M. M. Hodža implemented outside of public policy.

**Key words:** Michal Miloslav Hodža, Slovak issue, linguistic modernism, Messianism, *Matora*

### Introduction

The Slovak nation-forming elite which attempted the linguistic, cultural and political modernisation of the Slovak nation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was considerably differentiated. It differed not just in political and social orientation, type of socialisation, views on the epoch of culminating Romanticism, nation-specific nationalisms based on the language-cultural-ethnic principle, civic modernisation of the Habsburg Monarchy, but also on the results of the Revolution in 1848-1849. They also differed in their views on Slavic reciprocity. Some of them inclined to innovation of the Slavic idea on the Austro-Slavic principle, others rejected it as an outdated cultural and political vision, and still another part favoured the East Slavic political-cultural concept led by Russia. The common feature of all of them was that they tried – each in their own way – to reflect on the issues of the spiritual and political-economic life of their own community. During that period, several lines of opinion on these issues crystallised. The generation of authors of “Všeslávie” (Pavol Jozef Šafárik, Ján Kollár, Ján Hollý, Karol Kuzmány, and František Palacký,

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who was active in Slovakia at that time until 1823) tried to self-reflect on the Slovak nation as a historical entity through the Slavic whole. The pragmatic line of Slovak Romanticism dominated by Ľudovít Štúr and Jozef Miloslav Hurban developed ethnic-political ideas and ideals within the framework of realistic politics and the search for an appropriate relationship between political goals and the political force needed to achieve those goals. Liberal-oriented intellectuals led by Ján Palárik did not perceive the Slovak issue in a narrow national framework, but involved it in broader liberal-romantic projects. The Messianic line of the Slovak nation-forming generation (consisting of Michal Miloslav Hodža, Peter Kellner-Hostinský, Samo Bohdan Hroboň, and Pavol Hečko) was connected by the spiritual sphere, but they did not have a unified opinion on nationalisation issues. While the Hroboň-Hečko “pantheological” line devoted more to the “divine-human” principle, the Messianic “mythologists” Hodža and Hostinský did not avoid the political objectivity of the period either.

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### **Education to Humanism and National-revival Awareness and to Reflections on Issues of a Natiological Nature**

The path of Michal Miloslav Hodža (22/09/1811–26/03/1870) of personal, ethnic-political and cultural-artistic life led through education. At a folk school in his village of Rakša, later in Mošovce, he met teachers who maintained the cultural traditions of the Turiec region. In Mošovce, he was being taught by Adam Burian, an expert on Hungarian political conditions and Czech and Slovak literature. In Banská Bystrica, where he studied at a lower grammar school, he noticed that the teachers of that school paid more attention to their knowledge of and approach to teaching duties than to the differences in status among the pupils. In addition to the humane behaviour of teachers, their professional qualities and cultural interests, he was also inspired by expressions of national-revival consciousness and a sense of reflection on issues of a natiological nature in some of them. From G. Koch, his teacher of German, whom he respected very high, he learned, for example, that Slovakia is the cradle of the Slavs. This information fascinated him so much that he noted it in his biographical sketch (more details on that in Hučko 1970, pp. 10 – 13).

The study in the upper classes of the District Grammar School in Rožňava (1826 – 1829) left him with a lasting memory of the manifestations of Hungarian nationalism in the faculty, but also

of friendly relations with three future younger representatives of Slovak national politics – Samo Chalupka and Jonáš Záborský (*ibid.*, pp. 14 – 16).

He witnessed a political tendency to promote Hungarian as a language of instruction in schools when he came to study at the Evangelical College in Prešov in 1829. He first studied Kollár's most famous lyrical-epic composition written in the Biblical Czech, *Slávy dcéra* (The Daughter of Sláva) (1824), which in the following years became for him not just a source of national awareness, the beginning of his Slavic and Czechoslovak identity, but also a path to Herder's humanitarian principle of the free development of nations and the well-known work of Pavol Jozef Šafárik *Dejiny slovanskej reči a literatúry podľa všetkých nárečí* (History of Slavic Language and Literature by All of the Dialects) (1826). In particular, Šafárik's work opened up his knowledge horizon of the Slavs, of their ethno genesis, but also of their contribution to the creation of European culture together with the Romanesque and Germanic nations. He was also interested in Šafárik's proposals for implementing the idea of Slavic reciprocity. He also noticed that P. J. Šafárik did not primarily focus on the elaboration of his ideological-political conception, which means that his research into the literary and cultural unity of the Slavs understood as reciprocity did not have political ambitions. It was not about attaining a change in the existing social State formations or about political reflection on the independent national individuality of the Czech and the Slovak nations. His efforts were related to: a) reflection of natiological concepts (nation, homeland), which closely corresponded to the national self-awareness of Slavic nations and its political consequences in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, b) the philological concept of Slavic reciprocity, which was an expression of ethnic-emancipatory movement in the Slavic world in that period (more details in Gbúrová 2017, pp. 31 – 40). During his studies in Prešov, he significantly deepened his knowledge of philosophy. He was particularly interested in the solution of ethical issues in the philosopher and Enlightenment thinker Baruch Spinoza. It should be added that he did not sufficiently penetrate his complicated philosophical theses or his ethical views. He no longer returned to this philosopher, not even, for example, to some other ones, the so-called "cursed" philosophers (W. L. Wekhrlin, K. F. Bahrtdt, etc.) after the revolutionary years of 1848-1849, because he associated him with materialism and atheism, which was incompatible with his Messianic visionariness and mysticism (more details in Hučko 1970, pp. 17 – 18).

In 1832, Hodža moved from Prešov to Bratislava to study theology at the renowned Evangelical Lyceum which played an important role in the development of Slovak culture and education in Slovakia. Since 1803, the *Department of Czech-Slavic Language and Literature* was active in it<sup>2</sup>, which was the only one of its kind in the whole of Historic Hungary. He met a significant Slovak scholar, Juraj Palkovič, and also met Ján Kollár and Pavol Jozef Šafárik in that milieu. It follows from his poetic work at the time that he had a similar view of Slavdom as Ján Kollár (Gbúrová 2018, pp. 17 – 44), while in the Napoleonic issue discussed at that time he inclined to the opinion that Napoleon was a hero, a liberator of nations. On the politically sensitive issue of Russia's relationship with the Polish insurgents of 1830, he sided with the Polish uprising. From

<sup>2</sup> Department of the Evangelical Lyceum in Bratislava, established in 1803 from the Institute of Czechoslovak Language and Literature (1801–1803) with the intention of teaching future priests and teachers the Biblical language (*Katedra reči a literatúry československej* 2017).

the viewpoint of Hodža's future national-political activities, his election as the Vice-president of the self-educational student association of the *Czech-Slavic Society* should be considered important, where from the beginning he advocated the need for a unified written language for Czechs, Moravians, and Slovaks. Like Šafárik, he meant Czech as that language (he explicitly subscribed to it in the poem *Czechoslovak Language of 1833*), which he characterised as a language of "reciprocity", "generality", and the bearer of "revealed truth" (Hučko 1970, p. 26). Hodža confirmed his Slavic orientation just before leaving Bratislava (the other Štúr followers did the same on a well-known trip to Devín on 24 April 1836) that he added to his name of Michal also the Slavic name of Miloslav. In connection with the Czech-Slavic Society, it is necessary to mention Alexander Boleslavín Vrchovský (1812–1865), who, as a member of a secret Polish revolutionary association, influenced the tasks of this self-educating society in the sense that he enforced two political demands among them: social reform of the feudal system and the creation of a federation of free and equal Slavic republics (Alexander Boleslavín Vrchovský... 2020; Buchta 1971, pp. 43 – 49). Hodža not only agreed with these tasks, but after the dissolution of the Society he began to engage in the secret political association *Vzájemnosť*, which was founded in 1837 by the aforementioned Vrchovský (Butvin 1963, pp. 3 – 18).

In the same year, Hodža took over the priesthood in Liptovský Mikuláš, where the Hungarian middle nobility and nationally lukewarm impoverished yeomanry had a leading position in economic and political life, while there was no Slovak politically influential social class. Only the intelligentsia, which created a strong cultural tradition in that city for many years, had the preconditions to become such a layer. Two men were an important cultural stimulus for it: the main ideologue of the Slovak national revival, Ján Kollár, and the bookseller and nationally conscious yeoman Gašpar Fejérpataky-Belopotocký, with whom Hodža met, became friends and cooperated in developing the ideas of the above-mentioned secret society *Vzájemnosť* (Hučko 1965). In that cooperation, Hodža's efforts to ecumenically bring together the Christian intelligentsia in Liptov should be highlighted, who, by establishing associations of moderation and Sunday schools, participated in the elimination of grave social ills (especially drunkenness) of the inhabitants of that milieu, but also in their education in edifying and cultural skills and some practical crafts (wood production, tannery, agricultural production, etc.). Hodža believed, like Jonáš Záborský, that educating the popular strata means that they will be more nationally aware, more civically mature, while they themselves will be able to find a way out of their socially difficult position (Gbúrová 2018, pp. 191 – 214).

Hodža, theoretically well prepared by the school for public and political work, began to closely observe the political life in Hungary. He thought intensively about ways to paralyse the escalating Hungarian political demands for the introduction of Hungarian not just as the official language of secular and ecclesiastical administration and the judiciary, but also as the language of instruction at all the levels of schools. He believed, unlike other members of *Vzájemnosť* (Reciprocity), that help should be sought from the monarch. He therefore welcomed the participation in the first, albeit unsuccessful, petition against the growing Magyarisation of the Hungarian Parliament, which called for the repeal of regulations on the Magyarisation of the Church and education. Hodža's second national-political initiative ended with a similar result: together with G. Belopotocký, he prepared a plea of the Liptov Seniorate for the reconstruction of the *Department of Czech-Slavic Language*

*and Literature* at the Bratislava Lyceum on a new basis and with new educational and national-emancipation objectives. Under the influence of the new Superintendent General of the Evangelical Churches and their schools, Count Zay, the Sub-Danubian District Convention rejected the petition on 14/07/1840. This was one of the main reasons for the internal schism within *Vzájomnosť* (Reciprocity) and its gradual demise (Hučko 1970, pp. 58 – 62).

This fact did not discourage Hodža from other national-political initiatives, especially in the field of codification of the national language, which, after the above experience, began to be considered, similarly to Ludovít Štúr, as an image of the national spirit and the basis of Slovak national identity. As early as 1841, he revived the project of preserving the *Department of Czech-Slavic Language and Literature* at the Bratislava Lyceum from 1840, indeed, with a modified objective: increasing the quality of language culture (in this case still in Czech, which he considered the classical language of the Kralická Bible adapted to new times and their requirements; its other advocates, in particular the Superintendent Pavol Jozeffy who evaluated it as a living ecclesiastical language of Slovak Evangelicals) of future priests (more details in Gbúrová 2009, p. 54). Unfortunately, even this initiative of Hodža was not successful and the General Convention in Bratislava rejected it at its meeting on 08 – 10 September 1841 on the grounds that it was an anti-patriotic and pan-Slavic activity.

### Addressing the Language Issue of Slovaks

In 1842, Hodža accepted a lead in deputation to the monarch in Vienna. Through the plea of Evangelical intelligence in Slovakia he asked the monarch to prevent the violent Magyarisation of the Slovaks (Hučko 1970, p. 71). It should be added that the fate of the petition ended with the transfer from Vienna to Buda to the Palatine Pavol Jozeffy who did not judge it positively (*ibid.*, pp. 74 – 75). His decision was the impetus for the implementation of Štúr's political programme, within which the language issue of Slovaks was also addressed (more details in Gbúrová 2018, pp. 61 – 84). Štúr recognised the degree of politicality in deciding what language should be spoken to the Slovak nation in an effort to raise it comprehensively, in which language to educate, to organise its own political and cultural life. As part of Štúr's political strategy, several historically important consultations on Slovak took place. M. M. Hodža also took part in them. At a meeting in Hlboké (11-16 July 1843), Štúr and J. M. Hurban tried to win sides of M. M. Hodža, who was until now a supporter of the Czech language, more precisely the speech of the Kralice Bible adapted to the conditions of the new age, to introduce Central Slovak as a written language. Two facts were important for Hodža's future decision to develop Štúr's concept of standard Slovak. The first fact was related to Hodža's knowledge that Štúr's action would prevent the linguistic division of Slovaks and that Štúr was ready to make reasonable compromises in the area of codification of standard Slovak.<sup>3</sup> The second step must be connected with Štúr's initiative to develop

<sup>3</sup> As for the reform of the Štúrian literary language, it should be noted that M. M. Hodža also took part in it with his writings *Epigenes Slovenicus* and *Větin o slovenčine*. In them, he rejected the phonetic transcription of Slovak and preferred etymological orthography. In addition, he theoretically justified why Cyrillic is the best option for the Slovak language.

the national identity of Slovaks not just through language, but also through association activities (more details in Gbúrová 2016). Hodža accepted Štúr's concept so much that he also accepted the position of chairman of the *Tatrín* association, which is considered to be one of the most important manifestations of the cultural policy and organisational efforts of the Štúr group and the first all-Slovak cultural institution to develop national activities with Štúrian Slovak. It should be emphasized that Hodža performed this activity very responsibly and selflessly throughout the duration of the *Tatrín*, i.e. until 1848. At the same time, it should be added that although the association was not officially approved, it did not deter Hodža from developing his activities in the spirit of national political requirements of the Štúr followers (Hučko 1970, pp. 82 – 87).

### Hodža's Defensive Activities of the Slovak Nation

In 1847, the thirty-five-year-old M. M. Hodža published a political pamphlet with the attractive title *Dobruo slovo Slovákom súcim na slovo*, by which he attempted a cultural-political dialogue primarily with the Slovak public, especially with opponents of the national literary language (Hodža 1847; Hodža 2010). This text also stood at the beginning of Hodža's natiological work: In 1847 he published the Latin book *Epigenes slovenicus – Potomok slovenský*, (Slovak Descendant), in 1848 he wrote the work *Větin o slovenčine* and ended a series of such thematically oriented writings in the same year with the German brochure *Der Slowak*.

*Dobruo slovo...* was written in response to the role of the *Tatras* and the role that Hodža held in this nationwide cultural institution. The text of Hodža's work was assessed and approved at the Third General Assembly of the *Tatrín* on 16-17 September 1846, which means that it was a "sui generis" collective opinion of the representatives of "unity of lovers of the nation and Slovak life", a work of national defense. In this case, it was a defense of codified Slovak and the *Tatrín*. The basic starting point of Hodža's defense is the principle of equality. This resulted in the knowledge that the Slovak nation and its language are equal and equal with other nations and their languages. Hodža's defense was objective. On the one hand, he was critical of his own nation, on the other hand, he defended his authentic culture (including the new national language as the most important ethnic-identifying feature) against all "defectors" and "thugs" and "humiliators". In this work, Hodža manifested himself as a nationalist who understood the importance of natiological theory, but also of political-educational work for the development of national life. He realised not just the importance of theoretically developing national defence ideas, but also putting them into everyday practice. For this reason, he demanded that the idea of national life be realised on an "action" Christian basis, that is, in the combination of edification, education, and Christian teaching. The *Tatrín* Cultural Association, which successfully attempted a leading position in the Slovak national movement, was an example in this regard (it was no coincidence that he devoted two chapters of his work to it). He emphasised that Slovaks were only in this

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Martin Hattala, the author of Slovak grammars, relied on Hodža's conclusions (*Gramatica linguae slavonicae*, 1850; *Krátká mluvnica slovenská*, 1952), whose orthographic, phonological, and morphological rules have become the basis of the current language standard (cf. Krajčovič 1980; Jóna 1985; Pauliny 1983; Kačala 1994; Žigo 2001).

way reworked to the essence of the issue of law and obligation to be a self-confident nation. Only from this position will they gain knowledge about the essence of the term Slovak nationality, as well as about its politically distorted interpretations of the time. It was mainly about explaining nationality according to State-political borders, promoting the concept of one Hungarian nationality for all nations that are part of Historic Hungary. In this context, Hodža pointed out the fundamental difference between the free expansion of the Slovak language competences, including Hungarian as one of the languages of Historic Hungary, and the State concept of a single-language Hungarian complex, which was sought by representatives of the Historic Hungarian political elite.

As for the very concept of nationality, he explained it in the context of duty and law. The concept of duty is a special contribution of Hodža to natiological theory. We meet it in almost all his works. He perceives this concept as man's free will (comparing it to food without which man cannot live) as a *"virtue of charity"* and binds it to the Christian concept of faith. To be free means to become a *"God-like"*, to have an inner need – faith – to fulfill the will of God or *"Duty of life"*. In other words, where there is a Christian faith, there is a way to true humanity, to the *"commitment"* of man to what is good. Every person endowed with the *"virtue of charity"* is obliged to *"enlighten"* oneself nationally, to become a *"human man"*, to become a member not just of a nation but of a *"national nation"*. Nationality is, according to Hodža, the *"flower"* of a nation, something like an added value to the general concept of nation. *"When a nation has no nationality, it is merely a "narod'enstvo" (birthright) (short a); when it has a nationality, let's call it a "národ'enstvo" (long á)."*<sup>4</sup> „Národ'enstvo” of the nation is therefore the true dimension of humanity and no one has the right to question it. Against this background, Hodža objected<sup>5</sup> against

<sup>4</sup> *"Birthright itself has never raised any nation high, no matter how hard the people might have been trying to do so; it indeed often humiliated, frowned it with misfortune and shame. In a birthright of such a position, the nation knows nothing of itself, does not put anything on itself, does not feel itself, does not respect itself; in fact, it often hates itself foolishly. It is only an ape for the other national nations; it prefers to welcome every foreign language to its own; whatever it is doing well, it is doing it out of coercion from other nations, not of its own incentives; its children grow up into the educated life, into an estate, into an office, feeling ashamed of it, it becomes the object of slander and ridicule for others; it is made a loser, a weakling, and a nobody. But God also punishes it until it comes to its awareness and contributes to its birthright ... So God bangs and strictly punishes the Slovaks, the Croats, but especially the Slovaks, whose transparent, hollow birthright is standing in all its ugliness before our tearful eyes, as a skin of a kind of a frayed, shabby, deeply wrinkled skin of a hard working creature. Because God allowed the havoc of Magyars on them to cast dirt and ridicule on everything that is Slovak in capital and regional assemblies, in their writings and in their newspapers, at home and in public. Severe punishment from God this is, but well deserved one! And it will last until the Slovaks attain their nationality; until their higher and lower lords, priests, burghers, peasants, truly, unanimously, and in one language, contribute to their own national edification and education."* (cf. Hodža 1847, pp. 28 – 29)

<sup>5</sup> He raises four objections. The first objection is related to the confusion of the political and the natiological argument (mixing the State and its civil laws with the nation living in that State with its ethnic-genetic development). Hodža emphasizes that it is not possible to speak of the Historic Hungarian (Hungarian) nation, but only of Historic Hungary and its ethnic and social communities. The second objection concerns those who request a change of Slovak nationality to Hungarian on the basis of Hungarian State Law. In this context, he made a critical remark on some Hungarian laws in the field of natiology which achieve a low level of legitimacy. The third objection was based on the previous objection, him dealing with the issue of whether Slovaks should adopt Historic Hungarian nationality, because *"we have food, vesture, and potion from the Historic Hungarian country."* He considers this issue to be completely unfounded and gives it a clear answer. The last objection responds to the inaccurate, but politically deliberately nurtured information that *"Vienna"* wants to see Slovaks and eventually the Germans were Magyarised. In response, he quotes State Chancellor Lothar

political efforts to promote only one nationality in Historic Hungary – Historic Hungarian, which he synonymised with the term of Magyar. On the subject of nationality, he emphasised that when a nation has its responsibilities, it also has its rights, in particular the rights of edification and education.

In connection with the Slavic orientation of M. M. Hodža, it is not surprising to see his theoretical completion of the concept of Slovak nationality with the dimension of Slavicism. According to him, Slovak nationality also includes “*Slavjan*” and world nationality (this is due to the fact that Slovak nationality belongs to the “*pololenja*” of Slavic nations, which together with the generations of Romanesque and Germanic nations form European “*human*” nations). He spoke quite unflatteringly about Hungarian nationality as about a nationality that “will forever remain only a domestic,” “*secondary, tin-potting nationality*” (ibid., p. 43).

Hodža’s “good word” is primarily a political-cultural work, an ideological programming document of the Štúr group in the field of the language identity of the Slovak nation. At the same time, it is proof of the clear positions of Hodža in the field of medicine. Although he did not surpass Kollár’s conception of Slavdom, he clearly stood in Štúr’s positions on the issue of standard Slovak and defended the new form of Slovak against Kollár, the Bernolák group, but also against the political opponents of the Slovaks. In this sense, he was a supporter of the romantic Herdarian view which considered language not merely as a means of communication, but above all as a constitutive element of the nation. Hodža’s work has another essential feature. It is written in a preaching-rhetorical style, enriched not just by many of the author’s characteristic new creations, but also by contemporary journalistic phrases, colloquial lexicon and folk phraseology. It is necessary to see Hodža’s intention to promote the main ideas of the Štúr movement in this way, as well as his own special “Messianic” vocabulary, Slovak folk culture, and codified Slovak.

### **The March Events of 1848 and the National-emancipatory Attitudes of M. M. Hodža**

The March events of 1848 encouraged M. M. Hodža politically in his national-emancipatory attitudes. He came to the optimistic view that the path of democratic political changes had begun in the Monarchy, which means that the new government and the assembly will have an understanding for the national needs of the Slovaks. However, the reality was much more complicated. The Hungarian Parliament pushed for the political course of “Hungarian Historic Hungary”, which was welcomed in Slovakia by privileged aristocratic families, in which Historic Hungary was associated with political power and national movement with Pan-Slavism. These events prompted the Slovak national political elite to pursue an active public policy or to become an active political entity capable of creating a unified political programme and organisational back-

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Metternich who gives a clear answer to the above provocation: “*Let every nation in the Hungarian country be educated by way of law and justice, let it be developed in every way possible in its national language; Not only shall the Supreme Government put any obstacles in its way, it will even help it in everything.*” He also refers to the Slovak message led by Superintendent Jozeffy in 1842 (ibid., pp. 30 – 40).



ground, i.e. what the non-Hungarian national movements in Historic Hungary were creating at that time. In the circle of J. M. Hurban and Ľ. Štúr in mid-May 1848, a plan arose to organise assemblies in the regions to receive political petitions. On the basis of them, a national assembly was to be held, which would adopt and approve the Slovak political programme, and it would be sent for approval to the Historic Hungarian political authorities (cf. Rapant, 1937, pp. 73 – 80). The nationwide agitation movement began in the spring. *Liptovské žiadosti* (Liptov Petitions) were made in March, *Nitrianske žiadosti* (Nitra Petitions) and *Mikulášske žiadosti slovenského národa* (Mikuláš Petitions of the Slovak Nation) or *Mikulášske žiadosti* (Mikuláš Petitions) in May (Liptovské žiadosti... 2006; Goláň 1948). The nationwide promotional movement began in the spring. *Liptovské žiadosti* (Liptov Petitions) were made in March and are considered to be the first comprehensive Slovak political programme during the years of 1848-1849.<sup>6</sup> M. M. Hodža also collaborated very intensively on the Mikuláš programme. Together with Ján Francisci-Rimavský and Štefan Marko Daxner, they developed democratic constitutional requirements, the purpose of which was to fulfil the principle of equality at its three basic levels – civic-political, social, and national. In addition to respecting Historic Hungarian patriotism and the existence of Historic Hungary, they included strengthening the principles of civil society in Historic Hungary, creating national autonomies on a federal basis, defining ethnic boundaries, two-level assembly (general assembly, national special assemblies), freedom of association and freedom of expression. rights for men, abolition of urbarial obligations and serfdom for all categories of farmers, return of forests, meadows and pastures to farmers, creation of all levels in Slovak education and one Slovak university, teaching Slovak at universities in Hungarian areas and vice versa, teaching of Hungarian at universities in Slovak areas, the creation and free use of Slovak symbols. It is understandable that government policy did not understand such a concept. It called it political pan-Slavism and issued an arrest warrant for its main creators – Hurban, Štúr, and Hodža. All three emigrated to Prague against the persecution and arrest. For these reasons, the *Petitions of the Slovak Nation* could not have had much impact on further development in the revolutionary period of 1848/49.

### Hodža's Sojourn in Prague

Hodža's forced sojourn in Prague took place at a time when Prague was preparing for the Slavonic Congress (the congress was opened on 02 June 1848) which wanted to be not just a counterweight to the Frankfurt Assembly (18 May 1848), whose task was to create a constitution of a united Germany, but also an answer to the policy of the government of the Monarchy. Hodža accepted participation in a large Slovak delegation (together with P. J. Šafárik, Ľ. Štúr, and J. M. Hurban they became members of the central body of the congress). In his Czechoslovak section, he was one of the dominant personalities with distinct political and cultural attitudes. One of the topics discussed was the search for a way to address the Slovak issue. Three dominant ideas met here:

<sup>6</sup> See on that Bokes 1962.

1. Slovaks should form an autonomous unit within the federal Habsburg Monarchy,
2. Slovakia and the Czech lands should form one autonomous unit within the Habsburg Monarchy,
3. Slovaks should gain an autonomous position within Historic Hungary.

It should be emphasised that Hodža, unlike most of the Slovak delegates of the Congress, was in favour of the Austroslavist conception of Czech liberals led by František Palacký. He even demanded that the Congress addressed the issue of the representation of all Slavic nations in the common imperial assembly. Štúr and Hurban were supporters of the third idea of addressing the Slovak issue. Štúr clearly presented his position of favouring the concept of preserving his own nation as a future subject of political life over preserving the Monarchy.<sup>7</sup> As a man of agreement and compromise, empathy and understanding, Hodža sought to promote a civilised way of dialogue in contemporaneous political communication as well. However, he was not sufficiently aware of the extreme positions of political power, so for example, he was optimistic about the issue of Slovak-Hungarian political settlement. He believed that acceptable forms of political agreement would be found in the near future. In this context, he reminded that the Hungarian had not just been a tyrant, but also a “contractor” of Slovaks since the reign of King Stephen (Hučko 1970, p. 121). However, he did not realise that there were no preconditions for political concessions to Slovaks on the part of Hungarian government circles. For this reason, he considered the armed uprising against the Hungarian government, to which he (and other Slovak Congress delegates) were called by the Serbian and Croatian participants in the Congress negotiations, to be the last resort. The Slavonic Congress did not complete its mission due to the Prague uprising. Hodža took part in these events and saw with his own eyes the revolutionary barricade struggle with which he quite sympathised.<sup>8</sup>

### **Hodža’s Activities in the Establishment of the Slovak National Council and Volunteer Expeditions After 1849**

Hodža’s journey from Prague led to Vienna, where the competent disputes between Pest and Vienna culminated and where various ideas about the organisation of the Habsburg Monarchy and the position of Historic Hungary arose. At the beginning of September 1848, he wrote an eight-page political-ideological speech to the nation, *Hlas k národu slovenskému* (Voice of the Slovak Nation). Its basic theme was devoted to the intentions of the Slovak uprising. The speech was also read at the Myjava People’s Assembly on 19 September 1848<sup>9</sup>. However, another Hodža’s German-written work had a similar content with an emphasis on the Slavic-German settlement, *Der Slowak*<sup>10</sup>, which was addressed to the European public. Before the volunteer ex-

<sup>7</sup> “Should our goal be to preserve the Austrian Empire? Our goal is to preserve us. First we have to serve ourselves, then others ... We do not fall with the fall of Austria.” See *Slavonic Congress in Prague in 1848*. Collection of documents, prepared for publication by Dr. Václav Žáček. Prague 1968, p. 248.

<sup>8</sup> He stated this in a letter to his wife (*ibid.*, p. 123).

<sup>9</sup> Available on the Internet: [bokes1\\_doc\\_9.pdf \(izamky.sk\)](#). [quoted 03/06/2021].

<sup>10</sup> It was published in Prague at the end of September 1848. See more on that in Hučko 1970, pp. 127 – 128.

pedition itself, which was agreed at the meeting on 01 September 1848, the first Slovak national political body was established – the Slovak National Council, whose representatives included Hurban, Hodža, Štúr; its military members included Czech commanders B. Bloudek, F. Zach, and B. Janeček.<sup>11</sup> The uprising itself, the first in modern history of Slovakia, referred to as the September one in the time of its taking place, did not meet the expectation of Hodža and other leading figures of the Slovak national movement that the imperial army maintained neutrality (the Vienna Government ordered the army to suppress the uprising under the condition of restoring order in northern Historic Hungarian counties) and the expedition would be non-combat, more or less diplomatic (after the fight, there were 14 dead on the Slovak side, about 12 captured, and 9 wounded persons) (Hučko 1970, p. 130). This was probably one of the main reasons for Hodža's decision to leave the volunteer expedition and leave for Vienna. Hodža manifested himself there as a politician and a priest, not as a soldier who endured the hardships of the military regime. In this sense, his astonishment at Štúr's decision to summon him to a military court and judge him for "*defection*" can also be explained. On the other hand, L. Kossuth, on behalf of the Committee for the Defence of the Fatherland, issued an arrest warrant for Hurban, Štúr, and Hodža in the second half of October, declaring them traitors and depriving them of Historic Hungarian citizenship. After the outbreak of the revolution in Vienna (06 October 1848), all three of them travelled to Prague, where they lived in worries about the future development of politics in the Monarchy. It is remarkable that despite the negative experience that Hodža had from the first volunteer expedition, he decided to organise a second- winter and a third – summer expedition, which aimed to help resolve the Slovak issue within a concept close to him – Austroslavism, which means rebuilding the Monarchy into a federal State, where all the so-called small nations would enjoy equal position. This was also due to the declared will of Vienna's constitutional regime on Austroslavism. This dimension of government policy was also supported by the new monarch, Francis Joseph I, and the new prime minister, Prince Felix Schwarzenberg.

One of the issues of the day was the issue of the future of Historic Hungary. From the autumn of 1848 until the end of 1849, this theme was fuelled in various political projects, which stemmed from the strong power of the Monarchy and truncated federalism based on the small powers of the autonomous administrative formations (cf. Rapant 1937, p. 79). Hodža feared that the Historic Hungarian State, unlike the entire Monarchy, would divide the Slavic nations into northern and southern ones, similarly separating the Czechs and Moravians from the Slovaks and the Croats from the Serbs. Therefore, he did not trust Historic Hungary as a State. He emphasised that it had no "*world-forming history*". In connection with the above-mentioned volunteer expeditions, it should be noted that they helped to gain a certain respect of Slovak politics in the public by the fact that the Slovak issue became the object of the so-called high policy and for the first time the territorial borders of Slovakia began to be defined more precisely (ibid.; cf. also Rebro 1965, pp. 557 – 579). This happened after the defeat of the Hungarian Revolution in August 1849. Slovak politics escalated the demands by returning to the petition movement from the spring months of 1848, in which M. M. Hodža also played a significant role. She considered the secession of

<sup>11</sup> For more information on the establishment and operation of the Slovak National Council, see the works: Hučko 1998, pp. 7 – 31; Škvarna – Eliáš, 1998.

Slovakia from Hungary and the establishment of the Slovak crown country to be the only way to ensure Slovaks their national freedom. The solution of the Slovak issue was left to the Historic Hungarian political conservative circles, which had good relations with Vienna arguing that the integrity of Hungary and long-term good relations between Hungarians and Slovaks, the danger of Pan-Slavism, and the radicalism of Slovak Evangelical leaders would be maintained.

Slovak leaders, including M. M. Hodža, did not push through the fulfillment of all their programme objectives in the revolutionary years of 1848/49. It can be said that, given the amount of effort expended, their political gains were minimal: teaching Slovak in folk schools, in some grammar schools, in lower offices; appointment of Slovaks to lower offices, ensuring the publication of *Slovenské noviny* (Slovak newspaper) by the government, inclusion of the Slovak country in two administrative districts – the Košice and the Bratislava districts. The issuance of the Imposed Constitution by King Franz Joseph I in March 1849 resulted in the strengthening of centralism and the conservative orientation of Habsburg politics. This policy pushed the underprivileged strata out of public life, including the nation-forming Slovak actors.

After arriving in Liptovský Mikuláš, M. M. Hodža accepted the office of chief notary mainly due to the faster and smoother introduction of codified Slovak into offices and courts. However, it was only a matter of time before the political authorities in the Liptov region became mobilised and began to liquidate Hodža politically. A suitable opportunity for this was his new installation in the capacity of the Mikuláš-Vrbice pastor on 23 September 1849. The government commissioner, Count Anton Forgách (1819 – 1885), reproached Hodža that it was not appropriate for him to hold both secular and ecclesiastical offices at the same time; he should opt for one of them. Hodža finally relinquished his politically exposed position in 1850 and decided to devote himself to the priestly vocation and the unresolved issues of the Slovak Evangelical Church. His objective was to make this church subordinate to the Vienna government. At least in the church field, he wanted to achieve what he had failed to do in the field of national politics.

### **Messianic Life Balance of M. M. Hodža**

Hodža's disappointment with the Viennese government after 1848, especially with Bach's national dictatorship, but also other disappointments of a super-personal and personal nature (bad conditions for the Slovak nation, poor social conditions of his family, deaths of his own children ...) caused the issue of national freedom and man's freedom in the political sense of the word began to be intensively discussed on private soil – within himself. Between 1853 and 1857, discouraged after the defeat of the "Slovak Revolution", he wrote a poetic "*saga of the Slovak family*" in the evenings and nights, the most extensive poetic work with political content in Slovak literature – the lyrical-reflexive composition *Matora* (containing 20,400 verses of the 31 cm x 24 cm format<sup>12</sup>). If it had been published at that time, it could have contributed to the consolidation of the national identity of a more educated, but ethnically "lukewarm" part of the Slovak nation.

<sup>12</sup> Hodža, M. M.: *Matora* (1853 – 1857). The text was prepared, the comments and conclusion were written by Pavol Vongrej, the appendix was written by Peter Zajac.

Hodža intended to publish the poem. He sent a selection from the manuscript entitled From the Lyric-Epic Poem of *Matora* to Jozef K. Viktorin for publication in the Concordia Almanac in 1858. Since it was not published there, he gave up another intention to publish it (ibid., pp. 701 – 702). The cultural public found out about it only in 1910 (some parts of Hodža's poem were published in the magazine Slovenské pohľady from 1910 to 1913) and then in 1982, when a transcript of Hodža's unpublished selection from 1857 was published.<sup>13</sup>

*Matora* represents the key life balance of M. M. Hodža, the work of a disappointed Slovak politician who decided to leave public politics and begin to examine the value, philosophical and historical criteria on which the Slovak national movement was based. This literary and artistically complicated literary work showed what M. M. Hodža was a political thinker like, how he thought about the essence of the national destiny – the history of being and consciousness, how he sought the way to the origin of “*Christoslavie*”. *Matora* as neologism means the offspring of the mother, the family after the material, and this mother is represented by the mother of Jánošík, who always appears at the moment of the son's rebellious struggle for social and national justice as a strong moral imperative (ibid.). Hodža's image of Jánošík and his mother is not just an elaboration of his own thesis about returning to the security of home, but also an attempt to correct the revolting image of Jánošík's party, which was presented especially in Slovak Romantic literature. We have in mind the conclusion of the motif of revenge of Jánošík's retinue of men's crime, in which the sentiment of Jánošík's mother expressed by sentiment is dominated by the theme of vengeful revenge: „*Vinu vinou morit' dvojaká je vina*” (Fighting guilt by guilt is a double guilt). Hodža approached this problem untraditionally, in a different way than our Romantic literature and the political practice based on it. The starting point is a solution in the sense of the principle of “*family by mother*” not “*by the sword – father*”. The issue of freedom in the political sense of the word is a substantial part of the text of the poem. Mother's humility and forgiveness, son's hardness and revenge, godliness and banditry, revenge and forgiveness, passivity of faith in God and active approach to the human solution of wandering, pator – revenge and matora – humility: this is the struggle of two moral antipoles developed in Hodža's poem. Hodža's Jánošík undergoes internal psychic “Tolstoyan” moral transformations about the non-resistance of evil by violence. His resulting value and philosophical portrait has, as we have indicated, obvious “Tolstoyan” traits: he renounces the leadership of the vengeful mountain boys (“*Let's walk one way together, but a new one; go home, repent, we'll go loose, we'll never rob again, sin is different in Hungary and a fine in Poland ... Go with that word, let it into your people souls, try and see what this motto will evoke, our motto: Jánošík is already going to sould the soulless nation!*”), he walks away from them on his “Wandering-Jew-like” Messianic pilgrimage through life, and in the fundamental existential issues of faith in God he arrives at the following complicated philosophical-etymological knowledge: “*There is no God anywhere if he is not in man ... Where is our God, you ask? There is where you ask. Who-is He? He-is, w-ho-is. You preach him asking*” (Hodža 2003, p. 277, 282).

<sup>13</sup> In that year, Pavol Vongrej published selected poems from *Matora* in the book *Zlomky z romantizmu* (Fractions from Romanticism), Bratislava: Tatran, pp. 373 – 436.

Through Jánošík's message, Hodža tried to outline a new strategy for dealing with social inequalities and tensions: instead of "revenge for robbery", he proposed "a slower pace of defiance in a seemingly indifferent form of service" (ibid., p. 731). Therefore, in other images of the poem, the hero tries to fulfil this new way of fighting: He "lowers" to the level of a hill and under the name of "Vratňanský" returns to the life of the village, works hard on Holeš' farm, marries his daughter Hanka, with whom he lives a life of an ordinary honestly working peasant. The story of Jánošík-Vratňanský could end with this value rebirth, but Hodža will expose him to further trials, which will return the living Jánošík tradition to the epic scene. Jánošík-Vratňanský unjustly gets into a prison for a year, which unexpectedly updates the motive of revenge seen in his mother's eyes "Revenge, my son, your mother is calling to you! Any moderation is here bare vanity!" (ibid., part 17, pp. 438 – 439). He returns from prison to "Sloviany" in order to develop a living Jánošík tradition. At this point in *Matora*, Hodža develops a new "Jánošík" concept of Messianism: the whole "Slovenian" community awaits Jánošík as their Messiah. He meets his kind, whom he sends as messengers to all Slovak regions (for the entire area of the "Slovak Surroundings") in order to prepare for the uprising of all Slovaks. Jánošík himself sets out on another Messianic journey to "Slovenia", to his home, which he will never complete with his return. Overcoming various realistic and irrational obstacles, in his Ahasver story he enters the final multidimensional philosophical "dovieta" (sentence) of the meaning of the world, of life. Jánošík-philosopher condemns the demoralizing vices of civilisation over the millennia of its existence, condemns materialists, "God-debauchery scenes" from the lives of kings, cardinals, and poets. He seeks his salvation in the Christian faith, what Hodža proves by the controversy between the simple faith of the Slovak man-tinker and complicated philosophical views represented by Schiller's Gods of Greece.

Hodža's attempt to portray the character of Jánošík as a person and a symbol, to establish a new version of the Jánošík tradition consisting in combining Jánošík's male resistance with his mother's humility, is Hodža's contribution to the struggle for a realistic depiction of ideological and social struggles of Slovak society after the 1848 Revolution (more details in Kováčik 2000, pp. 122 – 126; Kováčik 2002, pp. 301 – 309). Although there is too much mythology in this idea, the depiction of the Jánošík issue is personal and unique.

Alongside with Hroboň (Somolayová 2008, pp. 67 – 88) Hodža tested the possibilities of Messianic language in *Matora*<sup>14</sup>, by which he wanted to trace the semantic archetypes of Slovak thought and to find out the qualitative possibilities of neologisms in the development of the spiritual "Cosmos of Christoslavia".

<sup>14</sup> The literary historian Stanislav Šmatlák commented on this topic in his review of the book edition of *Matora*: It is dominated by a kind of indomitable passion for word-making: a flood of neologisms, not only lexical but also morphological, constantly moves *Matora*'s poetic text into the position of a philological puzzle that the reader must resolve. At the same time, however, Hodža demonstrated in several expressively spoken places that it has such a wide range of generally understandable lexical synonyms that perhaps Hviezdoslav did not achieve later (Šmatlák 2005).

## Hodža's Activities After the Issuance of the "Protestant" Patent and His Exile

Two years after the completion of *Matora* and after unsuccessful attempts to publish it, M. M. Hodža, together with other members of the Pre-Danubian District of the Slovak Evangelical Churches, nevertheless received good news, albeit unrelated to him: On 01 September 1859 and territorial arrangement of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession and the Evangelical Reformed (Calvinist) Church, which based the organisation of the Church on a representative system, that is, on the personal equality of all the members of the Church. The Patent endangered all the excessive rights that the nobility had in the Church, all the customs rooted in the Evangelical Church, where only be a wealthy nobleman (yeoman) could be its inspector. Hodža was pleased with this report. However, his joy did not last long. At the urging of the Hungarian opposition, the monarch issued a decree according to which he left the Church congregations the right to decide whether they wanted to be established according to a patent or as an autonomous Church. The monarch's decision was used by the anti-Hodžian opposition to launch a discrediting campaign against him in order to paralyse his influence in the Evangelical Church bodies and subsequently suspend him from the priesthood. The campaign was led by Martin Szentiványi, the chief mayor, and MUDr. Viktor Mihalyik, inspector of Evangelical Churches. Hodža resisted this pressure in his own way: with sermons aimed at protection against Protestant-Magyarisation efforts, sharp criticism of the method of electing the bishop of the Pre-Danubian District, Ludovít Geduly<sup>15</sup> and an analysis of current Magyarisation tendencies in the 1860s<sup>16</sup>. The Hodža opposition has largely succeeded in phasing him out of his influence on Church governance with precisely targeted false accusations: first, the Convention in 1860 suspended his Church salary for two years, and finally the Consistory of the Evangelical Church at the instigation of the denationalized bishop Ludovít Geduly on 15 July 1862 in Liptovský Mikuláš, he was suspended from office and banned from working in all Church districts in Historic Hungary. Protests by Mikuláš Church voters and Karol Kuzmány delayed the implementation of the Consistory's statement for a time. In the end, he did not avoid decommissioning from the parish in Mikuláš. That happened on 20 May 1866.

Hodža regarded the move as a political case. He was convinced that he had fallen victim to political conditions before the forthcoming Austro-Hungarian settlement (Hučko 1970, pp. 174 – 182). When he found out that he would not find any place in Slovakia in the Church environment, he decided at the age of 55 to receive early retirement from the monarch and move out as an exile to exile in the Czech-Silesian-Polish town of Těšín. Here, too, he tried in the silence of his work with poetic means<sup>17</sup>, for the last time then, to "enter" the national and Slavic past and look for the future ways of existence of his nation.

<sup>15</sup> He did so in a polemical work, the Convention of 1862. For more details on the whole issue, see the statements from the letters of Hodža's daughter in the 1860s in the book *Letters of Marina Miloslava Hodžová to Viliam Pauliny-Tóth*. Prepared for release by Peter Liba. Martin: Matica slovenská, 1965.

<sup>16</sup> This is evidenced by Hodža's historical and philosophical discourse *Slavomiersky* of 1862.

<sup>17</sup> In Těšín, he wrote an extensive didactically conceived lyrical-epic poem *Vieroslavín*.

He considered the main problem of the Slovak nation, its reborn “reflexes”, its ethnic and social unobtrusiveness to be in that it adopted, albeit not of its own volition, a defensive position vis-à-vis the surrounding politically strong societies. He sought a way out, similarly to *Matora*, in the Messianic concept of the Messiah, the saviour of Slovaks and Slavs. In *Matora* it is Jánošík, in *Vieroslavín* Jesus Christ as a symbol of love, “*fraternal society*”, and goodness. Based on the principle of Christian love, he created a Messianic notion of the “*interest of familyhood*”, that is, the union of three great European tribes (Romanesque, which endowed the world with “*právnomyseľsvetokrasoumostou*” (legal-minded-world-wit-beauty), Germanic, which brought humanity “*free-mindednes God-truth-saying*”, and Slavic that combined beauty and truth with good. On a similar principle, he sought the future of the Habsburg Monarchy when he replaced the period thesis on the political hierarchy with the thesis on the civic hierarchy (“*So I am an Austrian by homeland, / I am a Slovak by my fatherland, / a hopeful one in Europe / a newcomer to enlightenment!*”) (Hučko 1970; p. 189). Hodža’s poetic farewell to life in *Vieroslavín* soon came true in real life as well. It was probably a cancer that had accelerated his painful path of life. He died in the morning of 26 March 1870.<sup>18</sup> He was buried in Těšín and in 1922 his body remains were transported to the cemetery in Liptovský Mikuláš.

## Conclusion

M. M. Hodža belonged to the closest collaborators of Ľ. Štúr. He underwent a complex internal development. Before the revolution, it was difficult to reach the position of Štúr’s ideological platform of Slovak identity as a natural community, which creates its national identity and internal integrity primarily through codified literary language. In the revolutionary years of 1848/49, he became fully involved in attempts at the full cultural and political institutionalisation of the nation and the theoretical completion of ethnic-emancipatory ideology. In his political work, he discovered an important means of political struggle – agitation. He believed, together with many national leaders of the Slovaks, that the Slovak issue could be resolved within the crown country of the Austrian emperor. He resolved his disappointment with the results of the Slovak revolutionary movement in the “forty-eighties” by leaning towards the Messianic faith in the special saving mission of the nation. The proof is especially in his literary work *Matora*, which represents the key life balance of M. M. Hodža, the work of a bitter, frustrated and humble Slovak politician of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, who decided to leave public policy and begin to examine the value, philosophical and historical criteria in which the Slovak national movement was rooted. This reader’s complicated literary work only confirmed that M. M. Hodža was a politician who thought deeply about the essence of the national destiny – the history of being and awareness at the level of modern political thinkers and visionaries.

<sup>18</sup> Tomáš Winkler described the Těšín stay and the last moments of Hodža’s life in detail in the book *Čas pred nesmrteľnosťou* (1998), pp. 112 – 125.



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