

## THE ATTEMPT TO CONSTRUCT A MARXIST MASTER NARRATIVE IN THE PERIOD 1948 – 1955

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HUDEK, Adam. The Attempt to Construct a Marxist master narrative in the Period 1948 – 1955. *Historický časopis*, 2008, 56, Supplement, pp. 111-131, Bratislava. The study is concerned with the development of Slovak historical science in the period 1948 – 1955. Its institutional and personal development is analysed, together with the methods of control and direction by the communist regime. The main interest is devoted to the problems of applying Marxism to Slovak historiography. The second part of the study consists of an outline of the way Marxist historiography interpreted and evaluated the key periods of Slovak history. Attention is also devoted to the formation of the Marxist periodization of Slovak history. The result was a framework for the Slovak Marxist national story, used in later synthetic works.

Master narrative. Marxist historiography. Concept of Czechoslovak history.

English term “master narrative”, in Slovak “národný príbeh” (national story) together with the Marxist „national history“ are expressions designating a dominant generally accepted account of the history of a nation (or in Czechoslovak case, of the state). The official interpretation of national history always was and still is an important political question. In general, it is possible to say that if a society is freer, the historians have more autonomy in formulating their versions of the national story. In totalitarian societies, on the other hand, shaping of the master narrative is mostly controlled by the government, which ensures that it is appropriate to the ideological demands of the regime. After the coup d'état of 1948 and the installation of communist totalitarianism, the new regime realized the importance of gaining control over historical research. The creation of its own, Marxist, conception of Slovak or Czechoslovak history had to be one of the important means of legitimizing the claim of the Communist Party to power.

In spite of the fact that the communist regime was established in Czechoslovakia relatively quickly, the application of Marxism-Leninism to Slovak historical science struck against various problems. Apart from some insignificant exceptions, Marxist historiography did not exist in Slovakia before 1948. The Marxist approach to history appeared only in popular articles by prominent Slovak communists like Ladislav Novomeský, Gustáv Husák or Vladimír Clementis.<sup>1</sup> However, their ideas about the Marxist version

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1 They were especially concerned with key periods in the national story – the revolution of 1848 – 1849, the origin of Czechoslovakia and the Slovak National Uprising. The first Marxist historical work in Slovakia appears to have been the dissertation of the history graduate Alexander Markuš *Sedliacke povstanie v Zemplíne v roku 1831* (The Peasants' Revolt in Zemplín in 1831). Markuš submitted this work in 1936, but it appeared in book form only in 1951. See: KAMENEC, Ivan. *Začiatky marxistického historického myslenia na Slovensku* (The Beginnings of Marxist Historical Thought in Slovakia.). Bratislava : Veda, 1984.