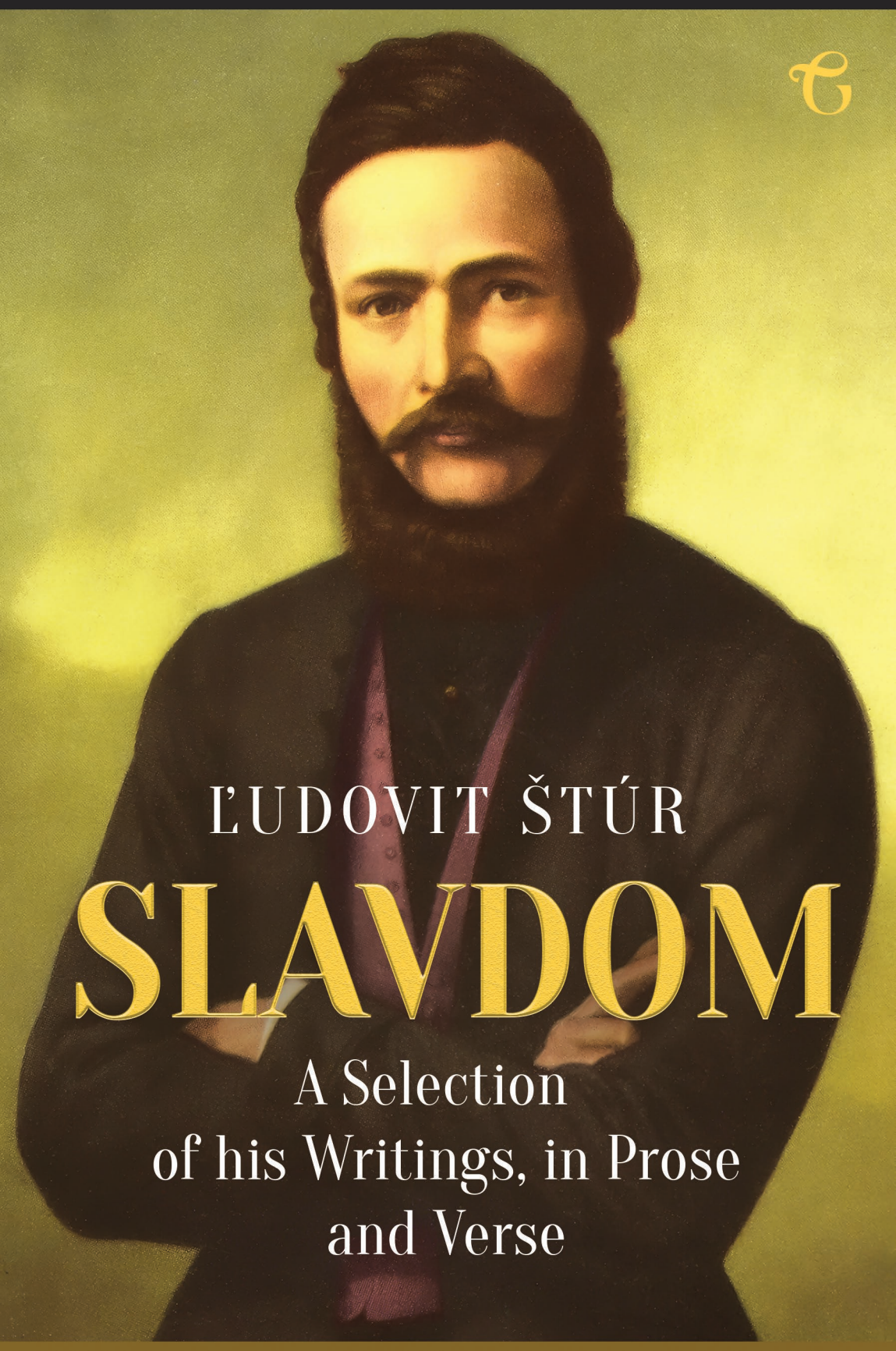
ĽUDOVIT ŠTÚR
SLAVDOM
A Selection
of his Writings, in Prose
and Verse

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by Ľudovit Štúr

Translated from the Slovak and introduced by
Charles S. Kraszewski

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GLAGOSLAV PUBLICATIONS

Contents

No Justice, No Peace! Well, I Guess That Means No Peace
Ľudovít Štúr and the Naïve Optimism of the Innocent Nineteenth Century

C.S. Kraszewski

I don't remember the first time I read the 'Journey through the Region of the Váh,' but it certainly was a long time ago. At any rate, when first I did, my eyes passed over the following sentence (in which Ľudovít Štúr records his first impressions of the poet Jan Hollý) without resting upon them for more than the time it took to scan them: 'The pleasant countenance and grey hair of this old man of fifty-six years lend him an especial charm that enchants the person who gazes upon him.' But now… those same eyes stopped dead in their tracks. 'Old man?!… fifty-six!?' For I passed that milestone two years ago and… Oh well. What's the use. I'm noting this down here not out of self-pity or vanity or anything of that sort. What really strikes me is how texts change over time, or at least the manner in which we read them does. We have a tendency to accept them, unthinkingly, like monuments carved in stone, as unchanging as the Discobolus, for example. After all, no one imagines that Myron's athlete will ever complete his motion, fling the discus, and reach for something else, like a javelin or a baseball bat. Literature is the same, in a manner of speaking, of course. The manner in which Dostoevsky spins out Raskolnikov's thoughts from the time we first meet him until he murders the old pawnbroker is so excruciatingly slow as we pass along Nevsky Prospekt with him — it takes a full 70 pages before the axe finally falls — that we're almost fooled into hoping that maybe 'this time' he'll turn away from the murder… But we know that this is impossible. *Crime and Punishment* does not change. But we do; the manner in which we read things changes as we change, due to our life experiences, due to the history that goes on around us, touching upon us, invading our consciousness, to a greater or lesser degree.

A better example of this can be found in the work of one of the great Slavic poets that Štúr mentions from time to time in his writings. In his narrative poem *Konrad Wallenrod*, which tells the story of a young Lithuanian lad who wishes to deliver his homeland from the invading German Knights of the Cross, the boy receives the following advice from an old bard (which determines his plan of action):

> 'Free knights,' he said, 'can choose which arms they please
> And on the open field fight man to man.
> You're a slave. Your only weapon's guile.
> Stay on and learn the German arts of war.
> First get their trust, then we'll see what comes next.'

'What comes next' is, Konrad passes himself off as one of them, with the premeditated plan of leading them to their destruction.

Konrad Wallenrod is one of the most important texts of Polish literature, one written by the greatest authority in nineteenth-century Polish life. Konrad may be a problematic character, but he has never been considered as anything less than a basically *positive* hero. Given the history of Mickiewicz's country, which has so often had to face overwhelming odds in its quest to survive, the no-holds-barred approach to national liberation outlined in the old man's advice — the 'strategy of the fox' as opposed to the 'strategy of the lion' — has generally been considered admissible given the extenuating circumstances. But now? Can we read these lines the same way after 11 September 2001, the nineteenth anniversary of which passed just six days previous to the date on which I'm writing this? Is it possible to see Konrad Wallenrod (whose name itself is a disguise; he was born Walter Alf) as anything but the violent terrorist of a sleeper cell, whose strings are pulled by a scheming imam? I may be exaggerating here, but it should be obvious, I reckon, that the matter is no longer as straightforward as it used to be. The text is the same, but we have changed.

My reception of the works included in this translation has changed too — and that over the course of just a few months. At least half of the translation, with which I am now busied, was completed in the United States, most recently, during the social unrest and 'calls for justice' that have roiled American streets during the summer of 2020. Watching the riots unfold, bombarded in a way that we never have been before, thanks to the never-ending 'news' programmes and ubiquitous cell-phone film-clips, it is impossible to read the bright shining lines, with which Štúr brings 'The Contribution of the

Slavs to European Civilisation' to a close without a jaded smirk. 'Humanity, in its progress, can simply never retrogress.' Really? Then why have we 'progressed' such a very little way in race relations since the 1960s, to say nothing of the 1860s? And on the other hand, is there not at least some naïveté in the convictions of the righteously angry marchers who seem to share Štúr's positive faith in actually getting something *done*?

Is not the promise of a great and better future nothing more than a political slogan, which reeks with added stench due to the corrupt lips that pronounce it, begging for our votes? If anything, the last four or five years seem to teach us that the idea of slow, but sure, and always incrementally further progress toward an ever better world is a myth. A myth no less fanciful and illusory than Marxist messianism, with its promise of the State eventually withering away as something unnecessary to a newer, progressively more angelic, I suppose, society. Human nature being what it is — and it's certainly not a very pretty little thing — humanity is not progressing along the straight upward line that optimists like Štúr have in mind, but rather is spinning in a vicious circle. The same old hatreds and problems, the same old brutal solutions in dealing with them, keep coming round and round again — whether it be 1848, 1948, or 2048, ad infinitum. To read Ľudovít Štúr, or any of the innocent nineteenth century nationalists, marching and protesting for justice for their own particular groups 'justly,' we must not forget that they were not destined to live through the bloody first half of the twentieth century, when their ontological definitions of nationhood, based on language and — as they would use the term — race, would lead, not to the

> …dawn of the long yearned-for, long demanded age of humanity […where] in place of the old congresses there shall be congresses of the nations, determining international affairs

as he puts it in 'The Russians,' but — the *Blitzkrieg* and the *Gulag* and the *Black Site*; the genocide of nations in Auschwitz, in the broad picture, and armed violence among neighbours who suddenly see one another as viscerally different, in the small. Is it imaginable that this basically decent man, a Lutheran pastor, with a heart big enough to think the best of the Magyar oppressors of his Slovak nation, trusting that one day 'they will shake off [their] bias and seek enlightenment and liberty not only for [themselves], but for others, especially the Slavs' ('Pan-Slavism and our Country'), would speak of the 'filthy clutches of the Jews' ('Slavdom and the World of the Future') if he knew what was awaiting them less than a century after he wrote that essay?

We have a broader perspective than Ľudovít Štúr, having recently marked the eightieth anniversary of the hell of World War II — something he surely could never have imagined happening in that bright future toward which humanity, he felt, was progressing. Now, if you're not going to say it, Sunshine, permit me to: there will be no justice, or peace, on this earth, ever. The closest we can get to optimism is that famous phrase that Štúr, if anyone, should know by rote: *inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te;* 'our heart is restless, until it rest in Thee.'[1] Let's keep these things in mind, then, as we proceed to a consideration of the writings of Ľudovít Štúr, especially when we hear him say things like, 'First, the Magyar must be destroyed, and then, let the Danube unite our regions' ('Address to the Slavic Congress') or 'The Russian character is very attractive to all of our tribes who have not become alienated from their nature' ('Slavdom and the World of the Future'). Ľudovít Štúr must be read in the context of his times and his reality, times different from our own, the only reality he knew.

ĽUDOVÍT ŠTÚR, HUNGARIAN

The land into which Ľudovít Štúr (1815 – 1856) was born on 29 October of the year in which 'that colossus of a man' Napoléon[2] returned in triumph to France, only to arrive, at last, at Waterloo, was the multinational Kingdom of Hungary. Francis of Habsburg, the last of the Austrian Emperors to bear the title Holy Roman Emperor, was on the throne of what was later to become the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary. When Štúr was thirty-three years old, in the tumultuous year of 1848, he was to witness the abdication of the beloved, ostensibly feeble-minded Ferdinand in favour of Franz Josef. This last-named, equally beloved of many, Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary, was to reign until his death in 1916 amid the catastrophe that would bring an end to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the establishment of the first Republic of Czechoslovakia — a fraternal unification of two closely-related Slavic 'tribes' such as Štúr longed for, and struggled for, all throughout his life.[3]

1 St Augustine, *Confessions,* 1.1.2.

2 Štúr, 'Pan-Slavism and our Country.'

3 The last Habsburg Emperor was Franz Joseph's great-nephew, Bl. Karl I (1887 – 1922). Having inherited the misfortune of World War I, Karl worked behind the scenes to bring an end to the slaughter, and extricate his land from the conflict, whole. This was impossible, for many reasons, of course. Never abdicating the throne per se, he was exiled from the newly-proclaimed Republic of Austria. Attempts at reclaiming the throne of Hungary in 1921 were unsuccessful.

Like Austria itself, Hungary was home to many nationalities. The dominant ethnicity, the Magyars (the name of whom we conflate with 'Hungarian' today)[4] constituted some 50% of the population of the kingdom, which also contained sizeable numbers of Romanians, Germans, and of course Slavs — Slovaks, mainly in the mountainous north, bordering Polish, Moravian, and Austrian regions, and Croats to the south-west, along the Adriatic, with a good number of Serbs as well. It is for this reason that Štúr defines himself, interchangeably, as 'Slovak' and 'Hungarian Slav', using both terms, for example in his 1839 letter to the Polish-language *Tygodnik literacki* [Literary Weekly] in Poznań.[5] During Štúr's lifetime, the Magyars, a Finno-Ugric people who migrated into the Danube region in the late IX c., initiated a programme of successively greater linguistic and cultural repression of the ethnic minorities living in Hungary, replacing, for example, the lingua franca of Latin with Magyar as sole administrative language of the Kingdom, in 1840. This put an end to the idyllic period — if there ever was one — when in that 'one, Hungarian homeland, 'Magyar and Slovak lived proudly, […] both being faithfully devoted to that common mother. […] And they found it good to reside here, for the land waxed in prosperity and brotherhood.'[6]

It sounds so simplistic, but great matters sometimes are. Had the nations that made up Hungary respected each other's cultural autonomy, holding to Latin as the official, administrative tongue of all, while encouraging, or at least tolerating, the development of regional languages as far as literature and basic education were concerned, a lot of blood and tears might not have been shed, families not riven by disputes in which surface appearance (language) becomes more important than inner essence (humanity).[7] After all, Štúr, who

He was raised to the altar by St Pope John Paul II in 2004; the beatification process of his wife, Servant of God Zita, is ongoing as of 2020.

[4] According to Paul Robert Magocsi, the name itself is derived from 'Onogur,' which signified a 'loose federation of Finno-Ugric and Bulgar-Turkic tribes' of which the Magyars formed a part. See Magocsi, *With their Backs to the Mountains: A History of Carpathian Rus' and Carpatho-Rusyns* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2015), p. 41.

[5] 'List Słowaka Węgierskiego do redakcji *Tygodnika Literackiego* [The Letter of a Hungarian Slav to the Editors of the Literary Weekly], 21 January 1839. Collected in Ľudovít Štúr, *Wybór pism* [Selected Writings], ed. Halina Janaszek-Ivaničková (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1983), pp. 406-412. Štúr wrote the letter originally in Polish.

[6] Štúr, 'The Slovaks, in Ancient Days and Now.'

[7] Hungarian history provides us with an eloquent example. Lajos Kossuth (1802 – 1894), father of the modern ethnic Hungarian state and determined magyariser, was of Slovak extraction; his uncle Juraj Košút (1776 – 1849), was just as strong a supporter of Slovak nationality.

gives as good as he gets in the rough polemical warfare between Magyar and Slav, was still able to write, in his 'Pan-Slavism and our Country:'

> In the end, our firm belief is that when the Magyars progress further in education and culture; when, as a consequence, they become more thoughtful and just, when they reflect more closely upon their state, their situation, and understand it better, more than one of them will shake off his bias and seek enlightenment and liberty not only for himself, but for others, especially the Slavs. What is more, not only will they wish it for the Slavs, they will actively engage in aiding them to its acquisition, […] from good will, true conviction, and, let us still add — from prudence. We firmly believe that this will come to pass, we say, and, further, we believe also that we shall see the days when each oppression, indeed every incitement to oppression of the Slavs, will meet with round rejection and condemnation, while the more sublime amongst the Magyars will aid the Slavs to greater development and liberty, working toward these goals and publicly encouraging them.

Alas, we alone can look backwards with a perfect clarity. Generous statements like these are, as we are about to see, more than balanced in Štúr's writings with diatribes of an almost xenophobic character, and even here it is not difficult to sense a hint of 'or else' in his suggestion that, along with good will and conviction, the Magyars might be swayed 'by prudence.'

Again, we see things that happened almost two hundred years ago quite clearly. We cannot expect the same prescience from those involved in the heat of the moment, who — like ourselves now — cannot see the future. Unfortunately, Štúr's was an age of ethnonationalism, and it was the centripetal force of the fashionable concept of the *Volk* which was to lead to the premature dismemberment of Austria-Hungary, that European Union *avant le mot,* as Rio Preisner, a Czech devotee of *humanitas austriaca* notes:

> Throughout its entire existence the Austrian monarchy was bound to the preservation of the cultural and political integrity of Central Europe, in opposition to Germany and Russia. Its tragedy was that both the Germans and the Russians understood, and to a certain extent respected, this task of hers, whereas the nations that constituted Austria did not.[8]

[8] Rio Preisner, *Až na konec Česka* [To the Very End of Czechia] (London: Rozmluvy, 1987), p. 238.

For Austria-Hungary was evolving in a manner that might well have filled Štúr with hope, had he lived until the turn of the century. After the Meyerling tragedy, Franz Ferdinand, nephew of Franz Josef, became heir to the throne. Morganatically married to the Czech Žofie Chotková, he, if any, was the emperor to lift the Slavs — constituting a full 47% of the population — to fuller participation in the life of the state. As David Fromkin notes in his magisterial work on the First World War, *Europe's Last Summer*:

> According to […] informants, it was the belief of the conspirators that Franz Ferdinand advocated 'trialism': he intended to make the Slavs full partners in government along with Austro-Germans and Hungarians [*i.e. Magyars.* … And yet the Serb Gavrilo] Princip, who killed Franz Ferdinand, did so for a muddle of misinformed reasons. Although the Archduke was the most pro-Slav member of the Habsburg hierarchy, the youth believed that he was anti-Slav.[9]

The discouraging thing in the above citation is not Princip's mistaken belief in the heir's anti-Slavism, but the conspirators' motivation to do away with him *because* his pro-Slavic stance would defuse centripetal ethnonationalism among the Serbs, and preserve the multi-national monarchy, which they wanted to break apart. With the irony that only history — and stupid humanity — can provide, Franz Ferdinand, who was murdered by a Serb terrorist worried at Austrian designs upon his country, had recently told dinner guests 'that Austria had nothing to gain from conquering Serbia; going to war would be "a bit of nonsense."' So, Slavs killed a pro-Slav on behalf of the Slavs. Because the pro-Slavic policies of the pro-Slav 'might deprive them of their issue.'[10] And history shows us, unfortunately, how important 'issues' are to some people.

ĽUDOVÍT ŠTÚR'S ISSUE

The period in which Štúr was born is marked by a resurgence of ethnic consciousness among the constituent nations of Austria and Hungary — the Habsburg Empire. Following the defeat of the Hussite forces at the battle of Bílá Hora in 1620, which initiated a decades-long process of germanisation

[9] David Fromkin, *Europe's Last Summer: Who Started the Great War in 1917?* (New York: Vintage, 2007), pp 122, 261.

[10] Fromkin, pp. 100, 122.

amongst the Czechs of Bohemia and Moravia, the Czech language declined to such an extent that it had practically disappeared from all classes of society, save the peasantry. To get ahead in the new reality of Austrian Bohemia, one had to know German. Likewise, the ascendancy of Magyar in the Slovak lands was aided by its adoption among the noble families of the Slavic areas on the southern slopes of the Tatras — such as the Kossuths. Although the great swathes of the Slovak peasantry held to their tongue, here too it remained little more than an ethnolect, given the predominance of Latin in Catholic circles, and Czech among Protestant Slovaks. Neither the one language nor the other, Czech nor Slovak, offered much practical advantage, and even the young Štúr, at twelve, was sent by his parents over 100 miles south from his birth city of Uhrovec to a gymnasium in Ráb (now Győr, in Hungary) 'in order to deepen his knowledge of German and Magyar.'[11]

The mollifying of Counter-Reformative policies during the reign of the enlightened emperor Josef II (1780 – 1790) led not only to decrees of religious tolerance for the non-Catholic minorities of his realms, but also to the 1786 Civil Code, which, among other things, guaranteed national minorities the right to use their native languages. Although a germaniser himself, Josef made provision for the teaching of religion in elementary schools to be carried out in the native language of the pupils.[12]

Such tentative liberalisation — however gradual — was one factor among many others in the *národní obrození* or 'national revival' of the Czech areas, during which the native, Slavic tongue was resurrected as a language of cultural discourse by scholars and poets such as Josef Jungmann (1773 – 1847) and Antonín Jaroslav Puchmajer (1769 – 1820), and the first codification of Slovak as a literary language independent of Czech was carried out by Anton Bernolák (1762 – 1813). And while there still was a strong tendency toward amalgamating the two kindred dialects by important 'Czechoslovak' poets such as Ján Kollár (1793 – 1852), other Slovaks, like the great epic poet Ján Hollý (1785 – 1849), adopted the so-called *Bernoláčina* and through their works proved Slovak to be a literary language of great expressiveness. All of this activity, which pushed both deep — toward a reacquisition of Czech and Slovak by the cultured classes under the tutelage of the village, the collection of folk-songs and the scouring of libraries for ancient documents in the Slavic tongue[13] — and broad — the grafting of Polish and Russian terms

[11] Janaszek-Ivaničková, p. xvii.

[12] Janaszek-Ivaničková, p. viii.

[13] Such as we find described in 'A Journey through the Region of the Váh,' in which the

onto the native trunks (especially in the case of Czech), was to influence Štúr both as a Slovak 'son of the Tatras' and a Pan-Slav, addressing Russians and Croats and Lusatians as his brothers[14] — and this from his earliest years. According to Janaszek-Ivaničková:

> The education he commenced in Ráb blossomed in a way different from what had been expected. For here there occurred a precipitous process of national awakening in the young boy, who now realised that he was first a Slav and a Slovak, and only then a 'Hungarian,' that is, a citizen of the Hungarian portion of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. This process took place in Štúr's consciousness under the influence of the teachings of the local gymnasium professor Leopold Petz — a German teacher of all things, a Slovak of German extraction, who having learned the 'hearth-speech of the Slovaks' only as an adult, became in his old age an ardent Slavophile in the spirit of… German ideas, that is, concepts chiefly derived from the German writer Johann Gottfried Herder, who idealised the Slavs. It is certainly to Petz as well that Štúr owed his familiarity with the selected writings of the great contemporary Czech and Slovak Slavophiles Šafárik and Kollár. Quite soon, Kollár's epic cycle *Slávy dcera* [The Daughter of Sláva] would become the Bible of Slavicism for Ľudovít Štúr, the alpha and the omega of his activity.[15]

ŠTÚR THE SLOVAK

Ľudovít Štúr's conception of, and attachment to, his particular homeland, that is, Slovakia, is threefold. First, he is firmly grounded in his Slovak nature, i.e. that of a person born of Slovak parents, as in the case of the 'young son' catechetically addressed by the pilgrim-poet of *The Slovaks, in Ancient Days and Now*:

> And who are your countrymen, young son?

discovery of a letter from King Matej Korvin 'proves that even the Kings of Hungary addressed their Slavic subjects in the Slavic tongue in matters of public importance, and it also testifies to the fact that the Czech tongue was familiar to, and favoured by, the courts of the Hungarian kings.'

[14] See 'Slavs, brothers!' and other of his writings from the time of the Slavic Congress in Prague, for example.

[15] Janaszek-Ivaničková, p. xvii. Pavel Josef Šafařík (Šáfarik in Slovak, 1795 – 1861) was a Slovak poet and writer, like Kollár, creative primarily in Czech.

My parents are Slovak, and so my countrymen are also Slovak — it is to their benefit that I am preparing myself, my countryman!

True are your words, young son.

While on his 'Journey through the Region of the Váh,' he makes something of a pilgrimage out of a visit to the first great poet of modern Slovak, Fr Ján Hollý, translator of Virgil and author of Slavic epics dealing with Svätopluk, SS Cyril and Methodius, and the Great Moravian Empire, topics which will also be of great import to Štúr's own literary compositions. Štúr speaks of Hollý's verse as arising 'from the most candid and cordial of hearts, and thus it is no surprise that it so moves the Slovaks.' We learn that, upon hearing that Hollý has set aside the composition of poetry, 'in the name of all sincere Slovaks [Štúr] begged him to take the lyre back down from the oak, once more to sing to us from the banks of the Váh' — a petition, which, considering the cultural struggle for the development of Slovak letters in which Štúr was already involved, is certainly more than mere courtesy. In the end, heartened by the news that a new collection of his work was currently in progress, the young poet joins the old in a cup of wine, toasting 'Slovakia, and ourselves.'

That Štúr is a Slovak by birth and language is an obvious thing, to us. Yet that was no sure matter in the times in which Štúr was fated to live, as we read from the continuation of his story of the Slovak boy, cited above:

The mother gives birth to her child and presses the innocent infant to her bosom; the baby wails and the mother soothes him with the words of her mouth, which shall become the child's mother tongue.

The child does not yet understand his mother's speech but his little eyes never leave her beloved countenance.

The child is weaned and grows and the mother chirps and chatters about him; he begins to understand, and to imitate his mother's voice. And the mother kisses her child and plays with him.

The child grows and speaks the words he has learnt from his mother's lips, and the mother's heart dances at the speech of her child.

[…]

And she rears him in fear of God, and he learns from his father, and his parents rejoice in their offspring.

The little son has grown, learning from his parents and teachers to fear God; learning all things in his mother tongue.

Yet, it is not necessarily as obvious as it seems. For as his consideration of the Slovak child continues, we learn that 'they,' i.e. the Magyar-majority government, plan to

> … tear your little son from your bosom and send him off to a settlement, where he shall have neither mother nor father, where he will have no one to talk with, and where he shall grow up without fear of God, deprived of all that is good.
>
> No one shall watch over your little son in that land, and the house in which he shall abide will remain foreign to him.
>
> They shall mock him there on account of his language, tormenting him, so that he will all the more willingly hold it in contempt himself.

Is this an expression of the twelve-year-old Štúr's anxiety when 'torn away' from his own home, he went off to Ráb for immersion in Magyar and German? Perhaps, but little did he suspect — or perhaps, after all, he did — that such violence would soon be written into law. Magyarising pressure on Slovak children was only to intensify. In 1874, some thirty years after this text was written, the government of Hungary enacted an official policy of forcibly relocating orphans and children deemed impoverished from their families to 'pure Magyar districts.'[16]

Who on earth would not be moved to anger at that? Thus, second, for Štúr, to be Slovak is *not* to be Magyar — as it was, it seems, for Fr Hollý as well:

> When I remarked in response that indeed he was a hermit of sorts, secluded here in the pensive region of the Váh, he set to praising the peace he enjoys in Madunice and its groves, which he finds so pleasing. He had been offered a much more significant parish, but he turned it down, as he said, because of his great preference for the peace and quiet he enjoys here. It has been reported, nonetheless, that he would have allowed

[16] Gilbert L. Oddo, *Slovakia and its People* (New York: Robert Speller and Sons, 1960), p. 145. This is also the subject of Svetozar Hurban Vajanský's aptly-entitled narrative poem *Herodes* (1879). See Svetozar Hurban Vajanský, *Sobrané diela* [Collected Works] Vol. IV, *Tatry a more* [The Tatras and the Sea] (Trnava: G. Bežu, 1924), pp. 139 – 173. Of course, the Magyars weren't the only ones to do such a thing. The Nazis instituted the same policies in Poland and Eastern Europe in their *Lebensborn* programme, and the European Americans strove to assimilate Native American children through their boarding schools in which they described their aim to be 'saving the man by killing the Indian.'

himself to be transferred to a certain parish, but because the curate there was devoted to the Magyar cause, he elected to remain here, being as he is the confirmed enemy of all renegade attitudes.

The key word here is 'renegade,' in Slovak: *odrodilstvo*. This word has connotations of degeneracy, in the primary sense of the term, that is to say, a person unnaturally abandoning the identity into which he was born. The threat that should be underscored here then, is not that of Magyars per se, but rather of those Slovaks like the 'curate devoted to the Magyar cause,'[17] or the Slovak gentry, who defected from their natural ethnic identity for personal advantage. We will deal with this theme of Magyars and Magyarisation, as well as that of the responsibility of every Slovak, every Slav, in the upkeep of Slavic nationality, later.

Third, Štúr's understanding of Slovak identity is based on a somewhat mythologised conception of an enduring, ancient culture, which exists among the Tatra mountains and river valleys, in unbroken succession from the days of the Great Moravian Empire. In his aforementioned letter to the editors of the *Literary Weekly*, he defines himself, and his nation, in these terms:

> I am a Slovak. My home is in the inaccessible Carpathian mountains and their valleys, in which, as your author justly notes, ancient customs and mores, entertainments, legends, traditions, sayings and other dear treasures of our nationhood, most especially our songs, are preserved in all of their purity, untainted by any foreign influence. It is true: all of this can be found among us in profusion. The Slovak sings hymns to God, and raises his voice in songs of praise of the heroes of past ages; he expresses himself in gloomy meditations and thus lightens the oppression, which the long-vanished heroic ages of which he sings knew nothing.

This is not the last time that we will catch a hint of self-description in his image of a singer brooding on the heroic ages of the past. Is Štúr not thinking of himself when he introduces the character of the Bard in *Matúš of Trenčín*?

> In ancient songs and legends lies
> The might of spells — a frightful force —
> For to him upon whom it alights

[17] Whom Štúr describes in but one strong word: *maďaroman*, i.e. Magyar-maniac.

The gift brings misery, a curse;
The fated man — 'tis not his choice —
Is emptied of himself, and all
That was human within him falls
Away forever, except his voice.

For anyone remotely familiar with the writings of Ľudovít Štúr it is hard to think of anything else here. Few are those in history so consumed with an idea — in this case, the liberty and union of the Slavic tribes — as to be as steadily, and single-mindedly, devoted to one and one thing only. Goethe wrote scientific papers as well as *Faust*; Dante was a political theorist as well as the author of the *Divina Commedia*; Mickiewicz excelled in erotic verse and descriptive sonnets as well as his magnificent monumental drama; Ľudovít Štúr, it seems, never picked up a pen without a thought of somehow furthering the Slavic cause.

The two narrative poems included in this book, *Svatoboj* and *Matúš of Trenčín* are testimony enough to that. But his fascination with Great Moravia, his grounding of Slovak identity in that Slavic Empire of the early middle ages, is found again and again in his publicistic works. In the greatest of these, his quasi-biblical *The Slovaks, in Ancient Days and Now*, patterned after Adam Mickiewicz's *Books of the Polish Nation and Polish Pilgrimage* (1832), he encourages his fellow countrymen to patriotic activity in the present by reminding them of the glories of the past. Their land, he states, was grand indeed:

> From the river Torysa, there near the Tisa, it stretched toward the broad Danube, and from thence to the Tatras, and beyond the Tatras it stretched far and wide, with Poland and Bohemia and Silesia, toward the farthest bounds of land: a great country it was! Great, as is the Danube among the rivers of Europe, and the Tatras among the mountains!

This is not mere nostalgia. It is a patrimony. And in the face of what was presently going on in Hungary, with the progressive suppression of Slovak nationality in favour of the Magyar majority, it is a fulcrum against which to rest the lever; it is a call to effective, and justified action:

> Long ago it was, O long ago, a thousand years ago, when on this land, over which you now tread, and in the bosom of which, your hard labour done, you shall lay down your bones, adding them to the bones of your

fathers, that a great nation came to be — great and populous, rich and widely-famed. And the name they called it by was Great Moravia: and this was the land and patrimony of Your Fathers.

The patrimony, of which Štúr speaks here, might be pushed back in history to the first part of the VII century, when the Frankish merchant Samo established a Slavic realm consisting of Moravians, Czechs and Sorbs, which may have comprised the lands of western Slovakia as well. Štúr mentions Samo once, in the list of early Slavic rulers included in the opening paragraphs of his *Slavdom and the World of the Future*, but, whether because the realm was ephemeral, evaporating at Samo's death, or whether because it did not provide the sort of dramatic legendary material as the story of Svätopluk and his venally feuding sons, it is the Great Moravian Empire (833 – 907)[18] to which he appeals as a lost, golden land. 'Great' it certainly was, comprising most of the West, and some of the South, Slavic lands into one whole: spreading from the Sorbs in modern day Germany through the Czechs and Slovaks, north into Silesia and Southern Poland, to exert some influence upon the westernmost regions of today's Ukraine, and south again through modern-day Hungary toward Slovenia and Croatia in the Southwest and Serbia in the Southeast. Of course, for Štúr, the main attraction of the Great Moravian Empire is that very comprehensiveness. As much of a Slovak as he is, he is nonetheless a Pan-Slavic dreamer, and Great Moravia is bathed in the golden nimbus of a dream, a vanished reality, which brought into being the unity of the Slavic 'tribes' he longed for, with Slovakia as the central pivot around which everything spins:

Who's never set foot on the Trenčín heights,
    Or ranged along the Váh with happy tread
Will find his soul incapable of flight,
    Unable to lift high his sluggish head
Where spirits, borne aloft on wing unfurled
    Soar through the sky, and seem to rule the world,

Over one hundred Mountains as they sweep
    And tremble over myriad pied vales,
Now over Poland to climb swift and steep,

[18] Anton Špiesz, *Ilustrované dejiny Slovenska: na ceste k sebauvedomiu* [Illustrated History of Slovakia: on the Path to Self-Consciousness] (Bratislava: Perfekt, 1992), pp. 17, 20.

Above Moravian summits now to sail,
Then down toward the Váh once more to swing
And, home on Nitra's aerie, fold the wing.
Matúš of Trenčín

It is the vanished glory of Great Moravia, of its capital, Slovak Nitra, that fires Matúš to his patriotic warring against the foreign usurper Robert, and it is no coincidence that Štúr describes his first triumphs thus:

On daring wings the soul, emboldened, soars.
This is no time for luxury and rest:
The Slovak regiments, refined in wars,
Now into neighbouring Moravia press,
Where town and keep submit to Nitra's terms,
And daughter strayed to mother now returns.

Now unto Danube gaily skips Morava,
A welcome friend, from infancy well-known;
To Danube too, that summer, comes the Váh
To whisper, *No more shall you be alone!*
While north to Wisła fleetly hastes Poprad
To bring her news of Matúš' daring thought.
Matúš of Trenčín

Slovakia, Moravia, the Danube (and thus the pre-Magyar Pannonia, Samo's realm), the Wisła (and thus southern Poland)… Matúš is doing nothing less than re-assembling the Pan-Slavic, or at least Austro-Slavic, Moravian Empire toward which Štúr himself is labouring. *This is no time for luxury and rest!* Štúr's narrator comments, and it is not hard to hear in this a direct address to his contemporaries. For if Great Moravia fell, she fell on the one hand because of the selfishness of individuals, who placed their own particular interest over the good of the whole,[19] and this ended in catastrophe:

Those moans reach Slovak ears like peals of doom,
As tolling bells oppress the orphaned heart.
Slovakia! They bear you to a tomb
Where you shall lie, benighted, set apart,

[19] A charge, in his Pan-Slavic writings, that he will constantly level at the Poles.

Though lifeless, in the world for all to see —
To toil, die, toil, and perish endlessly.
Svatoboj

It is interesting how here, as elsewhere in *Svatoboj*, Štúr uses 'Slovakia' interchangeably with 'Moravia' as a shorthand for the Empire as a whole. It is a *pars pro toto* strategy, as it underscores a theme that runs throughout much of Štúr's thought: the Slavs, from the Russians in the east to the furthest settlements in Lusatia in the west, are one nation, made up of distinct, but closely related, tribes. It also serves to firmly set before the eyes of his readers — he is writing in Slovak, after all — the ontological continuum of their present being to that distant, glorious, idealised past. The message is a simple one: what a shame it was to see our nation destroyed before it had time enough to become firmly established! What a shame it would be, in this new age of opportunity, to waste our chances, and allow our nation to sink out of reach again! We must all put our shoulders to the wheel.

More than once, chiefly in *Slavdom and the World of the Future*, but elsewhere as well, Štúr bemoans the practice of dying kings dividing their kingdom up between their sons and hoping for the best. For the 'worst' is what always occurs — envy rears its ugly head and a war breaks out, which is to the advantage of no one but foreigners awaiting the proper time to leap into the fray and carry off the spoils. The theme is found at the very dawning of Slavic pre-history, in the legend of Lech, Czech and Rus — protoplasts of the Poles, Czechoslovaks and Eastern Slavs — who, when they were setting out from home, were warned against disunity by their father, in a graphic metaphor. Three staves bound together are hard to break. Separated, they can be snapped over one's knee with ease, one after the other. It is a warning that, later, Svätopluk's sons too chose not to heed, which led to whole ages of subjection for their descendants:

> Svätopluk's oldest son Mojmír, having obtained the greatest share of his father's divided state, assumed his father's throne. But his brothers envied him his place, and, rebelling against him, enkindled a civil war, the flames of which consumed the land at last. At this was Satan delighted, seeing that all was proceeding according to his intentions. So, swiftly he drove the pagan Magyars forth from the hills and against the Christian Slovaks, inciting also the Germans against them, to their destruction.[20]

[20] Štúr, *The Slovaks, in Ancient Days and Now.*

Writing in *Archäologie in Deutschland,* the editors confirm the Magyar role in the downfall of the elder Svätopluk's empire, as the younger, known as Svätopluk II, rebelled against his brother, with their help, and that of the Bavarians[21] as well:

> [Svätopluk] allied himself with the Hungarians [*sic*] who had reappeared in the Carpathian Basin in 894 and were threatening Frankish Pannonia. This event triggered the Hungarian conquest, even if the Hungarian tribal association had not intended it.[22]

The role of Satan in all this must be listed under 'unconfirmed rumours,' or at best, as part of the quasi-biblical style adopted by Štúr for his *The Slovaks, in Ancient Days and Now.* It allows him to depict the Magyars more as a herd than a community, as they are 'driven' against the Christian Slovaks — which sidesteps the matter of the Christian Svätopluk's role in it all. At any rate, the emergence of the Magyars in Slovak history, at this crucial juncture at least, is described by Štúr as something diabolical. In writings such as these, which deal with the earliest interactions between the Magyars and the Slavs, Štúr rarely speaks of the former with anything less than unfeigned disgust. In *Svatoboj*, when the title character makes his long confession to the hermits he has taken up with, he speaks of the Magyars as 'savage pagan bands' and — with a deft shifting of the blame — suggests that they are 'allies of our allies,' i.e. not troops that we, good 'Christian Slovaks,' summoned forth, but 'savage pagan bands' called in by our allies, i.e. the Germans, who seem but little better than they:

> Our allies called up allies of their own
> — The savage pagan bands known as Magyars
> Who wander the wild steppes with no fixed home —
> Unto this weakened, squabbling land of ours.
> So Christians serve their brothers in the faith
> By urging pagans to put them to death!

[21] Špiesz, p. 24.

[22] 'Die Ungarn.' *Archäologie in Deutschland,* Sonderheft 2008: 75 – 108, p. 80a.

How much historical truth there is behind Štúr's literary handling of the ancient Magyars is, of course, beside the point. As we have mentioned, in a Hungary where magyarisation was the axe lain at the root of Slovak nationhood, one of the ways in which Slovak identity is confirmed is by underscoring the fact of one *not being a Magyar.* And if the nineteenth century Magyars were, on the whole, unkindly disposed to the Slovaks, Štúr takes the occasion to project the present situation of Magyar-Slav relations on the past. Once an oppressor, always an oppressor. The magyarising heavies of today are the direct, lineal descendants of the blood-quaffing savage hordes that laid waste to Great Moravia. They admit as much themselves, as the modern-day counsellors concocting plans to root out all ethnicity but their own are presented in *The Slovaks, in Ancient Days and Now*:

> And so they continued, saying: 'Because the Magyar nation is that which conquered this land and took unto itself the rule thereof, it is only right and just that their language should take precedence over all others and broaden its reach, while the languages of the subservient peoples should humble themselves before it. In time, they should be swept away, for good it is, and needful, that there be but one tongue in our motherland, and that one language that is to be spoken, that is to dominate all others, should be, by right, the tongue of the Magyar nation.'

It is a common thing to claim a moral victory when one cannot be expected on the field of battle. The Slovaks, although defeated by the superior might of the Magyars (and in the excerpt cited above, the entire Magyar argument is based on rights of conquest, brute force), are yet a higher culture, more refined. When they arrive at a *modus vivendi* with the invaders, who, it seems, are here to stay, the distinction between high and low culture, Christian and pagan, Slovak and Magyar, is brutal: 'The Slovaks agreed to the terms of this covenant and swore by their God to preserve the peace and not to take up arms against the Magyars. And these last, joyful at having achieved what they desired, quaffed blood to seal the agreement, for they were still pagans.'

A common, related theme of Štúr's writing in this vein is the ingratitude of the Magyars. They were a rough lot before they settled amongst the Slovaks, it seems, who introduced them not only to Christianity, but basic hygiene, as well. In this same work, he notes:

> Before this time, the Magyars had no permanent buildings or houses, for leading a nomadic life, they knew only quickly erected hovels and lean-

tos, in which filth reigned and no implements were to be found. It was the Slovaks who taught them how to construct clean, spacious dwellings and how to fashion various tools and implements for household use.

In 'Pan-Slavism and our Country,' Štúr's reasonable argument against a Magyar 'liberalism' that declares freedom of the press, on the one hand, while slurring over the fact that this is really all about freedom of the *Magyar* press, and suppression of all other types of free expression in the other languages of Hungary, leads to an extended excoriation of their ingratitude in the face of the benefits received at the hands of the Slovaks:

> And against whom did that Magyar liberalism come out so strongly? Against whom did it so fulminate? Whom did it wish to stifle, to destroy practically at one blow? Truly — one would hardly believe it — the Slavs!! The oldest, most ancient, most faithful companions of the Magyars. Their neighbours to the west and to the north, to the east and the south. The constant companions, surrounding neighbours, and friends of the Magyar nation from the very first days of their appearance in Europe, and throughout history. Those, who earnestly aided them to establish their commonwealth, who led them into the Christian Church, who taught them agriculture and the crafts; their instructors in the basics of education and enlightenment. This liberalism of theirs seeks the destruction of a good nation, an adventurous nation, a nation of comely men and women, full of ability; a nation upon whose wisdom and freedom, should they reflect a just a little, and weigh with honesty, certainly the Magyars, if anyone, should find that they infinitely depend.

All of this is part of Štúr's strategy of defining Slovak identity in contrast to all things Magyar, and is, as we have said, motivated by a perhaps understandable projection of the present difficulties of his nation upon the past. But Štúr does not always demonise the Magyars; here and there he extends an olive branch, seeking rapprochement — all would be well if *they* acted justly. Anyway, he takes pains, even in the polemical *The Slovaks, in Ancient Days and Now*, to refer to a better past, one in which, as he puts it above, 'Magyar and Slovak lived proudly, in one Hungarian homeland, both faithfully devoted to their common mother, in brotherhood:'

> Indeed, from time to time the motherland was threatened by various savage and murderous nations: Mongols, Tatars and Turks. But the con-

> joined swords of her united sons swiftly vanquished all these hordes — all those who had come intending to pasture their steeds and herds on the fat meadows, on the fields covered with thick stalks of grain, and to spill the blood of the citizens of our land.

Likewise, in 'The Contribution of the Slavs to European Civilisation,' we read:

> And here we find that it was the Slavs indeed who, undaunted, set themselves in firm opposition to the fanatic hordes, risking their very existence in long years of war in defence of the freedom of Europe and Christendom. Many a blow did they exchange on behalf of their brothers in this so exhausting, and therefore all the more heroic service. Here we see that at different times, varied Slavic nations led the resistance against the arch-enemy. They were supported in this endeavour by the Magyars, who in this case can be termed their allies.

In these descriptions of a Hungary united, it is interesting to read how the Magyars, raised to a higher civilisation by the Slovaks, stand in defence of their land against new savage hordes, described in terms that used to be applicable to themselves. In other words, national identity, in the writings of Ľudovít Štúr, is something that is always defined in contrast to others, as it is always under attack. In his early journal of pilgrimage to the Lusatian Sorb communities in eastern Germany, which he describes as the 'westernmost outposts of Slavdom,' he notes this conversation with two 'brother Slavs' — a Lusatian and a Pole — met by chance in a train compartment:

> Thereupon we talked about the Sorbs of Lusatia and of the gradual disappearance of their native language, which the Lusatian there present confirmed with pain, bemoaning the fact of the various ways in which the national speech is being uprooted, i.e. by the forcible imposition of German upon all schools, even village schools; the inability to introduce legal actions in court in Lusatian Sorbian, and so forth. In conclusion, he added that they are unable to serve the Lord God properly in any language save their mother tongue, for which reason, it seems, he does not attend the German cathedral church, although the citizens of Budyšin customarily go there, preferring instead to remain true to divine services in Sorbian.

This is the same thing that has been going on in Hungary;[23] the Germans are oppressing the Sorbs in the same manner as the Magyars are oppressing the Slovaks. All of the Slavs are in the same boat: all of the Slavs are in a manner of speaking awakened to a deeper understanding of their identity by constant pressure of forces from without, seeking to make them over into something else than what they are.

In this way, Štúr progresses along a straight path leading from an awakened consciousness of himself as a Slovak, through a comparative realisation of the similar problems faced by all Slavs (save Russia, of which we will speak more later), to identification as a Slav by considerations of a shared past and present — to agitation for a better, shared, future for the most numerous 'nation' in Europe.

ŠTÚR THE PAN-SLAV: THE SON OF SLÁVA

In order to understand Štúr's concept of Slavic brotherhood, we must first get his terminology straight. We have grown used to conflating the term 'nation' with 'state,' using them interchangeably. In common parlance, the United States is a 'nation.' Take, for example, the common American credo known as the 'pledge of allegiance to the flag.' At one point, the saecular confessor professes his fidelity to 'the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible.' This is not a reference to the Americans' ethnic identity, which of course is multifarious, but rather to the federal whole made up of the fifty individual states that constitute it — an allusion to the War between the States, the Civil War of the XIX century, and a pious statement of determination never to allow such a thing to happen again, by God… Curiously, we owe this conflation of terms to the Americans themselves, who carved up the map of Europe at Versailles. The determination to dismember the Habsburg and Hohenzollern empires was made at least a year previous to the conference at which the treaty bringing the Great War to a close was to take place. It created so-called 'rump states' of Austria and Hungary, re-establishing Poland, founding Czechoslovakia and other lands, the expanses of which were determined by (sometimes angrily) drawn ethnic borders. Thus, 'nation' and 'state' became more or less interchangeable ideas in the case of

[23] 'The Education Laws of 1879, 1833 and 1891 made the teaching of Hungarian compulsory in kindergartens and primary and secondary schools. Soon there were no Slovak secondary and higher elementary schools in [Slovak] Upper Hungary, and between 1880 and 1890 the number of church schools fell from 1,700 to 500.' Paul Lendvai, *Total Blindness: the Hungarian Sense of Mission and the Nationalities* (New Brunswick: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 300.

newly-homogenised nations with only trace elements of ethnic minorities who could not, or would not, be transported from their natural homeland across the border to the one determined by Woodrow Wilson. After World War I, nearly all of the Hungarians truly are Magyars. 'Nation' now equals 'state,' and the term also began to be used in reference to those countries of immigrants, like the USA, Canada, Australia, where the population is nowhere near homogeneous.

For Štúr, the key terms are *národ* and *kmeň*. The first of these terms, signifying 'nation,' is a community bound by ties of blood, something that the term, found in all the Slavic languages, carries implicitly within it, as it springs from cognates such as *rod* [house, clan] *narodiť sa* [to be born], and so forth. It is this which prompts Štúr, in writings such as *Slavdom and the World of the Future*, to speak of Slavic nation-building as an extended family, rather than a political association of convenience.[24] The *kmeň,* or 'tribe,' is the particular, local manifestation of the nation: Poles, Czechs, Russians, Sorbs, etc. It is for this reason too, logically, that what we call the Slavic languages, Štúr speaks of as localised 'dialects' of the one Slavic tongue, rather than languages in their own right. Thus, according to Štúr's conception, there are as a result only a few large nations inhabiting Europe — the Latin, the Germanic, the Celtic and the Slav — although there are many states.

Of course, such groupings have more to do with linguistics than physical kinship. In the case of the Slavs, though, where all of the Slavic languages retain to this day a high degree of mutual intelligibility, it is easy to see how Štúr, and others, would arrive at such conclusions.[25] And thus, in the introductory paragraphs to his 'Journey to Lusatia,' he writes:

[24] Although, in the passage to which we refer, Štúr elaborates his statement using Poland as an example, this connection is even more apparent in the Russian term for 'homeland' — *rodina*. The same word in Slovak, Czech and Polish (*rodina, rodzina*) means 'family.' The Russian Slavophile Ivan Kireyevsky similarly theorised that whereas 'western states rest upon subjugation, the Russian state is founded upon familial peace' [*rodinný mir*] Cf. Samuel Štefan Osuský, *Šturova filozofia* [Štur's Philosophy] (Bratislava: Slovenská liga, 1936), p. 33.

[25] I am always reminded here of the late, great Prof. William Schmalstieg, an authority on Lithuanian, Balto-Slavic, and linguistics in general, under whom I had the honour and great pleasure of studying Old Church Slavonic in the 1980s. Once, in response to a question concerning the difference between a 'language' and a 'dialect,' he responded: 'A language has an army.' Mutual intelligibility or not, the inroads that English has made all over the world since the Second World War seem destined to put an end to any Pan-Slavic dreams of a Slavic lingua franca. Quite recently, my wife and I were approached by a Ukrainian tourist in Kraków, who asked us to take his picture against the backdrop of the church of SS Peter and Paul on Ulica Grodzka. He made his request in English, and thanking us, complimented us on 'our beautiful city,' encouraging us to visit 'the beautiful cities of Kyiv and Lviv' — in English, despite our Slavic 'brotherhood.'

> The natural affection I have for my nation, which grew stronger immediately upon my acquisition of a clearer consciousness of my own self and my fellow-countrymen, augmented in good time through the lecture of the poetry of our priceless Kollár, swelled year by year, greater and greater in my breast, attracting me to everything that could help me to a better knowledge of our nation, as expressed in all of its tribes.

Quite clearly, the 'nation' he speaks of consists of the Slavs in general, of which his own Slovaks, and the Sorbs he is about to describe, are 'tribes,' the local expressions of the greater, organic whole. It is what allows him to speak of 'our' victory over the Turks at the lifting of the Siege of Vienna in 1683 by Polish King Jan III Sobieski,[26] 'our' cities, as in his complaint of their being overrun by a foreign (i.e. non-Slavic) element:

> So it goes for us Slavs, that we frequently find ourselves pushed out of our main cities by non-residents, not only in those regions close to foreign parts, and where foreign elements have widely spread, but also in purely Slavic regions. Examples of this are many and obvious: I might point out Trnava and Bystrica in Slovakia, Brno in Moravia and Kraków in Poland, etc.
>
> *Journey to Lusatia*

Likewise, 'our patriot' describes the perils faced by 'our language' although the tongue in question is the Lusatian Sorb, and the patriot, not a son of Slovakia, but rather Jan Hraběta, a Czech. Likewise, when in the essay 'Slavdom and the World of the Future,' he counts up '16 million speakers of the Slavic tongue in Austria,' he has in mind all the speakers of Czech, Slovak, Polish, Croatian, Serbian, and Ukrainian taken together, for all their tongues, to his way of thinking, are merely dialects of the one common Slavic language.

He is not alone in this. Before him, two Slovak pan-Slavs, Ján Kollár and Pavel Šafárik (or Šafařík, as he spelt it in Czech), spoke in similar fashion. In his influential essay *On Literary Reciprocity among the Slavic Tribes* (1836), the poet Kollár speaks of: 'the common participation of all parties and tribes in the spiritual and intellectual fruits of their nation through a reciprocal

[26] In his speech to the Slavic Congress in Prague: 'It was us that defeated the Turks, but the Germans ascribe that to themselves.'

purchase and lecture of books published in all the Slavic dialects.'[27] As for Šafárik, the author of the influential *Slovanské starožitnosti* [Slavic Antiquities] (1837), an eloquent testimony to his Pan-Slavic views is provided by Kollár in his sermon 'The Greatness of our Nation.' Upon visiting Šafárik in Prague and noticing the large map of Slavdom[28] hanging on the wall behind glass, he notes:

> When I asked him why he had hung it there, he told me of the national pride and joy it gives him to gaze upon the greatness of our nation, the many lands of which it is occupied, how broadly it spreads, how much it encompasses.[29]

'All of this is our homeland! Slávia, Omnislávia!' Kollár himself gushes, later in the sermon, going so far as to propose — it seems — a common name for the grand expanse of Slavdom — *Všeslávia*. Thus it is no surprise that Štúr, as admittedly under the spell of Kollár as he was in his youth, travelling through Upper and Lower Lusatia with the earlier poet's *Slávy dcera* in hand, should speak of his westernmost Slavic brethren[30] in such terms: 'the heart of each ardent Slav must glow with pride and esteem for them. For they, although few in number, have still remained true to their language and the traditions of their forefathers, in spite of all the fierce wars and catastrophes which have been inflicted upon our nation.' Again, *our* nation. The 'Journey to Lusatia' is interesting, not only as a discovery to his readers at home of the Slavic remnant in eastern Germany and their ancient past, but also an example of behaviour: like them, the Slavs of Hungary must also 'remain true to their language and traditions' in spite of all that may be inflicted upon them.

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[27] Jan Kollár, *O literní vzájemnosti mezi rozličnými kmeny a nářečími slovanského národu* [On Literary Reciprocity among the Various Tribes and Dialects of the Slavic Nation] (Praha: Jan S. Tomíček, 1853), p. 3.

[28] Referred to as a *zeměvid slavjanský,* i.e. 'Slavic landimage' — a neologism intended to avoid borrowings from foreign languages. It didn't stick. In contemporary Czech, Slovak and Polish, one uses *mapa.* An even more frenetic example of linguistic Pan-Slavism is provided by Kollár's perhaps over-ebullient motto: *Slávme slávne slávu slávov slávnych* — 'Let us nobly celebrate the glory of famous Slavs.'

[29] Jan Kollár, *Prózy* [Prose Writings] (Prague: Knihovna Klasiků, 1956), p. 291.

[30] Or *Slavobratří,* to cite another of his charming neologisms.

ŠTÚR THE ROMANTIC IDEALIST

Following hard upon a sense of kinship with other Slavs, there arises in Štúr a sweet, romantic nostalgia for past ages, and an idealisation of the Slavic people of the present. As far as the first is concerned, along with his dusty labours, searching archive and library for old Slavic texts and his typical, given the time period, interest in the preservation of folksong, Štúr enthusiastically searches out the slightest archaeological evidences of pre-Christian life in the lands he visits. With what enthusiasm does he ascend Prašica (Frageberg), a mountain near the Lusatian city of Budyšin:

> That like the Greeks — those long-extinct brethren of ours — we Slavs also believed in auguries, cannot be doubted. The very name of this summit […] offers ample proof, as do the legends that still live amongst the people. According to these, the priest would stand in the centre of this rock and emit utterances in answer to the questions posed by those enquiring of their future (hence the etymology of the name, Prašica, 'to enquire into'). To one side of the boulder there is a hole. According to folk belief, this was the ear of the god who concealed himself in the depths of the rock. These votives, these stones […] justly might be named the obelisks and pyramids of far-distant Slavic antiquity.

Whether the 'legends that still live amongst the people' are of ancient date, or just wishful thinking, is better left to anthropologists to decide. Štúr himself, a product of the age that saw Madame de Staël develop her theories of a Northern antiquity to rival the Mediterranean past, who greeted the *Rukopisy královédvorský a zelenohorský*[31] as hard evidence of ancient poetry in Czech, dives in with both feet. His reference to 'our long-extinct brethren, the Greeks' is redolent of the North/South fad of the Romantic Age; the 'ear of the god' reference may well be something that he heard from the locals with whom he'd clambered up there, but his enthusiastic ascription to 'obelisks and pyramids of distant Slavic antiquity' is simply disarming in its naïveté. But after all, 'It is the most powerful feeling to gaze upon the splendid remains of the presence and glory of one's own people, for they best

[31] The 'Manuscripts of Králové Dvůr and Zelená hora,' were supposedly discovered by Václav Hanka circa 1817, but their authenticity was immediately questioned. Most scholars consider them forgeries, although even Goethe was enthused by them at the time.

direct our minds toward the happier past, contrasted with our present state of subjection, which latter they allow us to feel most sorely.'

That the ancient Slavs must have had some religious sense, not to say organisation, seems doubtless. They were, after all, as human as any. However, for whatever reason, be it the lack of a written language before the advent of SS Cyril and Methodius, or the swiftness, with which they accepted Christianity from both German and Thessalonian, except for a very few carvings in stone and wood[32] the ancient Slavs have left no record of their beliefs, to say nothing of the marbles left behind by 'our brethren the Greeks.' Mediaeval chroniclers conflated supposition with what they learned of the classical pantheon in their schools; this and the paucity of material artefacts leads the greatest of modern scholars of Slavic antiquity, Aleksander Brückner, to shrug with a sigh: 'After setting aside all the mythological inventions of old times, as well as the suppositions of more recent ones, the material that remains is so skimpy, that all conclusions to be arrived at concerning the essence of that mythology are, it seems, out of the question. Really, all we have are a few names which, to cap it all off, elude all analysis.'[33] Yet Štúr is undeterred. He is led to a dramatic cliff by his Lusatian hosts, and reports of it thus:

> In ancient pagan times, the steep, soaring cliffs doubtlessly served as a temple of sorts, since such were frequently located in such eerie, awe-inspiring locales. To this day people still point out the place where, in ancient times, according to popular legend, the idol of the god Flinc once stood, poured of pure gold. This Flinc was thought to be able to raise the dead back to life, but I doubt that he was a Slavic god, as his name has nothing Slavic about it; I reckon that later ages, rather, confused some original Slavic god with Flinc.

[32] The most famous of these is the stone idol of the four-faced god Światowid discovered in the River Zbrucz. See Henryk Łomiański, *Religia Słowian i jej upadek* [The Religion of the Slavs, and its Decline] (Warsaw: PWN, 1985), p. 158. This idol was discovered in 1848, and presented to the Archeological Museum in Kraków by Mieczysław Potocki on 13 May 1851, where it remains to this day. The donation was recorded in Josef Miloslav Hurban's *Slovenskje Pohladi* [Slovak Perspectives] 1851:I.5 (25 June), p. 198b., where in true Slavic antiquarian fervour, he notes that the idol is 'wearing a cap such as can be seen amongst the people still today.'

[33] Aleksander Brückner, *Mitologia słowiańska i polska* [Slavic and Polish Mythology] (Warsaw: PWN, 1985), p. 44.

Note that it is the name that he doubts here, not the existence of the Slavic idol…

Before he sets off on the final leg of his journey home, Štúr visits one more site, where the remnants of 'ancient Slavic altars' are to be found: a mound in Königshain, near Görlitz on the Polish border. In reading through Štúr's pilgrimages to what are — to him — obviously the remnants of Slavic temples, one begins to wonder if Brückner and his colleagues haven't been looking in the wrong places? In any event, a pilgrimage it is. For, as he gazes from this height toward the peaks in neighbouring Silesia and Moravia,

> sending off in their direction my most ardent words of greeting, one after another, I remained a long while amidst these ancient monuments. To these sacred altars I brought an offering of tears on behalf of our race such as, I reckon, had not been poured there for many a year. Over the fields that stretched out on all sides one could already sense delightful spring in the offing, the first stirrings of which I took for a benign response to the questions I posed to the deities hidden in the depths, which still watch over us.

Fairly bold that silent sacrifice to the deities in the depths, for a Lutheran minister, but this is the Romantic age, and Ľudovít Štúr is as romantic as any man.

Certainly, the reference to the yet-extant Slavic gods, still vibrant enough to respond to his questions, is a literary trope. However, it is a fact that Štúr idealises the Slavs of his own day and age in the same manner in which he idealises the Slavic past. The Slavs he comes among in Lusatia are model physical specimens:

> Since Sunday came round during the time I spent in Budyšin, I visited both the Evangelical and the Catholic churches in which the services were held in the Sorbian tongue. Both churches were packed, even though the weather was grim and rainy, and in both I saw much attention paid to the service, and much piety, which made me right glad as conclusive evidence of the godliness of our people. I also had occasion to cast my eyes about the congregations gathered there. The greater part of the men were of tall and robust posture, strong of limb; the women too were of comely form. Their eyes — as is common amongst the Slavs — are bright and piercing. They are fresh-faced, with round features. The fairer sex still mostly clad

themselves in their national dress, which does not differ much from the costume of our willowy Slovak women.

And they are models of moral excellence, too. On this same journey, he tells the story of requesting the aid of a chance Lusatian passer-by met on the road. It was a hot day, and he asked him to help carry his load of books some of the way along the road to his next stop:

> My companion kept me company all the way into Kamjenc, even though his own road would not have led him so far. We travelled together for several hours. When we reached the city at evening, I paid him a few coppers for his cheerful aid, but when he glanced at the money, he wanted to give me back half of the sum, with the words *jara wele ste mi dali*. Not only did I not take it back, but, moved by the man's disinterestedness and honesty, I wished to give him even more, which of course he stubbornly and absolutely refused. By his clothes I knew him for a poor man, and yet his poverty did not incite him to greed, or even to accepting recompense greater than what was just. Such virtues still find their homeland amongst us, where they abide almost as refugees, banished from elsewhere and serving as one more laughing stock for those who defame us. But come, take refuge here in the regions where our people live, you ornaments of humanity: amongst us, I reckon, you shall be preserved until better times come round!

The Slavs, it seems, are so pure, that they don't even need legislative institutions. Their 'tribal customs' and inherent morality are enough of a guide, as he reports in *Slavdom and the World of the Future*:

> It is not for the Slavs to plan, delineate and prescribe details in statal terms and legislation; let us leave such petty officialdom to the bureaucrats, so distasteful to our tribes. Amongst us is the fulness of our tribal customs, to which code and regulation are unnecessary. All of this flows directly from our moral state, and these are obvious to all of us at first glance. That which is the consequence of our moral nature is so much more valuable than all of your bylaws and regulations, paragraphs and measures, letters patent and resolutions of your bureaucrats, your Germans!

The only Slavs he does find blame with in his writings are: the Poles, for their arrogant particularisation,[34] those Serbs and Montenegrins who treated their rulers so poorly, and the Croatian Ban Josip Jelačić, for his supposed timidity in Slavic issues and servility to Vienna. However, it will be noted that these are political criticisms of political faults, not directed at any sort of inherent natural flaw.

Slavic idealisation serves an ideological aim in literary works such as *The Slovaks, in Ancient Days and Now*. Here we have a description of the ancient Slavic *polis*:

> Who might that be walking there, staff in hand, wrapped in a cloak tatty and worn; who climbs up on the rock that stands lonely in the empty field; and what host is that, which gathers round him, gazing with respect at his noble figure? The man on the rock is the chosen leader of the people who surround him, the leader who is to remember whence he came and whither he may descend, if he were not to rule his people with righteousness and justice.

The same trait he finds fault with — and not without reason — when speaking of the Poles, that is, elected kings subject to the consent of the governed, so to speak, he sets forth here as a praiseworthy characteristic of ancient Slavic commonwealths. Of course, the thrust is obvious to anyone steeped in the history of the Slavic people, especially Štúr's own Slovaks and Czechs: what we need, naturally, is a king from among us. Rulers imposed from without, like the Habsburgs — not the mention the Magyars — do not fit the bill.

The manner in which the idealisation of the Slavs is carried out in the narrative poem *Matúš of Trenčín* is quite interesting. During the decisive battle at Nitra, the walls are defended by a heroic captain of the Magyar Robert's troops, curiously named Roland. Štúr gives him his due — Roland is heroic, and the brave Slovak troops pay dearly for opposing him. He finally

[34] Polish Pan-Slavists are few and far between. Walerian Krasiński is one colourful exception to the rule; Alexander Maxwell provides an interesting introduction to this oddball in his article 'Walerian Krasiński's *Panslavism and Germanism* (1848): Polish Goals in a Pan-Slav Context,' in *The New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, 42 (2008):101-120. Although there were Polish delegates at the Slavic Congress in Prague, Georges Luciani points out that there were *none* at the follow-up Congress of Moscow in 1867 — no surprise considering the 'mutual hatred' between the two peoples and the January Insurrection of 1863 falling just four years previous. See Georges Luciani, 'Du Congrès de Prague (1848) au Congrès de Moscou (1867)' [From the Congress of Prague (1848) to the Congress of Moscow (1867)] in *Revue des études slaves* 47 (1968): 85-93.

falls when the second Slavic hero of the work, Boleslavín, finds a moment of advantage in their duel, raises his sword aloft, and:

'Die, foreigner! You must!' calls out,
In raging wrath, Boleslavín.
And from above, with one swift clout
He splits Roland's helmet in twain.

Roland, like Robert, is not a Slav — not with a name like that. He is a foreigner, an invader of Slovakia, and falls, fighting for what is not his. It is perhaps no coincidence that it is not Matúš, but Boleslavín, who fells the enemy in an uprush of patriotic fervour. For Boleslavín is not a Slovak, but a Czech. And that is just the point: he is a Slav defending Slavdom; no Slavic tribesman is away from home, as long as he finds himself within the bounds of 'Všeslávia.'[35]

Now, every Troy has its Sinon, and Slavdom is no exception to the rule. Ctibor and Radmír, erstwhile comrades in arms of bold Boleslavín and Matúš, overcome by the lucre and promises of King Robert, connive to abandon Matúš at the very moment he needs them most. Wavering more out of fear than from pangs of conscience, they hold their troops back until, finally, when they're sure the battle is going against Matúš, they turn their men away, and the Slovak forces are routed, Matúš' great dream of resurrecting the Moravian Empire shattered. Previous to their final abandonment of the Slovaks, Ctibor and Radmír worked to undermine Matúš' confidence by spreading the disheartening rumour of Piotr Piotrovich, the count of Bretčan, breaking troth with Matúš and thus leaving his eastern flank unprotected. Still the doughty Matúš marched on, and we forget all about the traitorous count until, near the conclusion of the work, lo and behold:

Even the Count of Bretčan (ever true,
    Though slandered by the perjury of men),
Hearing of Matúš' baneful fall, he too
    Could not hold out long by himself, and when
Dansa attacked in all his massive might,
    Piotr fell — bravely — in the uneven fight.

[35] Part of the retouching of history in *Matúš of Trenčín* concerns the character of Matúš himself. Štúr deftly evades the question of his hero's ethnicity, which may well have been Magyar (Csák), by shrouding his genesis in a Byronic darkness. 'So, you know Skalka, the castle above Trenčín? / Monks brought him there, they say, when he was small. / Where he was born, who his folks might have been, / This no one knows, and no one ever shall.'

Roland, the foreigner, had to die. It could not be otherwise. Piotr Piotrovich, a Ruthene, and therefore a brother Slav, is proven as pure as snow. Might it have been otherwise? It's doubtful. Ctibor and Radmír are truly exceptions that prove the rule. And yet — is this not a lesson, too? The only way the Slavic troops could have been defeated is… by the Slavs themselves. And that for the second time, after all. For in the story of the fall of the Great Moravian Empire, told in the poem *Svatoboj*, and elsewhere, what initiated the process of disintegration in the grand, ancient Central European state of Svätopluk was neither Magyar invasion nor German pressure, but the traitorous falling out of his sons.

Let this be a lesson to the Slavs. Štúr certainly intends it to be. In *Svatoboj*, when the eponymous hero reveals to the hermits (who seem to live so deep in the wilds, that the rumours of the fall of the Moravian state did not reach them) his role in that affair, they seek to turn him from his intention to spend the rest of his life doing penitence, and return him to the battlefield. Svatoboj wavers, but then, with resignation, demurs:

'God will have none of such a sinner's aid.
And I am steeped in sin, from heel to head.
Here shall I serve Him, in this quiet glade,
To all the world's concerns I am quite dead.
But God the most merciful will never cease
To pour on the repentant grace and peace.

'And our despoiled land lies like these wilds:
Deserted; there's no man that I might bring
To war — here a woman, there an orphaned child…
That's all. A winter harsh stifled our spring.
Perhaps, in future years, some great Moravian
Scion will arise to liberate our nation.'

A deep silence fell then, as Svatoboj's
Words died away. And for long no one spoke,
Until at last, the three hermits took voice
Again: 'And yet, indeed there still is hope:
Capable youths develop from orphans,
And faithful mothers form them into men.

'Such shall, perhaps, be the nation's saviours.
But where a proper leader will they find?
You, Svatoboj, abandoned Great Moravia,
Yet her salvation's always on your mind.
So years can pass… Its ancient ardour gone,
Why, all of Christendom might be undone!

This is one of the most intriguing and well-handled aspects of the poem. Svatoboj is an anti-hero, but not because of what he'd done. Rather, it is because of what he refuses to do: shrug off his despair and return to the fray. If all the Slavs were to get up off their backsides and put their shoulders to the wheel, what might they not accomplish?

ŠTÚR THE PAN-SLAV: PRAGUE AND THE AUSTRO-SLAVIC DREAM

Indeed in that year of revolutions that shook all of Europe, the so-called Spring of the Peoples in 1848, it seemed as if the time had come for practical work on behalf of the Slavic nation. In his circular letter 'Slavs, Brothers!' calling upon all the Slavic nations to gather in Prague at the Slavic Congress summoned for that May, referring to other practical nationalist stirrings, such as the Pan-German National Assembly in Frankfurt, he says:

> The time has arrived for us Slavs, as well, to come to an understanding and to unite together in a common enterprise. Accordingly, in enthusiastic and joyful agreement with the many requests that have been sent to us from the various Slavic regions, we call upon all the Slavs of the Austrian monarchy, appealing to all who enjoy the confidence and trust of our nation, all, to whose hearts our general welfare is dear, to gather together in the age-renowned Slavic city of Czech Prague on 31 May of this year, where we shall deliberate together all matters which pertain to the good of our nation. And should any Slavs who live beyond the borders of our empire wish to honour us with their presence, they shall receive a cordial welcome among us.

One of the currents of thought aiming at an autonomous political system for the Slavs in those heady days, when all the world seemed moving toward a juster, more representative form of government, was known as Austro-Slavism. This political movement, acknowledging the numerical prepon-

derance of Slavs in the Austrian Empire and Hungarian Kingdom, sought to effect a tightening of the bonds between these 'tribes' and the eventual formation of some sort of statal organisation in which it would be they, not Germans or Magyars, who would be in charge of their destiny, their educational system, and their internal matters — though with a Habsburg monarch at their head. (Curiously enough, the 'trialism' of which Franz Ferdinand was suspected might have realised this, had he not been assassinated in 1914). At first, Štúr was cautiously supportive of such a scheme. In his 'Address to the Slavic Congress,' he said:

> Up to this very day, we have had no autonomous Slavic commonwealth within the borders of Austria. Let us express ourselves as follows: *We wish to remain in the Austrian Empire as autonomous Slavic commonwealths.* Let us neither say that we desire the preservation of Austria, nor that we wish to create an Austro-Slavic realm. Such a statement would deprive us of the sympathy of the European nations. Let us rather say that, as autonomous Slavic commonwealths, we wish to remain under the Austrian government. In this way, we shall place the accent on the Slavs — following this, the Austrian government will find itself able to live with us on this basis.
>
> For this reason, we must crush the power of the Magyars. As long as the Magyars are in the ascendant, and the Czechs are paralysed, all attempts at inducing the Austrian cabinet to busy itself with Slavic politics will be vain.
>
> I suggest:
>
> 1. That we desire the creation of autonomous, united Slavic commonwealths within the bounds of Austria.
>
> 2. Immediately thereafter, to impel the Austrian government to move to shatter Magyar dominance.

Just how cautiously he moved in support of Austro-Slavism is evidenced by the words which bring his 'Slavs, brothers!' to a conclusion. It is perhaps not without significance, that heartfelt invitation to 'the Slavs living beyond the borders of our empire.' Štúr never let his eye shift too far away from all of Slavdom; it's as if he were carrying that *zeměvid slavjanský* of Šafařík's around in his heart. Even had the Austro-Slav plan been realised, it is hard to imagine that he would ever quite renounce striving for unity with all of the Slavic lands. As it was, the guns of Windischgrätz, which quickly dispersed

the Slavic Congress, and the repression which fell upon the participants of the Prague Uprising in June of that year, confirmed him in his mistrust of Austria. The Slovak uprising later that year, in concert with the Croats and aimed at the Magyars (who were themselves in revolt against Austria), was at first supported by the Austrians (and achieved quite a few military victories) before the Magyars, regrouping under Kossuth, began to repel them, retake the Slovak counties, and reimpose Magyar government. What seemed promising to the Slovaks at the beginning of the conflict — perhaps even the separation of Slovakia from Hungary as a crown land in its own right — evaporated once the Russians entered the conflict at the behest of Vienna. The Magyar revolt put down, the Austrians no longer needed the aid of the Slovaks, and the situation returned to the *status quo ante bellum.* Thus Gilbert Oddo sums up the result of the Slovak uprising:

> Vienna knew full well that the Magyars had come within a whisker of making their revolt stand up. To incite them again now, by dismembering Hungary, would insure that anti-Habsburg resentments in Budapest would continue to smoulder and grow. And then next time the Magyar revolt might succeed. […] Accordingly the emperor, perhaps swayed by this kind of 'real politique' on the part of his chief advisors, very neatly forgot his proffers of support for the Slovak cause. They were made, after all, in ambiguous fashion and during the flush of revolt and couldn't be considered binding. Thus Slovakia was thrown back to the Magyar wolves.[36]

And so: intensified magyarisation. In this context, it is easier to understand the rather harsh-sounding words pronounced by Štúr in his address. He saw clearly, at least as far as the present and near future were concerned, and read the consequences of disunion and failure correctly:

> It won't suffice for all the regions merely to have equal political rights, they need to be autonomous. First, the Magyar must be destroyed, and then, let the Danube unite our regions. We want to govern ourselves. The rest will be self-evident. You want equal rights for the minority along with the majority — but that's just not possible. If the Czech does not prevail in the Czech lands, the truly Slavic life will not take root here. And if the Magyar is not destroyed, then we'll merely be talking about

[36] Oddo, p. 120.

> a Czech culture, for we would have lost the organ which unites us with the Yugoslavs. The Danube is a Slavic river. We must become masters of the Danube, which would provide us with a road to the south of Europe.

It would be wrong to read such statements calling for the 'destruction of the Magyar' as a call to genocide. If Štúr had, as we do, the experiences of the twentieth century behind him, he certainly would have chosen other manners of expression. What he is doing, however, is using drastic language to address a drastic situation. If the Magyar power to oppress the Slavic nations inhabiting Hungary is not destroyed, that will lead to the destruction of the Slavic nations themselves. As he notes in his 'Glance at Current Events in Slavdom, 1848:'

> In these days, when nearly all the nations of Europe are acquiring their liberty, when equality and fraternity are being vowed to all, the Slavs subject to the crown of Hungary are also yearning to cast off the ancient and unfair Magyar yoke. But that the Magyars, fellow-countrymen of the Mongols, comprehended the spirit of this age, can be seen from the fact that, not only did they not concede anything to the nations inhabiting Hungary in respect to their ethnic nationality, but, what is more, they began repressing them more than ever before and imprisoned all who dared speak of the sacred rights of their nation.

And in *Slavdom and the World of the Future*:

> But let us be clear about one thing: Magyar liberalism, which by its own definition sets itself to the task of establishing enlightenment and liberty in Hungary, has suffered up to this very moment from one great wound — a wound, which from its very inception was fatal, and made of it a laughing-stock in the eyes of the world and suspicious and hated in the eyes of the Slavs. And that wound is this: the enlightenment and liberty for which the Magyars profess to be fighting is intended for the Magyar nation alone. Magyar liberalism is, therefore, to the highest degree, nothing but egoism and tyranny.

In this situation, it is easy to understand the bitterness that emerges, time and again, from Štúr's writings, especially *The Slovaks, in Ancient Days and Now*, despite the fact that this particular text was composed in 1841, nearly a full ten years before the rollercoaster of 1848:

> The wind that booms, echoes with the voice proper to him; the bird sings in his own voice and the beasts refuse not to bellow in their natural voices, but You, man! are forbidden to speak in your own tongue!
>
> Your oppressors set you lower than the brutes, lower than the birds and lower than the realm of things incarnate, yet you look upon this with apathetic eye.
>
> […]
>
> Now what Greek, I ask you, will address a fellow Greek in Yiddish? What Italian will turn to another Italian in German? How then is the Slovak to address his fellow Slovaks?

The situation of the non-Magyar nations in Hungary was untenable. After all attempts at creating autonomy for the Slavs proved futile, the term Pan-Slav was used as a cudgel against any and all Slovak attempts at accentuating their ethnicity. In words that foreshadow those of Janko Jesenský two generations later,[37] Štúr, in his *Slavdom and the World of the Future* (1852), notes with gall:

> Should someone or other retire from public to private life, they cried: Suspicious! What's he conspiring? Should someone else emerge from private to active public life: Suspicious! He's looking to work up a cult of the individual and undermine liberty! That fellow there is a poor man: Suspicious! He'll sell his services to those who would fight against liberty! That other fellow is wealthy: Suspicious! He'll be using his money to assemble hirelings for the fight against liberty! This one's like that, that one's like this — to the guillotine! Off with his head! Such was the situation to which the frenzy about Pan-Slavism arrived in our own country. Someone wanted to reform our wretched Slavic schools — Pan-Slavist! Someone published a book for our neglected nation: Pan-Slavist! Someone founded a charitable association — Pan-Slavist! That's a conspiracy of Pan-Slavists! Someone's arranged a Slovak entertainment for us Slovaks: Pan-Slavist! Voices were raised in pain at the injustices done

[37] 'What's with the Pan-Slav! Instead of saying *kissaszonka* for 'little miss,' he says *slečna!* For 'I kiss your hands' he pops off with *ruky bozkávam* instead of *kezítcsókolom*; calls himself *služobnik* for 'your humble servant' and not *alászolgája*, and when you say 'Praise the Lord,' *dicsértesék*, he comes back at you with *naveky ameň* 'for ever and ever,' just as he should, but… in Slovak!… He uses the plural in formal address… And did you see how his name is spelt on his shingle? With an *S, not SZ!*… Pan-Slav… He takes his dinner and supper at Heindl's, where he orders in Slovak…' Janko Jesenský, *Cestou k slobode, 1914-1918* [On the Road to Freedom] (Turčianský svätý Martin: Matica Slovenská, 1933), pp. 7-8.

> to our nation: Pan-Slavists! In the end, anyone who dared say any word about the Slovak nation was already called a Pan-Slavist.

That such should be the case is not surprising, though one might say, following Július Mésároš, that the situation of fear in which the Magyars lived was created by themselves:

> The more that the Magyars pushed through their idea of a reformation of Hungary into a Magyar nation-state, thus increasing for themselves the resistance of the non-Magyar Nations against this politics of hegemony, the more the Spirit of Pan-Slavism waxed in Hungary, and consequently the struggle against the Plan-Slavic danger.[38]

With Austria out of the question, and the attempts at uniting the Austrian Slavs under the Habsburg crown proven to be pipe-dreams, Ľudovít Štúr plays his last and final card: the only hope for Slavic autonomy is in the annexation of all the 'tribes' of Slavdom under the sceptre of Russia.

ŠTÚR THE PAN-SLAV: IS IT NOT RUSSIA, INDEED?

Despite all his disappointments, Štúr never seems to have lost his optimism. His work *Slavdom and the World of the Future* foretells the advent of great things for the Slavs — something that Halina Janaszek-Ivaničková feels was influenced by his contact with Hegel's philosophy during the two years (1838 – 1840), which he spent at university in Halle:

> At the current stage of historical development, the Absolute Spirit is incarnate in Slavdom, more precisely: in its historical core, which, Štúr was convinced, was Slovakia. For just as once — according to Hegel's theories — at the height of its development, the ancient world of the Greeks and Romans realised the idea of beauty, and the Romance and Germanic nations became the representatives and incarnations of the

[38] Július Mésároš, 'Magyaren und Slowaken. Zur Frage des Panslawismus in der Vormärzzeit' [Magyars and Slovaks: On the Question of Pan-Slavism in the pre-March Period] in Ľudovít Holotík, ed. *Ľudovít Štúr und die slawische Wechselseitigkeit* [Ľudovít Štúr and Slavic Reciprocity] (Bratislava: Slovak Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1969), p. 189.

idea of truth, according to Štúr, the current Slavic world shall become the bearer of the idea of the Good.[39]

Yet this will not come about by itself. As Štúr appealed to all Slavs to take responsibility for the development and defence of their 'nation,' he came to believe that the only practical manner of assuring the advent of the Slavs' brave new world was through their submission to Russia. The manner in which he expresses this in *Slavdom and the World of the Future* sounds almost like a sigh of relief, as he finally gives expression to something he has long carried about inside himself:

> Come, my brothers, rest your hands on your hearts and admit it: Was it not Russia, indeed, that, throughout the sad ages of our past, shone like a beacon in the dark night of our existence? Was it not Russia that enlivened our hope, sparked our courage, revivified our will to live when it was all but extinguished?

This is no mere sentimentalism. These warm lines are immediately preceded by something amounting to a cold, logical syllogism:

> Since neither the first, nor the second of these options is practical, since the Slavs cannot organise themselves into a federation of states, independently or under the aegis of Austria, there remains only the third option: that of annexation to Russia. Only this project is reasonable; only it has a future.

Whether or not his reasoning is correct, whether or not all other options had been exhausted, these expressions certainly ring true to anyone who has considered his writings. Loyalty to the Habsburg crown, the 'king' (since he is writing from the perspective of a Hungarian citizen) who works tirelessly on behalf of his beloved subjects, is a theme that runs through *The Slovaks, in Ancient Days and Now*. As long as he could believe that a bettering of the situation of the Slovaks, and the Slavs of Austria-Hungary, was possible under the Habsburgs, he was more than willing to remain *treu und bieder*. The narrator of that work reacts with astonishment and anger to suggestions that what the Slavs of the monarchy are really aiming at is annexation to Russia:

[39] Janaszek-Ivaničková, p xxxiv.

It was also said in that speech that the Slovaks are to be magyarised so that they should not seek to ally themselves to the Russians, who are of the same Slavic tribe [*sic*] as they, and so that on the mere grounds of kinship they not call unto them, those northerners.

O man — you who made this statement, how could you so shamelessly accuse the Slovaks of disloyalty? When have the Slovaks ever shown themselves to be disloyal to their motherland? Have they not waged war in the ranks of her warriors against any and all of her enemies? Have not thousands of them fallen on behalf of their Hungarian motherland?

And you — are you concerned with the defence of the motherland, man?

Is the King not concerned with us, and does he not defend us from all our enemies — does he not call our Slovaks, thousands of his sons, to the glorious standard of the monarchy?

[…]

Rivers flow down from the Tatras, booming and uniting into one, and thus do they flow on to the sea, their roar resounding on all sides.

Rivers flow in the north as well, flowing into the deep sea with a roaring that fills the air.

And who of sound mind will curse the Tatra rivers for roaring in the same fashion as the rivers of the north? And who shall be so crazed as to believe that the Tatra rivers will call forth the rivers of the north with their roaring, so that they should flood these regions with their waters?

But now, all that has changed. In 1848, the good king Ferdinand had been shunted aside in favour of the young Franz Josef, and the devotion of the battle-scarred Slovak veteran and his strapping young cousin, who regale Štúr's narrator with tales of Slovak bravery in their battles under the yellow and black banner, are no longer worth as much in the eyes of Vienna as a docile Budapest. Austria has let her Slavs down, and in the early 1850s, the scales have fallen from the eyes of Ľudovít Štúr. 'Away then with utopias,' he exclaims in *Slavdom and the World of the Future*, and let us set ourselves rather to work with knowledge of the conditions and course of history.'

The Slavs wish to join in spirit with Russia, the only independent, organised Slavic state, and their global representative. We may now state this openly: that following our most recent negative experiences, the

> harsh disappointments of these latter days, our hearts have opened wide to Russia.

Štúr's maturing to a Russophilism, which progresses from a respect and fascination with the one Slavic 'tribe' that still plays an independent role on the European stage, to an active propagation of political union with the Tsarist Empire, is a curious mixture of a cold, logical thought process, and an urge toward idealism that seems at times wilfully uncritical. In 1852, at the mature age of 37, Štúr has eaten from more than one dish, as the Slavic saying goes. Having dedicated his life to the cause of his nation — be that Slovakia or Slavdom — he now sees what works, and what doesn't. As noted above, he has proven that neither an autonomous federation of Slavic nations, nor an Austro-Slav confederation under the Habsburgs, is a workable option. Alone, 'in their separatism,' as he puts it in *Slavdom and the World of the Future*, 'it is simply impossible for them to capably establish their own states. At the very least, no reasonable man can believe it possible.' There remains nothing now but to put an end to that separatism by rushing into the embrace of Sankt Petersburg. Notice, however, how clear-sighted this formulation of accession to Russia is. In the paragraph we are about to cite, there is no sentimentality; it is an argument from *Realpolitik* such as one is surprised to find in the mouth of a tempestuous Romantic such as Štúr:

> Let us assume that these tribes, by some miracle, actually succeeded in overcoming all of the above-cited difficulties. How then would Russia react to the appearance of a federation of Slavic states? Above all, out of principle, and with all her might, she would fight against the rise of such an independent Slavic state; she would not allow it to happen, for one simple reason: every non-Russian Slavic state would inevitably set itself up in opposition to her, and would either seek to influence her, in principle, or would have to fight against her, with the aid of western ideas and western nations. Russia is well aware of this. Only thus can we explain why she has up till now so little supported Slavic tendencies.

It is an amazing flash of clarity; it has something of the practical calculation of a Churchill to it, who, despite all his fondness for the nations of Central and Eastern Europe, recognises that his hands are well-nigh tied by the *fait accompli* of the Red Army's advance, and acquiesces to the falling of the Iron Curtain he was later to fulminate against. I say this neither in support of Churchill nor Štúr, by the way — I simply wish to point out something that is

obvious to us all. There is right and wrong, there is justice and injustice, and then there is practicality and making the best of a bad situation. The Polish nation has been faced with such difficult choices between despairing justice and compromising practicality again and again — from the uprisings against Russia in the nineteenth century to the Warsaw Uprising against the Nazis in 1944. In a group of people who have a common goal — the reacquisition of independence — there are always those who wish to roll the dice and rush to arms, damning the torpedoes, and those who urge caution. What is surprising here is that the passionate Pan-Slav Štúr should begin to argue from a position so calculating:

> Our tribes have been completely lacking in any sort of unifying and elevating ideal. A common origin is no such ideal. It cannot even bring about a turning away from disunity and a discontinuation of inter-tribal quarrels. For it can certainly come about that brothers inhabiting the same house can fall to quarrelling; how much more frequently does this happen amongst tribes who, over the course of time and due to physical separation, become ever more alienated one from another in customs, speech, and much of their establishments.

This practically amounts to a rejection of everything that had motivated him up to this point. Common language, common heritage, common origin, all well and good. The best that can do, Štúr now understands, is the sort of cultural reciprocity that his former oracle, Ján Kollár, urged — a common sharing and support between the Slavic tribes in the literary sphere, which, however, Kollár emphatically asserts '[lies] not in any political union of all Slavs, or in demagogical babble or revolutionary resistance against the rulers of the earth and our governors, from which only chaos and misfortune can result.'[40] This was never Štúr's policy; according to Osuský, as early as the Prague Congress 'Štúr had certainly progressed from cultural reciprocity to the political unification of the Slavs.'[41] Poet, priest, but political activist above all — to perhaps even greater an extent than Adam Mickiewicz, whose life as a literary figure and active freedom fighter Štúr's seems to mirror — no, he was not satisfied with merely being pen-pals with his Slavic 'brethren';

[40] Kollár, p. 3.

[41] Osuský, p. 177, and: 'Štúr was opposed to all petitions and moaning; he burned for action,' p. 167.

he always sought to move past this, eventually, and 'inhabit the same house' with them.

In this respect, no less striking than his calculating arguments for the advantages of becoming allied to Russia is the bitterness he begins to direct at his 'brothers' for political timidity, or, at least, their satisfaction with a Kolláresque effetism and antiquarianism. Those same Lusatian Sorbs over whom he gushed in 1839 for their literary pursuits and Slavic linguistics, now, in 1852, he speaks of as being 'abandoned to an insignificant literary dilettantism which is praiseworthy, but all the same unable to produce anything grand until the sun of Slavdom should burst forth at morning.' He has even harsher words for he Croats:

> What has become of your leaders, your *bans,* O Croats? What has become of your mighty military slogan, *Vivat banus cum Croatis*? Your *ban* has been shrunken into an Austrian bureaucrat, who already lacks even so much vinegar as to shout down a wretched constable, for fear of endangering his cushy position. Your song has grown silent! But what's there to sing about, anyway?

Yet Štúr is nothing if not fair in his distribution of thwacks, for he does not spare himself either. In his earlier idealisation of ancient Slavdom, one of the things he points to, in *The Slovaks, in Ancient Days and Now*, is the dependence of an elected leader upon the commonwealth that has raised him to his position. Unconsciously perhaps channelling the spirit of the words addressed to Polish King Stefan Batory (a Magyar elected to the throne!) by one of the noble electors — 'I am a maker of kings and a dethroner of tyrants,' he underscores the possibility of the ruler 'descending' from his position 'if he were not to rule his people with righteousness and justice.' Now — although he still values the Slavic political organisation of representation by heads of family which still (of course) exists among the Russians and Serbs, he sees his earlier ideas of Slavic democracy as naive:

> O model democracy of our forefathers! To allow itself to be dragged about and torn apart without a whimper of protest! To tamely bend its neck beneath the yoke and bind its descendants in the fetters of a millennium of slavery! O cut it out already, with those paeans sung of the democracy of the ancient Slavs! Stop shedding those tears over the sufferings that our nation underwent at the hands of the barbarian Asian hordes and express, rather, a righteous repulsion to the weakness, the recklessness and the helplessness of our nation!

In place of this, now, he values Russian authoritarianism, replacing the idyllic myth of government moving upward from the family through the village to the county and so on, a democracy of wizened fathers, with the no-less idyllic myth of the benevolent, absolutist *batyushka*: 'There is not the same sort of discord between ruler and people in Russia as there is elsewhere. In this respect, there one finds more concord than perhaps anywhere else in Europe.'

Just how much contact Štúr had with Russia and Russians is worth study; just how well he understood the conditions prevailing in Tsarist Russia is debatable. He certainly never experienced them on his own skin, never having travelled there as did his erstwhile Czech companion in arms, Karel Havlíček-Borovský. Having accepted with rejoicing a teaching position in Moscow through the good offices of Pavel Šafařík, he set off for Russia enthusiastically in February of 1843, only to return to Prague as fast as his legs could carry him in July of 1844, 'having learned that his boundless ardour [for Russia] had been merely nourished by unhealthy fantasy.'[42]

Whether Štúr would have come round to the same disappointing recognition or despair in connection with the Tsar as he did with his own Emperor, had he lived long enough to see Russia for himself, or consider the matter more closely, is impossible to tell, as he was to die in a hunting accident just a few short years after writing *Slavdom and the World of the Future*, a magnum opus of his political thought, so to speak, which unfolds as a more or less reasoned defence of Russian political hegemony over all the Slavic nations.

We say 'more or less' for, in the breast of the wizened old revolutionary of 1852 there still beats the heart of the twenty-four year old pouring his sacrifice of tears upon the stones of what he allows himself to be convinced are ancient altars of his vanished brethren in Lusatia. He never really moves past his idealism, he merely transfers it from the Slavs as a whole to the Russians in particular:

> Now, despite the fact that her power has reached such heights, it is not chiefly on account of this that the Slavs ought to join themselves to Russia. The chief reason, rather, rests in the creative might of the Russian nation, and their ability to maintain all that they have achieved. Besides

[42] František Sekanina, 'O našem Karlu Havlíčkovi Borovském' [Concerning our Karel Havlíček Borovský] in Karel Havlíček-Borovský, *Životní Dílo* [His Life's Work] (Prague: Věčné prameny, 1940), p. 17.

> the fact that the Slavic spirit is best preserved in the Russian character, and in the Russian civic system, in Russian customs strength is wedded to humility and good-heartedness. The Russian state has avoided the greatest errors of Slavic nation-building and has proven itself capable of establishing a strong, united realm.

Earlier, we read of the natural moral propensities of the Slavic people being such that even traditional legislation was unnecessary to them. Now, it is the Russian people who have preserved the 'Slavic spirit' to such a great extent that in them, 'strength is wedded to humility and good-heartedness.'

It would be tiresome to list here the many examples of Štúr's blanket idealisation of the Russian Empire found in *Slavdom and the World of the Future*. The interested reader will be able to conduct a tally-sheet for himself, if he so wishes. For one last example: 'The people and the Tsar are united in Russia — and in this lies the main strength of the country. Her nobles are selfless even if they do not enjoy political freedoms.' Anyone willing to say that that's a reasonable trade-off? This aspect of Štúr's new enthusiasm for Russia is adequately summed up by Samuel Štefan Osuský: 'Štúr looked at the situation in Russia with exaggerated idealism. He was blinded by his Slavic evangelisation, so that he did not see the horrid inadequacies, the flaws, the wreck of it all.'[43]

Suffice it to say that this essay of Štúr's is certainly to be listed among the greatest works of Russian propaganda that has ever spilled forth from the pen of a foreigner — John Reed's *Ten Days that Shook the World* notwithstanding. The entire thrust of the essay is both an argument for Russian dominion over the Slavic world — for the Slavs' own good — and something of a travel brochure. When Štúr turns to his enumeration of the mineral wealth of Russia, its gross domestic output and (supposedly) state-supported progress in culture and science, it almost reads like one of those American newspaper ads of the same period, extolling the riches of the unsettled lands beyond the Rockies to adventurous Easterners looking to make a fresh start. With one major difference, of course: where the European Americans from the Anglo Eastern Seaboard were enticed to head west and build up a paradise of their own, Štúr is inviting the Slavs to a paradise ready-made — or, more precisely, a landing of Russian angels on the beaches of their lands, to bring that paradise with them.

[43] Osuský, p. 176.

It would be just as tiresome to list here the errors, accidental or wilful, that pop up throughout *Slavdom and the World of the Future*. To mention just one, as it touches upon Štúr's idealisation of Russia, we note his description of Slavdom writhing in the torments of foreign subjugation:

> Indeed, it is a heartbreaking spectacle to look upon, this nation, the most numerous in all of Europe, shattered, divided; as in its atomisation it groans here beneath the Turkish yoke, there in long ages of servitude to the Germans: first to the Holy Roman Empire, and now to the Austrians, Prussians and Saxons. And there, she is engulfed and enslaved by Italian or Magyar. Everywhere she is dragged in triumph, bound to the chariot of foreigners.

It is a comprehensive catalogue of woe, so much so, that along with the usual suspects of 'foreign' invaders, the Germans and Magyars, even the Italians are pilloried — for their pretensions to Dalmatia, one suspects. But who is missing here in this rogue's gallery? Who, if not the Russians themselves. In his treatment of Poland, Ľudovít Štúr displays a flabbergasting depth of wilful ignorance. If there was any group of 'foreigners' at the hands of whom the Polish 'tribe' suffered, from at least 1795 onwards, it was the 'fraternal' tribe of the Russians. And so, it is difficult for Polish eyes to read such comments as:

> Now, in this lonely night, in this barren, sad time for the Slavs, when their body lies as if without sense or feeling and foreigners all the more rend and tear at the ligatures that bind their limbs together, drawing ever closer to the beating heart of Slavdom, not one single tribe has given thought to the sufferings of another, but rather, crammed into alien slops and tied to leads in the grip of alien proprietors, they have been made to serve the comfort of their lords, like instruments for the oppression and further enslavement of their own brothers.

Although surely not intentional, it is hard to read these words of the well-informed Ľudovít Štúr as anything else but a rubbing of salt into Polish wounds — something that would not be out of character after all, as he agreed with Pushkin's warning to western powers not to stick their noses into the 'family squabble' of the November Uprising of 1830, declaring somewhat triumphantly 'Who bears the blame, then, for the partitioning of Poland? The Poles themselves!' For if there was any group of Slavs whose body lay torn and bleeding, it was the Poles, and if there is anywhere that

Štúr ought to be pointing the finger for 'giving no thought to the sufferings of another,' it is at his own breast.

If there are any villains to be found in the writings of Ľudovít Štúr beyond German, Magyar and Turk, they will be Poles and Catholics. The 'arrogant separatism' of the former irks him as a Pan-Slav, and the character of the latter as one more tool of oppression introduced into Slavic lands by Germans (and Italians) sends him into a paroxysm of zeal for the Russian Orthodox Church. We mention it here as one final example of Štúr's unqualified idealisation of all things Russian, and one final bit of literary sleight of hand employed in his polemics of persuasion:

> O holy Church of our fathers, who first blessed our tribes with Christianity from the summits of Nitra, Velehrad and Vyšehrad! Who was once set to unite in spirit the entire family of our nations! O, return Thou to us! Lift up our hearts toward the Eternal and nourish our soul, so that it might realise its magnificent calling. […] Let no one charge us with advising the Slavs to exploit their Church as a means of political unification. Nevertheless, it is clear what we wish to accomplish by the means of Slavdom — and only that Church is in accord with that mission. Slavdom will never be associated with Roman Catholicism, while the eastern Church was once common to nearly all of our tribes, their true treasure. We are only drawing their attention to what already belongs to them.

This from the lips of a Lutheran minister. With such words Štúr brings a long discussion of the virtues of Orthodoxy to a close, after comparing it favourably to both Catholicism and his own Protestant tradition. What is interesting here, however, is how he identifies Russian Orthodoxy with the mission of SS Cyril and Methodius. This of course flies in the face of all historical truth. The Thessalonian Apostles to the Slavs did set out from Constantinople, it is true, and were shaped by Greek traditions, rather than the Latin West. But this argument conveniently overlooks the fact that the Church had not yet been split between West and East, and in their labours on behalf of the Slavs of the Great Moravian Empire, they had recourse to the authority and support of the Pope. Although part of the treasure of the entire Church Catholic, East and West, SS Cyril and Methodius, who visited Rome twice on behalf of their new flock, were most certainly obedient priests of the Western, Roman Catholic Church, and the liturgy they translated into the Slavic tongue, was that approved by the Successor of Peter.

The Great Moravian Empire, and its constituent peoples — Slovaks, Czechs, Moravians and Poles — were not evangelised by the Russian Orthodox Church; the Patriarchate of the so-called 'Third Rome' was neither once common to these tribes, nor, necessarily, their true treasure. Štúr's preference for a national church is understandable, as is, as far as his propaganda is concerned, his deception in conflating Russian Orthodoxy with the parishes established by Cyril and Methodius. For in so doing, just as Virgil shows Aeneas and his Trojans to be no foreign invaders landing on the shores of Latium, but a group of destined shipwrecks returning to the homeland of their protoplasts Teucer and Dardanus, so here: an annexation to Russia, and a submission to the Russian Orthodox Church, would not mean the assumption of a new identity, but a returning home, to authenticity.

ŠTÚR AND HAROLD CAMPING. OR, NOBODY KNOWS THE FUTURE

We all know that one day the world will come to an end. We also know that nobody knows when that will happen — poor Harold Camping, to give just one example, has proven that conclusively, after predicting its end — twice! — in 2011, and… here we are. Thank God. Maybe.

Štúr's predictions also came out wrong, in the main. Russia certainly was able to flourish, after a fashion at least, without the Tsar, something he thought impossible; Poland did survive the partitions, reuniting the territory that had been taken from it by Russia, Prussia and Austria — following the Great War which realised to the full Štúr's dreams of a Slovakia liberated from Magyar control, and in part, his Pan-Slav longings, by uniting Czechs, Moravians, and Slovaks in one statal whole, which would last, with one brief interruption, until 1993, nearly a century and a half after his death.

That all this would occur without the help of Russia, and even against its wishes, would perhaps surprise him; the fact that, having once achieved political union, the Czechs and the Slovaks would want to *part* from one another, would certainly have knocked him for a loop. As would the fact of the Slavs closest to him — Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Slovenes, Croatians — being attracted, not to the East, but to the western European Union, *along with the Magyars.* Bulgaria is in the European Union as well, and two nations of which Štúr speaks with great fondness, Serbia and Montenegro, are knocking on the door. How happy Ukraine — the once-termed 'Little Russians' — would be, to tear themselves from the jealous embrace of their big brothers, idealised by Štúr, and annex themselves not to any Slavic

super-state (been there, done that), but that Western European Union, with all its western ideas! And the only thing that is blocking that access, to the EU and NATO, is Europe's fear of provoking Russia. At least Štúr got one thing right:

> How then would Russia react to the appearance of a federation of Slavic states? Above all, out of principle, and with all her might, she would fight against the rise of such an independent Slavic state; she would not allow it to happen, for one simple reason: every non-Russian Slavic state would inevitably set itself up in opposition to her, and would either seek to influence her, in principle, or would have to fight against her, with the aid of western ideas and western nations.

I am far from chuckling at Štúr here. Rather, I'm returning at the end of this long introduction to some ideas I broached at the beginning. When we experience long periods of prosperity and comfortable stability — let's say, for many people reading this, from 1969 until 2001 — it's easy to succumb to the illusion of progress, the one central tenet of Štúr's thinking that continues unchanged throughout his writings: that of a continually upward-pointing graph of human progress. How many people of my generation, born in the early 1960s, died, prematurely perhaps, before 11 September 2001, never having experienced the horror of that day, or the consequent fallout, knowing nothing but security, comfort, and the idea of a steadily broadening, steadily 'progressing,' good life?'

Even people of my generation, or my sister's generation, who were born in the early fifties in Central Europe, have experienced the same thing — even more intensely. While their standard of living was much different from that of their peers in Western Europe and the Americas, still and all: the end of Stalinism, the unprecedented uprisings of 1956 and 1968, the rise of Solidarity in 1980 — even if all of them faced setbacks, sometimes violent ones — unto the revolutions beginning in Poland in 1989 and then spreading throughout the Soviet Bloc, until — now who would have thought *that?* — the disappearance of the Soviet Union! To people like them, to people like me, Štúr *made sense*, at least in so far as his faith in progress was concerned.

But here I am, in the middle of the Covid-19 crisis, watching protests — violent or not — wreak havoc upon the social fabric of the country (I almost said 'nation') in which I find myself at the moment, unable, because of the pandemic, to be anywhere else — and, as I said at the start of this essay, unable to read Štúr in the same way as I read him before. Social progress,

really? An ever upward ascent toward more justice, more brotherhood, more peace… *really?* Who do you think you're kidding?

Štúr's optimism, for me, is now as quaint as the *shantis* and *oms* of the flower children, who have been on the wilt now for at least twenty years, if not longer. I'm coming to think that maybe that germanified Slav Nietzsche was right. Time is not proceeding in a linear fashion; we are stuck in an eternal return of the same. Liberalism pushes and pushes until Conservatism is provoked into pushing back; Conservatism tightens the screws until the threads are stripped, and the pressure of Liberalism starts popping them out again. My Christian nature, as faulty as it is, is still deeper than my Slavic identity, and it recoils at this. But if there is a linear nature to time, after all, it can only progress, as St Augustine says, from the creation of the world to its end by constantly turning back upon itself in 'eddies.' And how tiresome it is, to be caught in an eddy such as this one.

Change is the element of human history: nothing is stable, there is no 'once and for all' state of stability, which, once achieved, will usher in a continuum of enduring peace; 'progressivism' is a myth. Goals and freedoms achieved by progressives can be toppled just as easily as the monuments of 'unawakened' reactionaries. The most recent history of the West shows us that the progress of humanity *can indeed* be stifled; the only progression that cannot be held back is that — Augustinian — progression through time. What the future holds may not be better than the present at all. There is no guarantee.

One of the greatest fallacies shared by many citizens of the land in which I am writing these words is their naive American Exceptionalism — the gullible perception that 'it can't happen here;' that the United States is some kind of *ne plus ultra* political community, which, having attained the summit of liberty and social perfection, is somehow immune to the slings and arrows that take other empires down. The greatest empire of all, on which all of our Western systems are based, the Roman, saw its greatest period, that of the Pax Romana, expire after the passage of some 207 years. As of this moment, the ticking clock of the United States shows 244…

I do not intend, God forbid, to offer any predictions of my own. Quite simply, using myself as an example, I'm laying out how literary texts change over time — or, at least, our perceptions of them do. Writing in *Slavdom and the World of the Future*, at a time when the weaknesses of the Austro-Hungarian system were apparent, and the forces that would eventually burst the Dual Monarchy apart rising before his ken, Štúr correctly foresaw the following:

> It is as clear as day that if the majority of her nations, the Slavs among them, were to turn against her, it would no longer be possible for her to resist them, and Austria would disappear from the face of the earth. Then no power on earth would be capable, however mighty it be, of gluing back together the parts of Austria dismembered. They would no longer belong together, and no spirit of life could then be breathed into her nostrils.

Where he got it wrong was using so strong a negative formulation there, at the end. We should know by now never to say never. Let us consider one final aspect from *Slavdom and the World of the Future*. I would not blame the Reader if he or she finds the following citations concerning Russia and the West patronising, and even out of step with the general tendency of history — especially considering what I have mentioned above concerning the key dates of the latter twentieth-century:

> We have shown how all of those Western ideas are worth nothing to that nation, and can merely lead it to the edge of the abyss […] The Russian government does not allow many western products into the country, which are abhorrent to the people — and both the people and the government are quite within their rights to do so.

All one need do is substitute 'Poland' and 'Hungary' — those favourite whipping boys of Western European progressives — for 'Russia' in the citation above to place the matter in a more immediate, relatable, context. Who is to say that the European Union is a be-all and end-all, the final, and ideal, terminus for these countries in their journey through time? Who is to say that the ever more open, ever less Christian, philosophy of the West is an objectively better approach to the world, and reality, than the traditional outlook shared by less 'progressive' nations? We have already seen the unthinkable — Brexit — happen; does anyone remember the 'Grexit' threat that preceded it? Given the wide gap that separates Western attitudes toward refugee rights, life issues, and sexual morality from those in countries such as the more conservative Poland and Hungary, who is to say if, or when, a critical mass might be reached that would impel the Vyšehrad Group, or at least portions of it, say, Poland, Hungary, perhaps Slovakia and Moravia, to withdraw from the EU and form a different sort of *polis*, repellant, perhaps, to those looking in from without, but more convenable to the outlook of those within?

I hasten to remark here that this is *not* something that I advocate, or would necessarily even approve.[44] What I must say — and this I have just learned from Štúr — is that no one knows anything about the future except: it will in some way repeat the mistakes of all past human existence. Progress? *Plus* ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

Pan-Slavism is an important aspect of the culture of East and Central Europe during the nineteenth century. It has long been my dream to make at least some of the writings of Ľudovít Štúr, one of the great theorists of Pan-Slavism, and one of the greatest poets of Slovakia, a nation dear to my heart, available to the English reading public. This anthology proposes to do little more than that: to present Ľudovít Štúr under the aspect of Slovak, Slav, and practical advocate for the peoples to whom he was devoted. Still, Štúr is more than just a Pan-Slav; his horizons are wider than his focused struggles on behalf of Slavic autonomy and fraternity might suggest. I regret that more space could not be devoted, at present, to Ľudovít Štúr the poet and Ľudovít Štúr the cultural explicator; I wish I could have included at least some fragments of his *O národních písních a pověstech plemen slovanských* [On the National Songs and Tales of the Slavic Tribes], but that would have swelled this volume, already hefty, to unimaginable dimensions. Perhaps, in the future, I will be lucky enough to have the opportunity to return once more to this fascinating Central European Romantic.

As always, I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Glagoslav Publications, my editor Ksenia Papazova, the Slovak Literárne Informačné Centrum, and all who have supported this translation.

Tento preklad venujem svojej babke blahej pamäti Juliane Kožarovej.

Virginia Beach, VA
17 September 2020

[44] To argue against this, one need only point to the current intra-Vyšehrad quarrel between Slovakia and Hungary over dual citizenship, and the cultural wars (the 'Women's Strike,' for example), which is polarising Poland as much as any other western country.

SLOVAKIA

A Journey through the Region of the Váh

The Slovaks, in Ancient Days and Now

Svatoboj

Matúš of Trenčín

A Letter from a Hungarian Slav to the Editors of the *Literary Weekly*

At Ján Hollý's Monument

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ľudovít Štúr (1815 – 1856) is arguably the most influential author in Slovak literature. Entirely devoted to the cause of the Slovak people's independence, there is hardly a work of his, whether in prose or verse, that is not conceived with his great mission in mind: the establishment of a proud, autonomous, Slovak nation, in brotherly concord, if not outright political union, with all the other 'tribes' of Slavdom. Fluent in Magyar and German, as well as all of the Slavic tongues, Štúr came to understand his nature as a Slovak, and a Slav, while a young boy sent to a distant Hungarian boarding school in the town of Győr. Following his brother Karol to the Slovak lyceum in Bratislava, he threw himself into activity on behalf of the Slovak nation and Slavic culture, even as a student himself lecturing the lower classes on Slavic languages and literatures, inculcating in them a love for their nation, and Slavdom as a whole. His two years spent at the University of Halle introduced him to both a deeper understanding of Hegel's philosophy of history — which, as he saw it, guaranteed a bright future for the Slavs — and Herder's idea of the *Volk*, which sharpened his perception of the traits and nature of the Slavic peoples, in the past and in the present. Upon returning to Hungary from his studies, he undertook agitation as a publicist — especially after being deprived of his position at the Bratislava Lyceum for his opposition to the Hungarian Kingdom's policies of magyarisation. He defended Slovak rights in the Hungarian parliament, to which he was elected in the fateful years 1847 – 1849. The outbreak of the Spring of the Peoples saw him in Prague, as one of the chief organisers of the Slavic Congress. When this was disrupted by the cannon of General Windischgrätz, Štúr took to the barricades during the Czech June Uprising, and later played an active role in organising armed resistance to the Magyars, on behalf of Slovak independence, at a time when the Magyars themselves were in open revolt against Vienna. The quelling of these rebellions by the Austrians, aided by the Russians, put an end to his political activity — consigning him to what amounted to a house arrest in the village of Modra — and disabusing him of any illusions he may

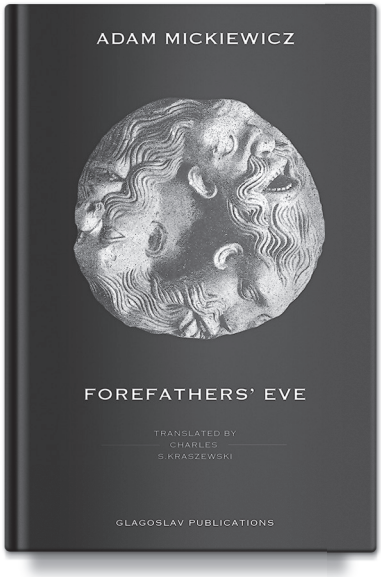
have had about the possibilities of a union of the Slavs under the Habsburg sceptre. Štúr died at the young age of 41 from complications arising from a hunting accident. Although his tireless polemics on behalf of his Slavic and Slovak ideals are his most noteworthy writings, he was an accomplished poet as well. His two great narrative poems, *Svatoboj* and *Matúš of Trenčín* are among the treasures of Slovak poetry.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Charles S. Kraszewski is a poet and translator, creative in both English and Polish. He is the author of three volumes of original verse in English (*Diet of Nails; Beast; Chanameed*); and one in Polish: *Hallo, Sztokholm*. He translates from Polish, Czech and Slovak into English, and from English and Spanish into Polish. Recently, his English version of Jan Kochanowski's *Dismissal of the Grecian Envoys* was produced at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London. He is a member of the Union of Polish Writers Abroad (London) and of the Association of Polish Writers (SPP, Kraków).

Forefathers' Eve

by Adam Mickiewicz



Forefathers' Eve [*Dziady*] is a four-part dramatic work begun circa 1820 and completed in 1832 – with Part I published only after the poet's death, in 1860. The drama's title refers to *Dziady*, an ancient Slavic and Lithuanian feast commemorating the dead. This is the grand work of Polish literature, and it is one that elevates Mickiewicz to a position among the "great Europeans" such as Dante and Goethe.

With its Christian background of the Communion of the Saints, revenant spirits, and the interpenetration of the worlds of time and eternity, *Forefathers' Eve* speaks to men and women of all times and places. While it is a truly Polish work – Polish actors covet the role of Gustaw/Konrad in the same way that Anglophone actors covet that of Hamlet – it is one of the most universal works of literature written during the nineteenth century. It has been compared to Goethe's Faust – and rightfully so...

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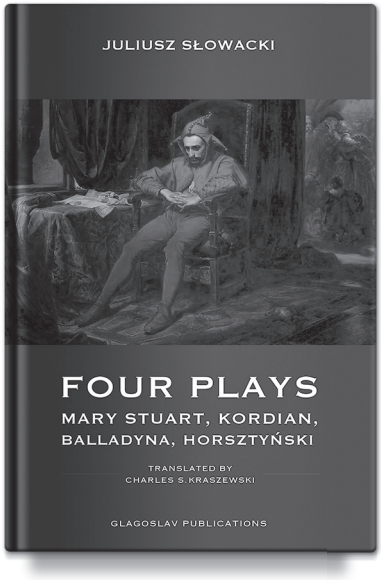
Four Plays:

Mary Stuart, Kordian, Balladyna, Horsztyński



The dramas in Glagoslav's edition of *Four Plays* include some of the poet's greatest dramatic works, all written before age twenty-five: *Mary Stuart, Balladyna* and *Horsztyński* weave carefully crafted motifs from *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in astoundingly original works, and *Kordian* — Słowacki's riposte to Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve*, constitutes the final word in the revolutionary period of Polish Romanticism.

Translated into English by Charles S. Kraszewski, the *Four Plays* of Juliusz Słowacki will be of interest to aficionados of Polish Romanticism, Shakespeare, and theatre in general.

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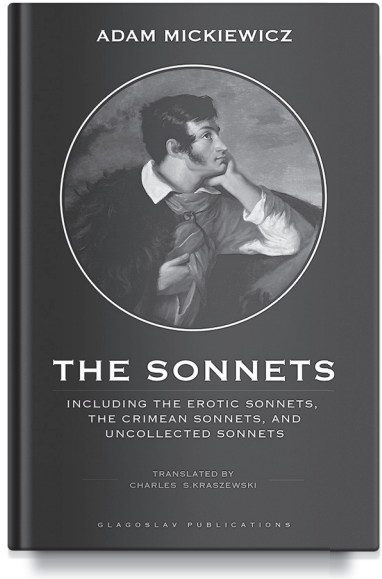
The Sonnets

by Adam Mickiewicz



Because the poetry of Adam Mickiewicz is so closely identified with the history of the Polish nation, one often reads him as an institution, rather than a real person. In the *Crimean and Erotic Sonnets* of the national bard, we are presented with the fresh, real, and striking poetry of a living, breathing man of flesh and blood. Mickiewicz proved to be a master of Petrarchan form. His *Erotic Sonnets* chronicle the development of a love affair from its first stirrings to its disillusioning denouement, at times in a bitingly sardonic tone. *The Crimean Sonnets*, a verse account of his journeys through the beautiful Crimean Peninsula, constitute the most perfect cycle of descriptive sonnets since du Bellay. *The Sonnets* of Adam Mickiewicz are given in the original Polish, in facing-page format, with English verse translations by Charles S. Kraszewski. Along with the entirety of the Crimean and Erotic Sonnets, other "loose" sonnets by Mickiewicz are included, which provide the reader with the most comprehensive collection to date of Mickiewicz's sonneteering. Fronted with a critical introduction, *The Sonnets* of Adam Mickiewicz also contain generous textual notes by the poet and the translator.

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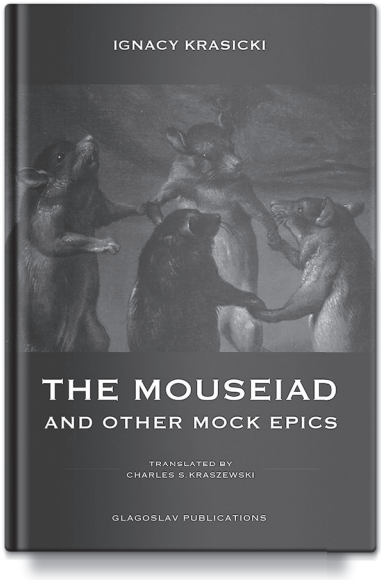
The Mouseiad and other Mock Epics

by Ignacy Krasicki



International brigades of mice and rats join forces to defend the rodents of Poland, threatened with extermination at the paws of cats favoured by the ancient ruler King Popiel, a sybaritic, cowardly ruler… The Hag of Discord incites a vicious rivalry between monastic orders, which only the good monks' common devotion to… fortified spirits… is able to allay… The present translation of the mock epics of Poland's greatest figure of the Enlightenment, Ignacy Krasicki, brings together the Mouseiad, the Monachomachia, and the Anti-monachomachia — a tongue-in-cheek 'retraction' of the former work by the author, criticised for so roundly (and effectively) satirising the faults of the Church, of which he himself was a prince. Krasicki towers over all forms of eighteenth-century literature in Poland like Voltaire, Swift, Pope, and LaFontaine all rolled into one. While his fables constitute his most well-known works of poetry, in the words of American comparatist Harold Segel, 'the good bishop's mock-epic poems […] are the most impressive examples of his literary gifts.' This English translation by Charles S. Kraszewski is rounded off by one of Krasicki's lesser-known works, The Chocim War, the poet's only foray into the genre of the serious, Vergilian epic.

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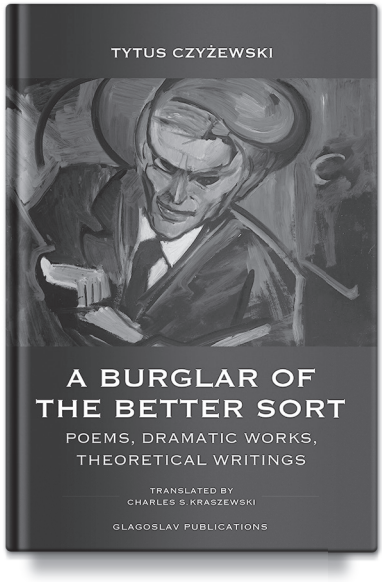
A Burglar of the Better Sort

by Tytus Czyżewski



The history of Poland, since the eighteenth century, has been marked by an almost unending struggle for survival. From 1795 through 1945, she was partitioned four times by her stronger neighbours, most of whom were intent on suppressing if not eradicating Polish culture. It is not surprising, then, that much of the great literature written in modern Poland has been politically and patriotically engaged. Yet there is a second current as well, that of authors devoted above all to the craft of literary expression, creating 'art for art's sake,' and not as a didactic national service. Such a poet is Tytus Czyżewski, one of the chief, and most interesting, literary figures of the twentieth century. Growing to maturity in the benign Austrian partition of Poland, and creating most of his works in the twenty-year window of authentic Polish independence stretching between the two world wars, Czyżewski is an avant-garde poet, dramatist and painter who popularised the new approach to poetry established in France by Guillaume Apollinaire, and was to exert a marked influence on such multi-faceted artists as Tadeusz Kantor.

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More coming soon...

'Why do you whimper and wail, O Tatra streams and rivers, who carry your plaintive lament resounding to the sea?' asks the narrator toward the end of *The Slovaks, in Ancient Days, and Now*. They respond: 'Because our human compatriots do not join together in memory, as we our waters mix with our origin, and because their lives do not resound booming, but roll on unconsciously, like hidden streams, silently to the sea of the life of the nations, young man!' This quotation from the most famous prose work of Ľudovít Štúr (1815 – 1856) might be set as a motto to the literary career of Slovakia's greatest Romantic poet, publicist, and political activist. For all of Štúr's writings aim at one goal: the propagation of the national traditions of the Slovaks in an age when their nation was threatened with such repression from the Magyar majority in Hungary, that the complete extinction of the Slovak language and culture was a real possibility. *Slavdom, A Selection of his Writings in Prose and Verse*, presents the reader with a wide selection of the creative output of a great Slovak writer, and an important Pan-Slav thinker. Divided in three parts: 'Slovakia,' 'Pan-Slavism' and 'Russia,' it reflects the development of Štúr's thought, from his insistence on the importance of the Slovak past and the quality of Slovak culture, through his attempts to find a modus vivendi within the Austro-Hungarian Empire by uniting all of the Slavic nations of Austria together in a federation under the Habsburg crown (Austro-Slavism) to his arguments for all Slavs to unite under the hegemony of Russia, when the events following the Spring of the Peoples in 1848 proved Austro-Slavism a dead alley. *Slavdom* offers a generous selection of Štúr's writings, from Slavic apologetics such as *The Contribution of the Slavs to European Civilisation* though selections of his poetry, chiefly, the two great *chansons de geste* centring on the ancient Great Moravian Empire: *Svatoboj and Matúš of Trenčín*. A must read for anyone interested in Slovak literature, Pan-Slavism, and European Romanticism in general.

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