

## INSTITUTIONALISATION OF SLOVAK SLAVISTICS

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**Abstract:** The following contribution is an overview of the gradual and systematic establishment of the institutional foundations of Slovak Slavistics. It looks at how the research focus and programme were developed and its coordination centre set up, beginning in 1988. Following that, the Slovak Committee of Slavists was established and its were statutes drawn up. Preparations then began for the 11th International Congress of Slavists in 1993. The Department of Slavistics at the Slovak Academy of Sciences was also established, becoming the Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics in 2005.

The article describes in detail the initial beginnings of the programmatic focus of research in Slovak Slavistics, highlighting the difficulties encountered and the various twists and turns that complicated the process of establishing the research programme and institutionalising Slovak Slavistics. It also stresses the results produced thus far and its future prospects.

**Key words:** Slovak Slavistics; programme of Slavistic research; Slovak Committee of Slavists; Congress of Slavists in Bratislava; Slavica Slovaca, Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics at the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

This article is about the initial institutionalisation and further development of Slovak Slavistics at the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS), predominantly associated with Slavistics work conducted at SAS and the Slovak Committee of Slavists. In an attempt to preserve the personal authenticity of this overview, I begin in 1988 when the Ľudovít Štúr Institute of Linguistics at SAS saw the creation of a two-member Slavistics unit, which gradually took on more staff to become a coordination centre for Slavistic research in Slovakia. During this period, a Programme for Linguistic Slavistic Research in Slovakia was drawn up and submitted in October 1988 for public review to more than 70 participants including linguists, literary scholars, historians and ethnologists. The reviewers were selected in accordance with the concept behind the Programme for Linguistic Slavistic Research, which presupposed close interdisciplinary collaboration within the scope of the research and the topics outlined in the programme. Following the review, the programme reads:

The programme comprises research which Slovak linguistic Slavistics should undertake now and in the long term. (...) The main conceptual principle behind the programme is that the focus of research should be on Slovak language examined from a linguistic and comparative perspective and from a Slavist viewpoint against a wider cultural and historical background, including its entire historical development and contemporary state. It is therefore dependent

on wide interdisciplinary collaboration, which means that on some issues linguistics will be able to participate in finding and contributing to solutions. The forms of collaboration and management mentioned in the programme were agreed on in previous conversations and negotiations between the parties involved. (...) It is assumed that this programme will be carried out gradually, depending on the capabilities of the general linguistics department and other departments and staff. Some tasks depend on the implementation of the first research stage, primarily at planned conferences or at the Slavist Congress in Bratislava in 1993, where the preliminary findings of new collaborative research will be presented on a number of issues. (...) Under each research area, the programme lists the names of tasks (topics), the collaborating disciplines and managing organisations and, where necessary, how the first stage of research should be carried out. There are nine research areas and each contains within it a number of individual topics: 1. Ethnogenesis of Slovaks and the earliest history of the Slovak language (disciplines collaborating with linguistics: history, archaeology, ethnography), 2. Great Moravian Period and its reflection in Slovak language and oral lore as well as in other Slavic languages (archeology, history, literary history), 3. Development of language of the Slovak ethnic group under feudalism in interlinguistic and interethnic relations (history, ethnography), 4. Slovak oral folklore in interSlavic relations from a historical and comparative viewpoint (folkloristics, ethnography, literary studies), 5. History of Slovak Slavistics (history, literary history, folkloristics, ethnography), 6. Relations between Slovak and other (Slavic) languages from a historical, comparative and typological angle (with regard to standard as well as non-standard forms and their development), 7. Slovak National Revival and Slavic equivalents (literary history, history, ethnography), 8. standard Slovak and Slavic connections (literary history, history), 9. Literary work of the Štúr group, language from a Slavic perspective (literary history) (Dorůfa 1989, 201-202).

At the end of the published text of the Programme for Linguistic Slavistic Research in Slovakia, there is further information on its basic characteristics and overall concept. This reads:

By relations between Slovak and other languages including more distant ones (...) we also mean research into parallel phenomena within the entire range of linguistic development (...), the compilation of linguistic reference books and dictionaries, as well as tracking and assessing translations, reviewing academic work and information on academic and cultural and historical work in the relevant languages, and promotional activities. The programme is a list of tasks and the topics are given in note form. Research on single topics or parts of topics in the relevant areas can be carried out individually (e.g. should there be a number of topics within research area 6), and more generally within a team, and primarily through interdisciplinary collaboration. Each research unit or team will draw up a more detailed programme for research on the particular topic or part of topic. (...) The programme indicates that a substantial number of research findings are to be submitted as early as the conferences in 1991 and 1992. The conferences will be interdisciplinary. General papers and previous research findings are to be critically summarised at the same time as the latest research results are presented. The conferences are a means of preparing for the Slavist Congress in Bratislava in 1993. It has been suggested that the programme focus primarily on Slovak and be as extensive as possible. The emphasis is on Slovak, because it contains the responsibility Slovak linguistics and other scientific disciplines has as a debt to Slovak society. We are duty bound to pay off this debt. Pressing social needs oblige us to do so. (...) Nevertheless should this programme seem maximalist, it is because of the numerous obligations we are responsible for and even those we are not. During discussions and assessments of the programme, we agreed that all this needs to be examined. By joining forces and cooperating much can be achieved. However, even in

our current situation, we need a programme like this. (...) We are delighted to see those who are keen to be involved and participate out of sincerity and from the heart. We believe that the number of those involved will increase. (...) The faith in the future gives us hope that the preconditions which have begun to develop will also acquire more stable and promising forms in relation to our own capacities. For now, even the potential that began to unfold in 1988 in Slavistic research can be considered a good starting point (*ibid.*, 209-210).

In the years that followed, the programme was implemented insofar as the socio-political conditions in Slovakia allowed. This demonstrates that the goals achieved in carrying out the Programme for Slavistic Research measure up to the expectations associated with them, making it a significant element in Slovak social and cultural development within Europe. The programme gained significant support in its pursuit of its extensive research focus making interdisciplinary collaboration essential. Academics from a number of disciplines and research areas gradually became involved in conducting research into the fields mentioned previously. This was of particular significance during the intense preparations for the 11th International Congress of Slavists in Bratislava and during the conference itself. The Slovak Committee of Slavists, which assumed responsibility for the preparations and the congress, gave its approval to the congress subject matter, which was finalised and officially approved at a meeting of the presidium of the International Committee of Slavists in Bonn from September 18–20, 1990 and then incorporated into the programme of the 11th International Congress of Slavists. The draft programme was submitted to the Slovak Slavist Committee and was approved by the presidium of the International Committee of Slavists, which met again for a working discussion in Smolenice between December 2–4, 1991. The presidium members of the International Committee of Slavists were also able to participate in some of the discussions on an interdisciplinary conference On the Development of Slovak Language from an Interdisciplinary Perspective taking place at the same time and part of the subject-related preparation of Slovak Slavists for the 11th International Congress of Slavists. Our ideas on approaches to research were then presented during congress round-table discussions in a particularly distinct manner: 1. Ethnogenesis of Slovaks, Great Moravian tradition in the history of Slav nations, 2. Ján Kollár and the Slovak National Revival (the idea of Slavic reciprocity), 3. Slovak-Czech relations in historical transformations, 4. Slovak exile literature in an international context) and at plenary talks during the various expert sessions.

While preparations were underway for the 11th International Congress of Slavists held at the Slovak Committee of Slavists, decisions were made which laid firm and methodological foundations for the further development of Slovak Slavistics. It was at that time that the bylaws were drawn up and adopted for the Slovak Committee of Slavists, an independent legal entity operating throughout Slovakia. These bylaws state that the Slovak Slavist Committee is composed of representatives from Slovak academic disciplines in linguistics, literary history and literary studies, ethnology, history and archaeology, which deal with Slavistic-oriented research and academic activities (research into Slovak language, Slovak literature, history, spiritual and material culture in comparison to other Slavic languages, literature, history and cultures as well as research into other Slavic languages, literature, history and cultures). The Slovak Committee of Slavists is responsible for ensuring the development and coordination of Slavistic research in Slovakia (article I of the bylaws).

However, creating a Slovak institutional base was not a smooth and trouble-free process. To illustrate this, we refer to part of a published report on a meeting of the Slovak Committee of Slavists:

The Plenary meeting of the Slovak Committee of Slavists was held on February 18, 1992. The main item on the agenda was the report on the activities of the Slovak Committee of Slavists in 1991 presented by Ján Doruľa, the president of the Slovak Committee of Slavists. At the beginning of the report, he stressed that the last Slovak Committee of Slavists plenum on December 13, 1990 adopted some important decisions which had an impact on the activities of the Slovak Committee of Slavists presidium in 1991. One of the decisions was not to establish a federal coordinating Slavist committee or group, since liaison and contacts between the Slovak and Czech Committee of Slavists can be efficiently ensured by the existing bodies, especially the presidiums of these committees. (The question of a mutual Czech and Slovak federal Slavist body was raised again at the presidium discussion of the Slovak Committee of Slavists on April 22, 1991 in the presence of the president of the International Committee of Slavists and the Czech Committee of Slavists, Slavomír Wollman. Besides Wollman, both Jozef Hvišč, presidium member of the Slovak Committee of Slavists, and Ján Bosák, secretary of the International Committee of Slavists, were pushing for the creation of such a body despite the resolution adopted by the plenum of the Slovak Committee of Slavists. Since the resolution by the plenum of the Slovak Committee of Slavists which relied on essential reasons in disapproving the creation of a federal Slavist body, is binding for the presidium's activities of the Slovak Committee of Slavists, this new attempt to establish an umbrella body failed; we consider the problem to be solved and the matter closed.) Another important decision taken by the Slovak Committee of Slavists plenum of December 13, 1990 was to hold the 11th International Congress of Slavists in Bratislava, despite the fact that the majority of the presidium members of the Slovak Academy of Sciences did not show sufficient understanding or willingness to compromise with the organisers over the preparations for the 11th International Congress of Slavists. The plenum of the Slovak Committee of Slavists decided that it would seeking support in places where the organisation of a Slavist Congress in Slovakia would meet a more positive response. In keeping with this, the presidium of the Slovak Committee of Slavists carried out further activities related to the preparation of the 11th International Congress of Slavists. The presidium representatives of the Slovak Committee of Slavists led negotiations at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Slovak Republic, at the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, with the Slovak Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister as well as the Government Office of the Slovak Republic. – Based on the discussions on February 4, 1992 with the Slovak government ministers involved, the Slovak Minister of Culture will submit a *Návrh na organizačné a finančné zabezpečenie príprav a priebehu XI. medzinárodného zjazdu slavistov v Bratislave* [A proposal on the organisation and funding of preparations and proceedings of the 11th International Congress of Slavists in Bratislava] to the Slovak government session and the congress is to take place from August 30 to September 8, 1993 (Doruľa 1992, 109-110).

The report on the plenary meeting of the Slovak Committee of Slavists from February 18, 1992 also states that the president of the Slovak Committee of Slavists also communicated the proposal of the presidium of the Slovak Committee of Slavists to the plenum, so that within the upcoming months (by the end of June 1992), the members of the Slovak Committee of Slavists can bring forward proposals to the Slovak Committee of Slavists to invite guests of honour to the 11th International Congress of Slavists in Bratislava. These guests were mainly

to include Slovaks living abroad who had contributed to the development of Slovak science and culture and to the good reputation of Slovakia and Slovaks in the world. This plenum of the Slovak Committee of Slavists also adopted further, mainly personnel, decisions that had a significant impact on the effectiveness of preparations for the congress. As stated in the report on the plenary meeting of the Slovak Committee of Slavists, the Slovak Committee of Slavists presidium and the organisational staff for the congress underwent certain changes in 1991: For medical reasons, Ján Podolák resigned as vice president of the Slovak Committee of Slavists and Peter Ďurčo resigned as organisational secretary of the congress “for personal reasons” (he was secretary from May 20, 1991 to November 29, 1991). Following a proposal by the president of the Slovak Committee of Slavists, the nominations of Viera Gašparíková and Ján Števček were unanimously approved and both carried out a significant amount of meritorious work in preparation for the congress. Congress preparations were underway with the participation of the Slovak Committee of Slavists presidium composed of the following members: Ján Doruľa, Tatiana Štefanovičová, Ján Števček, Vincent Sedlák and Viera Gašparíková. In this respect, one cannot leave out the indispensable hard work conducted by Vladimír Gregor—the only employee of the Slovak Committee of Slavists secretariat, Helena Rummelová who helped solve funding and financial support issues of the work carried out by the Slovak Committee of Slavists and the heartfelt commitment of Igor Kšiňan at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Slovak Republic. The statutes of the Slovak Committee of Slavists define it as a national, coordinating and organisational body with no membership base (the statutes are similar to those that govern the International Committee of Slavists). Back then the Slovak Committee of Slavists was composed of the following members: Vincent Blanár, Ján Bosák, Ján Doruľa, Emil Horák, Ján Kačala, Ján Sabol; Dionýz Ďurišin, Michal Eliáš, Jozef Hvišč, Peter Liba, Ivan Slimák, Ján Števček, Hana Urbancová; Alexander Avenarius, Tatiana Ivantyšinová, Matúš Kučera, Alexander Ruttkay, Vincent Sedlák, Tatiana Štefanovičová; Oskár Elschek, Viera Gašparíková, Emília Horváthová, Ján Komorovský, Ján Podolák and Zuzana Profantová.

We should note that efforts to preserve *Slavica Slovaca* were a success (at least as a journal publishing two issues per year; the journal became an interdisciplinary journal for Slavists with the publication of its 27th volume, 1992) and the publication of a series of academic books dedicated to the 11th International Congress of Slavists.

The official programme accompanying the 11th International Congress of Slavists stated in its address to the journal's readers:

The complexities involved in creating the programme were related to the complexities of our situation (and that of Slavists around the world) at a busy time which has also apparently left its mark on this programme. We believe that by joining forces, we will succeed in making the programme a reality in the spirit of traditional mutual understanding and cooperation (Doruľa, Gregor, Skladaná 1993, 3).

We know that it was a time of tension and conflict in inter-Slavic relations (the collapse of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia) and a time when new Slavic national committees were emerging that wanted to present themselves independently at the world congress. That they were in fact able to do so and to communicate with each other in an undisturbed, creative and sociable working atmosphere is not merely down to the success

of the congress organisers, but is also down to the success and valuable moral reputation of its participants. The organisers did well to ensure that the Serbian Slavists were also able to attend the congress and take part in full as equal partners despite the international situation at the time. Bratislava (Slovakia) was at that time probably the only place in the Slavic world where this kind of meeting among Slavists could have been held in such a sociable atmosphere.

Once the 11th International Congress of Slavists in Bratislava had been concluded, we were able to state with relief and satisfaction:

The congress is over. Those eagerly anticipated wonderful, yet difficult, days that we prepared for so diligently are behind us. Throughout the months and weeks before the congress and each hour and day of the congress itself, many attitudes and characters were put to a difficult test. I would therefore like to express in writing my acknowledgement and sincere gratitude to my dedicated colleagues for their lengthy preparations for the congress (their unbreakable faith in its success despite the difficulties and the fact that their devotion to their work was down to personal conviction in part) and to the entire organisational staff who worked so harmoniously together during the lively days of the congress, starting early in the morning and finishing late in the evening. – Today, we already know that the wish we expressed before the congress in the 4th issue of *Slovenská reč* has come true: The 11th International Committee of Slavists in Bratislava will not only be a significant international event, but also a notable event in the Slovak Republic. We can trust and hope that the environment created thanks to the dedication of several organisers in arranging a successful congress will guarantee a calm working atmosphere for the delegates and ensure that in their eyes Bratislava will become a place of friendly meetings in the spirit of mutual understanding and the legacy of Slovak history in a year of important anniversaries. We know now what expectations were expressed in answer to the journalistic question *What do you expect from the Slavist Congress?*: I expect above all that the 11th International Congress of Slavists in Bratislava will accomplish its mission, i.e. that all the lectures will be delivered..., followed by insightful discussion amongst experts, involving a lively exchange of views at round-table talks, that the congress will take place in an atmosphere of tolerance and focused creative work and understanding and that as the host country, we will ensure that the debate will run smoothly. Part of the congress will also be dedicated to three special excursions and two cultural programme evenings, various official and unofficial meetings, talks, receptions and conversations. I expect it will all contribute significantly to preserving the true image of Slovakia and authentic views of the country in the eyes and minds of Slavic as well as non-Slavic Slavists from all over the world (...). I certainly express the impressions of the majority of my colleagues when I say that we in no way expected such an overflow of spontaneous recognition and appreciation of our work. Many congress participants certainly expressed surprise at the unexpected level of academic, technical, cultural and social expertise and at all the information available. We look back to a time when we noticed and accepted these acknowledgements in disbelief and with a certain amount of surprise. We cannot deny that each of us has weighed up and sifted through those responses in their own way. There is no doubt that we have justifiably experienced the good feeling of having done our job responsibly. We do not even have to criticise ourselves, because we are secure in our knowledge that our much appreciated social conduct and tact were not deliberately rehearsed, but a natural trait we ourselves would not consider worth noticing. However, the responsible and dedicated work we carried out together and the lack of play-acting significantly helped create an atmosphere of creative broad-minded cooperation, which dominated the congress in Bratislava despite various misgivings, aired or not. The president of the German Committee of Slavists, Professor Hans Rothe from Bonn, expressed his opinion: Firstly, I would like to

congratulate you on the congress. You have mastered it under the most difficult of conditions. It seemed that it might not take place: in any case, in the West such assumptions had been made. It is thanks to your steadfastness and tenacity that you succeeded in holding it. The expected tensions between the Slavists... did not arise. This is also thanks to your outstanding direction. In my opinion, the level was considerably higher than one of the two, actually three preceding congresses. For this achievement, you and your Committee deserves credit. The situation was extremely difficult, outwardly and psychologically, not only for you, Slovaks, and your Czech neighbours, but also for all Slavs. With energy and great tact, you have overcome all those difficulties and served as a role model indicating that even under such unfavourable conditions, it is possible to calmly listen to, debate and discuss scientific topics. On behalf of all German Slavists, I extend my sincere gratitude to you. ... I would like to ask you to convey the thanks of the German participants to your entire staff and also to your government officials. In his answer to the question What do you think is the greatest contribution of the Bratislava Congress of Slavists? F. V. Mareš (...) from the University of Vienna stated: Of course, the scientific component, the lectures is given top priority. Every congress is proud if it delivers this aspect successfully. This has been excellently achieved in Bratislava. The level was high, really world-class. This does not mean that there were no weaker lectures, but the level of the event as a whole was extraordinarily high and above all disciplined as well as transparent. So in terms of the lectures and discussions, the contribution of this congress cannot be disputed. Being able to socialise with others, which I would rank even before the other aspects mentioned was fully made use of here. I would like to praise the organisation of the event. I know what it means. I remember the Prague congress my wife helped me organise. What the people in Bratislava have achieved is remarkable. It is truly a success, and in terms of the administration as well, which is less visible, yet even more perceivable. The group of Russian Slavists sent me the following statement (signed by N. I. Tolstoy, O. N. Trubachov, V. Sedov, followed by more than thirty other personal signatures by eminent-sounding Slavists): At the meeting on the conclusions and summary of the 11th International Congress of Slavists (Bratislava, August 30 – September 8, 1993), we looked back with satisfaction and gratitude to the unforgettable days we spent in Bratislava. The warmth and cordiality which we felt and received in those days could not even be overshadowed by the rainy weather. We assume that Slovakia, which took on the burden of organising the congress, met this challenge with its head held high. The congress and its scientific conclusions will occupy a dignified position in the history of Slavistics. It is thanks to you and your personal involvement that this congress was a success. We saw with our own eyes how much time it had taken to organise and run the congress. We saw how you found time for each and every one of us who turned to you with serious questions, but also with trifling ones. You always offered us understanding, support and paid proper attention to us. I would particularly like to thank all your colleagues and the Slovak public for paying so much attention to our delegation. Without your support, we could not have come to Bratislava in the group that we did and do so much useful work during the congress. Moreover, this was the first opportunity for many of us to get to know the cordial Slovak nation and to experience its hospitality and kind-heartedness. From the very depth of our hearts, we express our gratitude to you and hope that we can work together again in the future (Doruľa 1993, 321-324).

Alas, we also had to affirm this:

One could quote many similar acknowledgments from various parts of the world. Not, however, from Professor Ľubomír Ďurovič, who denounces Slovak linguistics for sending politically dangerous signals: But back to the congress. To the detriment of the congress, the Bratislava organisers politicised the event in one respect. They also invited an almost complete delegation of political émigrés from the people's party supporters (adherents of the popular rightist

political platform). There were people who had nothing to do with Slavistics. And this was definitely noticed by the congress participants. It could have been interpreted as a dangerous signal on the part of Slovak linguistics: “These are the people we are interested” (...). Of the Slovak émigrés, the following people were among the guests of honour at the congress: M. S. Ďurica, J. M. Kirschbaum, I. Kružliak, J. M. Rydlo, K. Strmeň and Š. Vragaš. They are the authors of several prominent academic works, and other scientific, journalistic and artistic works. They are historians, literary scholars, and a number of them have been university professors and lecturers for many years. They are eminent representatives of Slovak science and culture abroad devotedly spreading Slovakia’s good name around the world. At the Slavist congress, they were Slavists taking part at least as justifiably as the majority of the other congress participants, with a variety of research focuses and different levels of expertise. The guests of honour at the 11th International Congress of Slavists were in fact “the people we are interested in”. The decision to invite them was adopted by the plenum of the Slovak Committee of Slavists, one fifth of whom are linguists, so this politically dangerous signal attributed to Slovak linguistics is far more dangerous, since it also affects the social science disciplines. Indeed, “The Bratislava organisers” (...) did not evaluate the participants of the congress, which had the character of a scientific event, by any political benchmark...<sup>1</sup> In this context, Slovak Radio is also worth mentioning, since it broadcast information that had clearly been fabricated including the claim that Slovakia was being presented in an unfortunate manner at the congress. The only response Slovak Radio made to the promptly delivered written notice pointing out the inaccuracy of the information broadcast was “to broadcast the same information again and without changing the content” (Doruľa 1993, 321-324).

At the end of my post-congress reflections and notes, I wrote at that time:

I am convinced that the “Bratislava organisers” were a little sad when they read the last paragraphs. I hope that not even those to whom the threat hidden in the admonishment about the political danger of their actions is addressed were alarmed. They were certainly encouraged by the acknowledgement from all the congress participants who cannot be suspected of any personal or political bias against the “Bratislava organisers” or against the Slovak Republic. – One needs to appreciate the fact that many Slavists from all over the world came to Bratislava and that the tradition of holding Slavist meetings was not interrupted, and that Bratislava was the centre of a genuinely creative atmosphere of mutual understanding. Acknowledgment should be made of the fact that it was possible to organise the congress using a carefully elaborated concept, where all the components of the programme complemented each other, creating a balanced and integrated whole. – It may fill us with satisfaction that the unique and authentic congress atmosphere is linked with its venue, with Bratislava and with Slovakia. After all, a spirit of tolerance and broad-mindedness is the spirit of Slovak history and culture. This was a place where that spirit could fully manifest itself in today’s disorderly world. The fact that this spirit was manifest is not only due to the common victory of the good will of

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<sup>1</sup> S. Ondrejovič also remembered the 11th International Congress of Slavists in Bratislava, which he assessed thus: “Its success surpassed all expectations, which is best demonstrated by the fact that even those who did not actually lift a finger wanted to get the credit for it.” It is remarkable, yet not very surprising to find that this text was incorporated ten years later (thirteen years after the explanation quoted here) by S. Ondrejovič into a book of reports from his supposed science travels and ‘enriched’ by adding the emboldened sentence as follows (emboldening added): “Its success surpassed all expectations, which is best demonstrated by the fact that even those who did not actually lift a finger wanted to get the credit for it. **The only scandalous thing perhaps was the choice of distinguished guests**” (Ondrejovič 2006, 46).



the congress participants and of the organisers' endeavours, but also due to the victory of an independent Slovakia. Slovakia will benefit from the 11th International Congress of Slavists in several aspects throughout the long years to come (Doruľa 1993, 321-324).

Even now, one has to bear in mind that ministers of the Slovak government Matúš Kučera and Dušan Slobodník as well as the selflessly dedicated Juraj Sarvaš, creator, dramaturgist and host of impressive cultural programmes, significantly contributed to the dignified running of the 11th International Congress of Slavists in Bratislava and to the representation of Slovakia.

The successful proceedings and spectacular response to the 11th International Congress of Slavists in Bratislava resulted in important work for the future of Slovak Slavistics, which left an impression on the wider Slovak scientific and social and political community. It might be difficult to continue disputing the importance of Slavistics, since within a prominent international context it integrates not only the majority of the social scientific disciplines, but Slovakia itself, marking out a place for it "on the map". It was also recognised that there was a need to gradually complete the institutionalisation of Slovak Slavistics by establishing a research and coordinating organisational centre, which would be a suitable partner to other Slavic and non-Slavic Slavistic centres. Resolution no. 733 of the Slovak Academy of Sciences Presidium of December 20, 1994 made it possible for a **Department of Slavistics at the Slovak Academy of Sciences** to be established as an organisational unit on March 1, 1995. Article I (1) of the regulation establishing the new Slovak Academy of Sciences department states:

The Department will focus on general research into relations between Slovak language and culture and other Slavic languages and cultures, and also on research into Slovak-Latin, Slovak-Hungarian and Slovak-German relations from the initial and earlier periods. It will conduct research into other Slavic languages and cultures. The Department of Slavistics at SAS is the first stage, the foundation stone on which an interdisciplinary Slavistic research centre—the Institute of Slavistics—will be built. It will focus not only on linguistic research, but also on research into history, ethnology, and cultural and art studies, from a comparative perspective involving both internal and external interdisciplinary collaboration. It is not merely a research centre, but also a coordination centre for Slavistic research in Slovakia. (Statute of Department of Slavistics at the Slovak Academy of Sciences)

The article also holds that the Department of Slavistics at SAS has responsibility for "editing and publishing the Slovak Slavistics journal, *Slavica Slovaca*".

It is obvious from the nature of the scope of research defined for the newly established department that it follows on from the previous programme of Slavistic research, which also included research into Slovak-Latin, Slovak-German and Slovak-Hungarian relations. Research into these relations is of primary importance when it comes to examining and clarifying Slovak linguistic and historical-cultural development as part of its integration within Europe. Establishing a special Slavistic department within SAS has proved to be an act of extraordinary importance, in part because the department has become an irreplaceable coordination centre for Slovak Slavistics at home and abroad. This was clearly shown in the fact that it ensured that the Slovak Committee of Slavists could function. The two organisations signed an agreement on collaboration together. Thus, for example, it

provided a natural and efficient organisational base for preparations for the participation of Slovak Slavists in regular international Slavist congresses. At the tenth anniversary of the Department of Slavistics at SAS, we were able to declare:

From the very beginning, the Department of Slavistics was set up as an interdisciplinary research centre with responsibility for coordinating the domestic and international sides, and for organising all the activities and work relating to the Slovak Committee of Slavists, which is a member of the International Committee of Slavists. (...) Although at present the Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics at SAS employs has a staff of ten and several full-time PhD students (...), many external co-investigators from other academic, university and foreign institutions work on the institute's interdisciplinary projects. (...) Extensive interdisciplinary research is carried out as part of projects at the Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics at SAS by research teams composed of SAS staff members, universities and other departments. This research contributes to knowledge on Slovak cultural and social evolution, which is an area that has thus far been explored briefly or not at all (incorporating not only the work of scholars and writers in Latin within the context of Slovak cultural and historical development in Central Europe and Europe as a whole, but also Church Slavonic works used by the Byzantine-Slavonic rite in Eastern Slovakia. It incorporates research into religious literature, prose and song together with the music in a comparative European context, and research in oral folklore in an inter-Slavic and European context etc. ) - Regular interdisciplinary scientific conferences involving researchers from abroad are directly linked to projects implemented by the Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics at SAS. Research papers from these conferences that have been published have met with a positive response at home and abroad." (Doruľa 2005, 3-4).

We include this quotation on the Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics at SAS because

the Resolution of the Presidium of the Slovak Academy of Sciences of December 16, 2004, with effect from January 1, resulted in the Department of Slavistics at SAS being renamed the **Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics at SAS**. Through this name, we pay tribute and respect to the character and work of the important Slovak Slavist Ján Stanislav. (...) On April 27, 2005, we had the opportunity to commemorate important anniversaries relating to the Slavistics department (the 10th anniversary of the department, the renaming of the department as the Ján Stanislav Institute at SAS) and the anniversary of *Slavica Slovaca* (the publication of the 40th volume). – The appearance of President of the Slovak Republic Ivan Gašparovič at the modest commemoration made the celebration all the more engaging. At the Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics at SAS, the President was welcomed by Štefan Luby, president of SAS, who briefly recounted the history of the Slavistics department at SAS. He was president of SAS when the institute was created and referred to this period as being one of the least favourable in terms of the conditions under which new SAS departments were set up. He appreciated the tenacity of those who were not discouraged by the conditions at the time. He stressed the results that the institute had achieved and suggested it was quite entitled to bear the name of the esteemed Slovak Slavist, Ján Stanislav, teacher to some of those who had now become its foremost researchers (*ibid.*).

With reference to the institute being named after Ján Stanislav, it seems useful to highlight a conference which took place between December 1 – 3, 2004 in Liptovský Ján:

At the *Centenary of the Birth of Ján Stanislav (the Legacy of his Work and the Present State of Slovak Slavistics)* conference, his students and colleagues, who still have vivid memories of his teaching, research and his commitment, gathered together at Ján Stanislav's birthplace.

Our young Slavists, who are familiar with Ján Stanislav from his published work, have come together with Slavists from abroad. What unites them all is respect for the work of Ján Stanislav. (...) – We knew Professor Ján Stanislav as a Slavist who made a significant contribution to the development of Slavistics, mainly through his historical-comparative works, in which he brought Slovak together with Slavistics and even in an interlinguistic context to an extent that no one had ever done before him and few have done after him. The range of research interests he had is impressive. Ján Stanislav's findings are of lasting value in several research fields. He obtained many of his findings gradually through diligent and persistent examination of a great amount of documentary evidence, and in analysing and interpreting it he displayed admirable meticulousness and erudition. We might just mention some of his work on historical topography, on contemporary and historical dialectology and on the evolution of Slovak language as well as the Great Moravian period in Slovak history and culture. In his scientific work, J. Stanislav kept up with the research findings of Slovak historians, archaeologists in particular, but also ethnologists and literary historians, showing respect and reflecting upon them with great interest. When we strive to conduct more extensive research via interdisciplinary collaboration, we follow up on the work of Ján Stanislav and develop his legacy. – Naturally further research has led to new facts, additions and greater precision. (...) In spite of all the obstacles which need to be overcome when conducting research, progress has been made in many research fields, which would fill Jan Stanislav's heart with joy (Doruľa 2004, 161-162).

For those interested in familiarising themselves with the results of the research, organisational and coordinating activities of the Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics at SAS, detailed information on all the institute's publications can be found on the SAS website at (<http://www.slavu.sav.sk>), where all the issues of *Slavica Slovaca* are freely available as well, beginning with volume 32 (1997).

The social urgency for extensive research into Slovak language, history and cultures as described above is clear and is becoming clearer even today, at a time of politically motivated, organised and publicly proclaimed and spread misinterpretations of Slovak historical and cultural development, which are often linked to undignified irony and demagoguery. The victims are not only myths, "our"<sup>2</sup> Slovak ones (those that are non-Slovak, however

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<sup>2</sup> This (as allegedly their own) is how it is referred to by those who diligently seek to expose Slovak myths and falsely present themselves as the wise and sincere cleansers of genuine Slovak history. Yet nothing connects them innerly with it, they are not bound to it as its direct heirs and continual participants, but are in their great majority its hateful and spiritually external destructors. It is understandable that these spiritual extremists, these "worldly wise correctors", do not know anything about the "devious" opinions of supposedly Slovak nationalist scholars and artists, as far as Slovak history, language and culture are concerned. One of them recently wrote: "We stored in our memory the things that we had lived through. Science calls this social and historical conscience, not *myth*. Its role is a well-chosen tradition, which is stored by generations as their property and bequeathed to their descendants. While this refined tradition has someone to carry it on, then it is a living and also an active component of society's awareness of itself" (Kučera 2010, 150). And page 147 reads as follows: "Historians often discover great and clear truths about the development of their society. If these discoveries are to become the property of an entire nation, poets must issue forth. Only they were given a gift by God which enables them to enter the depths of the nation's soul. This can also be seen in the fate of the Svatopluk tradition among Slovaks." One of the greatest Slovak poets said: "Somewhere at the dawn of human remembrance, something happened that we are going to talk about. So deep, deep in time that the human memory is unable to see its beginning and humanity is becoming lost like an

inventive, are a sacred unimpaired historical tradition or a precious folk creativity), but also reportedly unjustly appropriated Cyrillo-Methodian tradition and the entire “non-key” Great Moravian period of Slovak history (its previous historical development being ignored) and a sort of made-up ancient Slovak people. A multinational, multicultural, non-proletarian, internationalised i.e. a civic globalised Slovakia supposedly does not even have its own Slovak history, for this history dissolves in the real and authentic history of our neighbours, these days mainly the history of our neighbour to the south. Our history is allegedly confusingly similar to and inseparable from those neighbours. It is unknown why these neighbours are said to be unlike us, non-multinational and non-multicultural. Although the majority of the Slovak population is still Slovak, a priori suspicious and dangerous nationalism (many Slovak extremists reportedly refer to it misleadingly as patriotism) somehow doubts the pre-Nitra kind of Hungarian chauvinism, that has been revived and nurtured, and is supposedly harmless in a unified Europe, even worth understanding and must remain untouched and unharmed by civic globalisation.

It is clear that this anti-Slovak attitude is also being obstructed by Slovak Slavistics in the form of extensive targeted research. From time to time, we can listen to or read sophisticated “analyses” which state that it is inappropriate and old-fashioned to define academic disciplines (literature studies and even philology), history and culture by appending adjectives. However, a closer inspection shows that it is only the adjective *Slovak* that is inadequate, inappropriate, old-fashioned, and non-academic, in all three of the genders it takes in Slovak, and which it turns out is used most often by “our” world-class sages.<sup>3</sup>

I believe, and I am sure I am not alone, that in the near future, the socio-political conditions in Slovakia will after all enable us not only to preserve, but also to enhance and

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actor behind a curtain that will never rise. In such a distant and ancient time, it is no longer the simple truth that stands at the cradle of human history, but the legend – the older and wiser sister of truth. For an immense number of simple historical events is needed, until time shapes their fragile, evanescent little bodies into an everlasting myth. Hundreds of thousands and millions of fates, millions of minute dramas will take place leaving a speck of ash, a grain of dust, which we turn to. Yet this grain is not inconsiderable. It is a cell, a building block, which constitutes legend and myth, a parable of human lot” (Rúfus 2010, 19).

<sup>3</sup> The Slavistics course at Prešov University, with its long tradition and remarkable results, has gradually come to a complete demise. Yet funding has been secured for the Institute of Hungarian Language and Culture which was festively inaugurated on November 10, 2011 in the presence of the leader of the Hungarian political party in Slovakia, the rector of ELTE University in Budapest, the Consul General of the Republic of Hungary in Slovakia and other high-ranking official guests, according to Prešov University website. According to officially published data, applicants able to communicate in Hungarian will be accepted on the course on Hungarian language and culture combined with English, German or Ukrainian to be offered at Prešov University without having to pass an entrance exam. Slovak will not be offered as a combined subject at Prešov University, although according to published information, Hungarian language and culture graduates will also be able to work in the civil service. We assume that this refers to the civil service in the Slovak Republic. We cannot find any texts which would deal with the question whether the objectives that this institute was so festively created to meet are already being sufficiently met by universities in Slovakia (University of János Selye in Komárno, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra and other schools in Slovakia). However, we can affirm with certainty that the course on Slavistics will be missed in the east of Slovakia even more than the new course on Hungarian language and culture was missed (by whom?) before.

develop Slavistic research as an extensive targeted programme as has oft been mentioned. We are convinced that this is in the interests of Slovakia and Slovakia's future.

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