**Illegal Translation Activities of Ján Ivan Mastiliak CSsR**

**Abstract**

Ján Ivan Mastiliak was born on 5 November 1911 in Nižný Hrabovce. In August 1922 he entered the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer (Redemptorists), where he took his religious vows and completed his philosophical and theological studies. As a young priest, he studied in Rome from 1937 to 1944. From September 1945, he taught students of theology in Obořiště. In 1950, as a monastic priest, he was unjustly sentenced to life imprisonment in a staged monster trial. He became one of the victims of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. He was released from prison on 10 May 1965 on the basis of an amnesty granted by the President of the Republic. It was not a true freedom. He lived under constant surveillance by State Security officers.

Mastiliak understood that his place was in the secret Church. He undertook the secret formation of theologians, monks and nuns who needed suitable literature for their formation and spiritual growth. This was an important impulse why he

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1 **CSsR** – Slovak abbreviation for the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, Redemptorists.
undertook the translation of valuable literature, which was distributed as samizdat. It is documented that from 1965 until his death in 1989, he translated more than 100 works from various languages.

The presented study deals with Ján Ivan Mastiliak as a scholar who could not create on his own because the communist totalitarian power prevented him from doing so, but he devoted his efforts to illegal translation activities. Thanks to his contacts, he found ways to obtain quality religious literature. From this he selected works that were suitable for the formation and spiritual development of the initiated and the laity, whom he secretly formed. The subsequent translation, reproduction and distribution of samizdat were also done illegally, under threat of further condemnation and imprisonment. He was aware of this danger, but accepted responsibility for the formation of clandestine clerics and religious was greater.

**Keywords**

Mastiliak, Greek Catholic Church, Redemptorists, Samizdat, Communism, Czechoslovakia

Mastiliak came from the rural environment of eastern Slovakia (Mandzák, 2009, p. 7). Already the first years of school in his native Nižný Hrabovec in the district of Vranov nad Topľou confirmed that he liked to learn and was friends with books. He was given the opportunity to be educated by the Redemptorists, whose community he joined in August 1922, when he was still about three months short of turning 11. He went through the Redemptorist religious formation, passing successively through the juvenate, the novitiate, taking his religious vows in August 1929, and concluding his philosophical and theological studies. On August 12, 1934 he became a Greek Catholic priest. It was no coincidence that those three years after his priestly ordination, the Redemptorist leaders sent him to Rome to study. He earned a doctorate in Ecclesiastical Sciences of the Christian East from the Pontifical Oriental Institute and a licentiate in Dogmatic
Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University. His scholarly research focused particularly on the person and work of the Russian philosopher Vladimir Sergeyevich Soloviev. He returned home in April 1944, worked in monasteries in Slovakia and from September 1945 in the Redemptorist seminary in Obořiště near Prague. He devoted himself to pedagogical work among the theologians and at the same time continued his research and publishing activities. At that time, he was already one of the respected experts in ecclesiastical and secular circles on the life and work of Solovyov and on the history of Russian philosophy.

His promising development was ruined by the onset of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. He became one of its victims, as in 1950 he was unjustly sentenced to life imprisonment as a monastic priest in a staged monster trial. (Mandzák, 2008 and Mandzák (ed.), 2009) Following an amnesty from the President of the Republic, and undoubtedly some relaxation of the regime, he was released from prison on 10 May 1965. It was not true freedom. He lived under constant surveillance by State Security officers. Although in 1968 there seemed to be a glimmer of better times, it soon became clear that this was not the case. Although the Greek Catholic Church was restored, Mastiliak could act publicly as a priest with great restrictions. During the brief period of the so-called Prague Spring he attempted to publish, but as a former political prisoner he was essentially unsuccessful.

Decision to publish non-periodical samizdat

In 1969, further socio-political changes took place in Czechoslovakia, and the subsequent normalization also had an impact on the church situation in the state. The communists returned to consolidating the totalitarian regime, which was also reflected in the fundamental restriction of the rights and freedoms of citizens, including their religious beliefs. The struggle against any expressions of religion and strict censorship were also manifested in the field of literature. While the totalitarian regime was publishing a large amount of ideological literature, Christians could not publish even the Holy Scriptures without the regime’s permission. It is therefore understandable that
the way out of this situation was to publish samizdat. These were basically illegally published printed materials, which had a variety of focuses, including religious ones. (Šimulčík, 1997, p. 15) They were published periodically, for example in the form of magazines, or non-periodically, various printed materials and books. They were either original texts or translations.

As a young monastic priest before 1950, Mastiliak devoted himself primarily to study and pedagogical work, which may have seemed inconsistent with the Redemptorist charisma, the vocation of a missionary. But the opposite was true, which became especially evident in later years, after his return from prison, when he was not free to live his monastic and priestly consecration. He was never a popular missionary; the communist regime did not allow him to proclaim the Word of God as an active priest in pastoral ministry. He struggled to find an appropriate way to serve God and people, to use his talents and linguistic abilities, and even though he was not allowed to do so by the regime of the time, he nevertheless excelled in this very ministry. Mastiliak understood that his place was in the secret Church. The latter, including the secret Church hierarchy, seemed to be covering the non-public, even outright forbidden by the state, activities of the Catholic Church. In spite of his health difficulties, he undertook the secret formation of theologians, monks and nuns who needed appropriate literature for their formation and spiritual growth. This was an important impetus for his undertaking the translation of valuable literature, which was distributed as samizdat. (Mandzák, 2016, p. 82)

There are varying data on how many works Mastiliak translated and from which languages. According to some it was over 100, according to others up to 130 books (Mandzák, 2009, p. 179–180). Jana Lukáčová also dealt with the topic. According to her analysis of the 100 books that Mastiliak translated between 1969 and 1987, he, as a translator, tried to introduce the reader to the subject of the publication in a short introduction. Lukáčová’s pie chart illustrates that 26% of the books were translated from French, 21% from German, 3% from English, 3% from Russian, 2% from Hungarian, 1% from Latin, 1% from Ukrainian, and 43% could not be identified as to what language they were translated from. (Lukáčová, 2016, pp. 103–108)
Mastiliak signed his works and translations with his own name or used several pseudonyms. (Mandzák, 2009, p. 171) However, samizdat published during the communist totalitarianism was signed exclusively by Ivan Marianov. Some shorter texts he did not sign at all, which consequently caused a problem to document the list of his translations and samizdat.

Mastiliak had the aptitude and formal training to write his own texts even after his release from prison in 1965, which he did to some extent, but he did not venture into larger texts. One of his first secret students, the Roman Catholic Redemptorist Ján Janok, gives an explanation of why he “only” translated:

In addition to his work as a teacher, O. Ivan was mainly engaged in translating books from foreign literature. Sometimes we encouraged him to write something nice himself. To this challenge he explained his position to us, “In order to write a good book, I would have to have contemporary literature and know what has been written in this field. And I don’t have that, so I don’t try to write books. But if I translate a nice and useful book, I will serve many people.” I don’t know how many books, major and minor, he translated, but I believe there were about 100 titles (ARM, f. Monastery Michalovce, 4, 2015).

Ways of obtaining books for translation

Mastiliak liked books. His statement that we cannot read all published books because there is no time for that, even a whole human lifetime is not enough for that, therefore only the best ones should be read, has already become famous. (ARM, f. Monastery Michalovce, V. Polák, 2015) He used to say that a proper Redemptorist should spend his life among books. He himself had so many of them that the Brajer family, with whom he stayed in Prešov, was afraid that the attic would collapse under their weight. And new ones kept coming to him. He managed to acquire encyclopedias and dictionaries that were valuable for that time. He had an overview of them, he knew exactly where all the books were placed on his shelf.

It is necessary to realize that during the communist totalitarian regime the State Security had its secret collaborators and agents in
all institutions in Czechoslovakia. Cultural institutions, including libraries, were no exception. It was therefore not easy to obtain and borrow religious literature. It certainly attracted attention. In the case of a priest, it was not strange, but on the other hand, it still raised the question of why he needed those books when most priests in the ordinary pastorate did not need them.

The problem was to obtain not only the latest theological literature, but also religious literature as such. In order to purchase and transport the literature to Czechoslovakia, permission from the relevant authorities was required or such literature was brought into Czechoslovakia illegally. How was it possible to get hold of it? Based on Mastiliak’s estate and testimonies, we can conclude that over time he found several ways to acquire valuable religious literature, namely:

- through friends and acquaintances
- through authors and publishers
- through the Post-Conciliar Library in Prague
- through the Cultural and Information Centre of the GDR\(^2\) in Prague
- through the lending service of the Scientific Library in Prešov
- through the Ordinariate of the Greek Catholic Church in Prešov
- through fellow brothers from the Czech Republic, Germany and Italy
- through advertisements in newspapers.

Between 1950 and 1965, Mastiliak had the opportunity to get acquainted in prison with important clerics and laymen of the then Czechoslovakia, and several of these contacts helped him in later years. Especially in 1968–1970, when someone travelled abroad, he could bring him suitable literature. He himself, in 1969, during his brief stay in Rome, brought back some rare literature. To the church lawyer and political prisoner Josef Ryška, whom he had met during his studies in Rome, he wrote in July 1972:

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\(^2\) GDR – German Democratic Republic.
Dear Josef! I hope that I will be able to contribute something to clarify the situation. Not because I would be an “expert in the law /Occidens-Oriens/”, as you benevolently write, but because I am the happy possessor of the law of the Church, both Western and Eastern. I brought the Eastern volume of the Codex Orientalis as a souvenir from my visit in the Eternal City (ARM, f. Monastery Michalovce, 3, 1972).

The book also contained other important documents concerning the Eastern Catholic Churches, so he was able to answer Ryško competently on questions of matrimonial law. He needed them because of his work in the church court in Olomouc.

Professor Ján Komorovský compiled the book “The Ethics of the Kingdom of God”, which is a collected edition of Mastiliak’s writings on questions of unionism and Russian religious philosophy. In the introduction, he presents a biography of Mastiliak, into which he has also inserted his personal reminiscences, writing:

He was released on 10 May 1965. Knowing that he was without books, I gave him the “Acta Conventus Velehradensis” and the “Slavorum Litterae Theologicae”. When I visited him on Sázavského Street, he gave me two Russian books from the editions of the Brussels Russian Catholic publishing house ŽIZŇ BOGOM – Andrei Bogolubov “Synčelovečeskij” (1968) and E. Svetlov “Istokireligii” (1970). At that time, we did not know that behind these pseudonyms was hidden the personality of the Orthodox protoyer and Catholicophile, the Jewish-Christian Father Alexander Meňa. The Brussels publishing house also sent him a reissue of the collected writings of Vladimir Solovyov (Komorovský (ed.), 2003, p. 10).

From the materials brought by the Halčák family in English from Medjugorje in 1985, Mastiliak wrote his own text, which was distributed as samizdat. (ARM, f. Monastery Michalovce, 5, 2015) Books were also sent to Mastiliak by Tomek from the Czech Republic (ARM, f. Monastery Michalovce, 6, 2015).

No information is known about Mastiliak’s acquaintance with František Verner (Koronthály (ed.), 2013, p. 495), or the sources do not comment on it. Verner, as a member of the Knights of the Order
of the Crusaders with the Red Star, was also a studied librarian. As a Roman Catholic clergyman, he was involved in pastoral work in Prague parishes, but he was also in charge of several theological libraries in Prague. In 1967 he was commissioned by Bishop František Tomášek, administrator of the Prague Archdiocese, to create a library for priests who were pursuing postgraduate studies. Verner not only accomplished the task, but succeeded in building the foundation of the so-called Post Conciliar Library. And it was this very library that Mastiliak also used to acquire valuable books. Some he studied, some he needed to check the exact text for correct citation, some he only consulted. In all likelihood, some of these borrowed books he also translated.

A brief account of contacts with Verner survives in the estate of Mastiliak. In it, Verner wrote to Mastiliak: “Dear Doctor, we have the “Bibliotheca Sanctorum”, but it is in the reference library. This means that I do not borrow books from there, but one can study there on the spot. Besides, they’re huge, big books, and I don’t know how they’d mail them. So, if you had a moment of free time, we would be happy if you came to study here” (ARM, f. Monastery Michalovce, 2, 1983). It is certain that Mastiliak did not go from Prešov to Prague, because his health and the circumstances of his life did not allow it. We can only assume that perhaps someone came to his rescue and made extracts of what he needed, or that he found the necessary literature elsewhere, where it was more accessible to him.

Another institution where Mastiliak obtained suitable literature for study and translation was the Cultural and Information Centre of the German Democratic Republic in Prague. It was founded in 1976 and its task was to organize cultural events with the participation of German artists, to train lecturers and teachers of the German language, and to assist in the purchase and lending of slides, films, gramophone records, magazines and books. Especially the latter was used by Mastiliak. His estate has preserved two requests from 1982, in which he asks to order books from the bookshop of the publisher Benno-Verlag, Thüringerstrasse-3, 7033 Leipzig, Postfach 98. In the first application he listed 17 books, in the second application he listed 9 books. The authors include Josef Neuner, Heinrich Roos, Heinrich Schlier, Arno Schilson, Ludvig von Hertling, John Paul II, Clemens
Brentano, Joachim Gnilka, Roman Brandstaetter and others. The list of requested works shows that he was primarily interested in theological and biblical literature (\textit{ARM}, f. Monastery Michalovce, 9, 1982; 10, 1982 and 6, 2015). It is more than likely that he contacted this centre several times, as he received actual catalogues of published books from the German publishing house, but unfortunately no detailed documentation on this has survived.

In Prešov, where he lived and worked, he used the lending service of the Scientific Library. Undoubtedly, its library collection did not offer many opportunities to borrow religious literature, because during the communist era this type of literature was published only to a very limited extent in Czechoslovakia. He could not obtain from there the latest works of Christian theologians or philosophers. On the other hand, it should be remembered that scholars hid their research on religious themes in various studies under the headings of literary science, culture, ethnography, archaeology or history.

In these works, he obtained certain information concerning religion and the Church, which he used for the needs of the illegal formation of clergy, monks and laymen, and for literary activities. It is probable that he had someone known among the librarians who lent him the necessary literature, or also arranged for a publication in which he was interested, but which the library did not have, to be borrowed from another library by means of an interlibrary exchange.

This view is supported by a well-preserved letter to Verner, in which Mastiliak writes about borrowing books: ‘If it would not lead to the goal, I advise, even according to experience, a successful way: to use the services of public libraries on an international scale: Ask a public library to lend you the requested work from such and such public library abroad. /For me, the State Scientific Library in Prešov once provided a book from Rome in this way – and asked the University Library in Bratislava if they had the book’ (\textit{ARM}, f. Monastery Michalovce, 1, 1982).

He obtained some magazines and publications by ordering them through the Ordinariate. Thanks to his great linguistic skills, as well as his philosophical and theological education, in 1969 Ján Hirka, then ordinary of the Greek-Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia,
chose him as a translator. On April 22, 1969, he was even appointed as the chief editor of the Greek Catholic press in Slovak. Mastiliak handled correspondence and official mail in foreign languages for the needs of the ordinary or the office. He reported on what the correspondence contained, or prepared summaries of replies.

Since the Ordinariate also received materials from the Vatican, various prepared or already officially published Church documents, he had access to them and could not only study them, but also make an extract from them, or even translate them to serve the local Church. If it was necessary to send something important abroad, Milan Mikloško took it to Prague, where Cardinal František Tomášek made sure that it was sent by diplomatic post through the Italian, Austrian or American embassy. Mastiliak’s translation of Soloviev was also sent to Rome by this same route (oAA, 3, 2014).

As a censor, he also contributed significantly to the translation of liturgical texts into Slovak. The influence he had on Hirka at that time is confirmed by the fact that he was his guide and translator during an important visit to the Vatican and Pope Paul VI. This role of his is also confirmed by the reports of the Czechoslovak State Security, which saw him as a very dangerous enemy of the then regime, which had a great influence on Hirka (Mandzák, 2017, pp. 136–137).

From May 1968 to May 1981, as a secret protoigumen⁢³, he led the Michalovce Vice-Province of the Redemptorists. As a superior he represented the Greek Catholic Redemptorists before the state authorities and the church nobility. However, by the time of normalization, it was clear that the communists did not recognize the renewal of religious life, so he could no longer appear before the state authorities as a representative of the religious community. However, he continued to be perceived as such by Ordinary Hirka from Prešov. Correspondence and monastic documents from the general leadership of the Redemptorists in Rome came to him, illegally, through the GDR, Poland or the present Czech Republic, which he translated into Slovak and sent to his companions. From there he also received

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³ It is the title of superior of an Orthodox or Catholic monastery of the Eastern Rite.
publications on Redemptorist history and spirituality, which he used in the secret formation of theologians. He also translated, for example, the extensive biography of Saint Alphonsus, the founder of the Redemptorists, by Théodule Rey-Mermet. He received Russian books on Soloviev from the Redemptorists in Belgium, as well as some books on St. Therese of Lisieux (OAA, 3, 2014).

When he was trying to obtain literature on St. Therese of Lisieux, of whom he was a great admirer, he submitted an advertisement in a Catholic newspaper in early 1973. This effort, however, did not bring him the expected result, as he did not obtain the literature in this way (ARM, f. Ján Ivan Mastiliak. Šanony, 1, 1973).

We can say that basically every book had its own history, as to how it reached him, or how he managed to obtain it. After several decades it is impossible to trace all the details. What we know for sure is that Mastiliak tried to obtain the work in its original language. Although he could have made it easier for himself and translated from Polish, for example, he was not an advocate of making a translation out of a translation. He never made things easy for himself in that way.

**Typists**

From mid-December 1968 until his death in September 1989, Mastiliak lived in the Brajer family’s lodgings on Sázavského Street in Prešov. He had two smaller rooms at his disposal. He used the back room as his study, which faced the garden, and was therefore quieter and more suitable for work. In these constricted conditions, where there were two desks, a few chairs and overflowing shelves of books, Mastiliak’s translations were also produced (OAA, 4, 2009 and OAA, 3, 2014).

After arriving at the Brajers’, Mastiliak tried to find a suitable typist to assist him in transcribing the texts. He knew Mrs. Liptáková from the cathedral in Prešov, where he attended daily services and served as a confessor. After a short time, she began to come to him and helped him with the translations. Thanks to this cooperation, he translated a book by Romano Guardini called “The Lord”. As this translation could not be published in Czechoslovakia, it was only distributed in samizdat form. However, the book was eventually published by
the Jesuits in Canada and Ivan Marianov was listed as the translator. The partnership worked nicely, with Mastiliak translating book after book. However, after several years of cooperation with Mrs. Liptáková, he had to look for a new cooperator because her health deteriorated and she could no longer leave her apartment (Mandzák, 2009, p. 175).

Other typists also came from Prešov or the surrounding area. Usually, women were willing to do this work, but there were exceptions. The following persons could be found: Mária Barnášová, Magdaléna Dziaková, Dzvoníková, Helena Fenčáková, Monika Fialková, Katarína Halčáková, Harmaňáková, Juricová, Šarlota Hučková, Okelová, Anna Rapavá, Pavol Rapavý and Hela Torkošová. The typists did not have any knowledge of each other, for security reasons, and many of them did not even know each other. When a typist did not have a typewriter, he himself used a typewriter by Marica brand, which Mastiliak bought from his own funds, including possible repairs, which were provided by Milan Mikloško. The latter was one of his first secret students of theology and later also a secretly ordained priest.

There were never enough female typists for Mastiliak, they were taking turns, as they could. The secret nuns who came to Mastiliak for secret formation also helped in writing down the translations. These included the Roman Catholic sisters of the Satmars and Dominicans, Anna Alberta Vaľková, the Gajdoš sisters, Celina Blichárová and Jozafáta Petriková, and the Greek-Catholic servant sisters (ARM, f. Material collected on Ján Ivan Mastiliak, 1, 2009).

**Translation Process**

The process of translating the book had its own order with Mastiliak. The typists came to work at the appointed time, i.e. in the morning from 9 a.m. to 12 a.m. and in the afternoon from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. If he had a different schedule, of course, the working hours changed. During the actual translating of the book, Mastiliak worked at one desk and the typist worked at the other desk. He dictated the translation and the typist typed it on a typewriter. As he grew older, he became more and more ill, so while working he sat in an armchair next to the sofa, on which he had auxiliary literature for the translation,
such as dictionaries or other books. He sat facing the window, his legs stretched out on a smaller chair to keep them horizontal. The typist sat behind his back, at the desk by the door (Mandzák, 2009, p. 176).

Milan Mikloško also assisted Mastiliak in writing up the translations, but as secretary he mostly helped with the correspondence. According to his testimony, Mastiliak had an overview, even a timetable, of which typist was to come to him and when. It often happened that when he arrived, Mastiliak was in the process of translating, reading a book in a foreign language, and the typist was writing down his fluent translation into Slovak. Naturally he began to talk to Mikloško in German, in French, in English, and it was only after being warned that he realised he was speaking in a foreign language. Although Mastiliak was retired and had little money, he paid the typists for their work. He did, however, receive generous alms from benefactors for the samizdat, from which he financed all his expenses and work. Typewritten paper and indigos were sometimes scarce, so sometimes the typists searched for them on their own, which was reimbursed, or Mikloško bought them in Prague (oAA, 3, 2014).

Sister Regina Ľudmila Mitrová, a servant sister, wrote down a translation of one of the works of Saint Alphonsus, a biography of Barbara Szapek and a book from the life of Saint Therese of Lisieux. As a student, she sometimes came for more days to make better use of the time, and then she stayed overnight with the Brajers. According to her recollections, if Mastiliak had a translation in another language, he consulted it. When looking for a suitable word, he sometimes also asked her opinion as a typist as to what word she would use. He dictated quickly, as if he were talking, which only emphasized that he translated with great ease (ARM, f. Monastery Michalovce, 7, 2015).

Some typists also transcribed texts at home. These were texts that had already been proofread and so they actually reproduced them. The language proofreading looked like Mastiliak corrected grammatical or semantic mistakes in one copy. Other copies had already been corrected according to the corrected model by Klára Brajerová or Milan Mikloško. Thus, two or three copies were prepared for other typists. These typists were already transcribing them at home, to A5
or A4 format in 10 to 12 copies. Depending on the kind of typewriter, it could hold 10 to 12 papers, with indigos among the papers, so the typist made ten to twelve copies of the text at a time. Usually one copy, already bound, was given to the typist by Mastiliak. Also valuable is the recollection of Maria Barnašová, who commented on this illegal activity:

I used to go to Father Mastiliak personally to get the texts for transcription. I typed them in our bedroom on a typewriter and every time I finished typing, I hid the typewriter in the duvet. The typewriter’s letters had to be pounded hard to make ten copies, so that even the last copy would be legible. I had heard several times that the State Security was conducting house searches in Prešov, so I was also afraid. After all, our family could have been watched also because of my uncle Bishop Stefan Barnaš, who was also being imprisoned. After the revolution, it became known that in the apartment building just above us, there was a confidant of the State Security. However, because of the transcription of texts, I had no problems. When I had the text transcribed, I took all ten copies to Father Mastiliak and he gave me another translated text or book to transcribe. I no longer cared who bound the transcribed texts into a book for him. It was also a matter of seeing him as little as possible, but also of seeing other people who came to visit him, so that the State Security would not be unnecessarily suspicious. When I came to Father Ivan with the texts, the meeting didn't last long, usually only a few minutes. I never took any money from him, neither for transcribing, nor for paper or indigos. For me it was self-evident that the typewritten paper and everything that was necessary for writing was bought with my own money. I considered it an honor to be able to serve him in this way (oAA, 2, 2015).

By rewriting the texts, the typists were taking a risk, because the possible discovery of their collaboration in Mastiliak’s illegal activities would mean not only a dragging at the state offices and the State Security Service, but also the loss of their jobs or even imprisonment. Each kind of typewriter had its own characteristics, and even, allegedly, some hidden marks by which experts could trace which typewriter the text was typed on. And then, if they found
the typewriter in question in someone’s possession, it would be a corpus delicti. Despite certain dangerous situations, the typists were ultimately not detected by the State Security.

**Binding of samizdat and its pictorial supplements**

When the translation and proofreading were finished, the binding of the books was taken care of by Ladislav Radvanský, who worked as an artistic bookbinder in the state printing house in Prešov. He owned all the necessary tools for binding books, so he could bind Mastiliak’s typescripts at home. When he could not do something at home, he went to the bookbinding department of the Municipal Enterprise in Prešov, where the head was Mrs. Mária Kožárová and where the priests Felix Majerník, Ondrej Jura and the Salesian Eugen Baša also worked. She allowed him to do everything. It is strange that this was possible under deep socialism, when this illegal activity was punishable by imprisonment (OAA, 1, 2015).

However, Radvanský always did the gilding of the headlines on the covers of typescripts at home. When the piles of papers were brought to him by Milan Mikloško, or one of Mastiliak’s typists, he first stacked them, added the first or even the second page, so that the first pages were clean, and painted the back with glue and pressed them together. He did this in his apartment in the kitchen. When it was dry and held together, he put it in a bag or backpack and walked to his private workshop on Baštová Street, where he trimmed it and made a hard cover for the book as well. From there he brought it back to the apartment, where he was still gilding the titles on the cover. Then he painted it and put it in the press. His wife, Anna Radvanská, and their children also helped him. Mastiliak always paid them properly for this work. Radvanský then brought the bound typescripts to Mastiliak’s home on Sázavského Street (OAA, 1, 2015).

When the books also contained pictorial material, these photographs were mainly reproduced by Jakub Halčák. He cooperated with Mastiliak on the album “Biography of the Virgin Mary”, which was intended for Pope John Paul II and for Cardinal Jozef Tomek. Halčák further mentions:
Sometimes we would go to him with the children, as if we were going to visit the Brajers. Mostly I visited him alone, or with my wife Katka, when he needed to transcribe something on the typewriter. I would visit only when it was dark, we called it “Nicodemus visits”, and even under the cover of darkness I would leave him. They were mostly edits of books or photo albums (for example, an album on the life of the Virgin Mary, on the life of St. Therese) that he translated. I took these photographs for him, either in colour or in black and white, on documentary photographic paper (ARM, f. Monastery Michalovce, 5, 2015).

**Spreading of translations**

On the basis of the collected testimonies and archival material, we can conclude that Mastiliak did not sell these samizdat, nor did he lend them out, but gave them away for free. He tried to give a suitable text appropriate to the age and condition of the person, or focused on an area that the person was currently dealing with in his or her life. Many of the samizdat served as literature for the secret formation of the theologians and monastics who came to him. We can simply say that he distributed the samizdat:

- to the theologians, monks and nuns whom he secretly formed
- to the penitents who visited him
- to relatives and friends
- to bishops and eminent clerics

Mastiliak became less and less mobile as he grew older, but his translations spread throughout the entire then Czechoslovakia. Mikloško, his secretary, worked on the railways, so he had a free ticket all over the republic. He was Mastiliak’s courier, carrying parcels, mail and samizdat all over Czechoslovakia. Although he had been doing this for years, he was never caught by the State Security in this courier service. He remembers this service as follows:

When Father Ivan was translating books, he also sent copies through me to the seminary in Litoměřice, and even to the seminary in Bratislava. I don’t remember which professor, but when I gave him the translated book, he told me: “Does the old man still want to translate?” That’s what he said of Father Ivan. The fact is that everybody knew him everywhere.
Father Ivan also sent his translations to the Prague Archbishopric, where they established a post-Conciliar library. There they had all the books that were published in Rome in Slovak and Czech, and also in other languages. They received books from all over the world. I remember that Father Ivan was once looking for a book that they were talking about on Vatican Radio. He wrote me a letter, and I took it to that library. They already had the book, so they gave it to me. Father Ivan had it with him for about half a year, translated it and returned it with his translation.

I wondered where all those things in his mind were coming from, that he remembered events and people in detail, that he remembered the spelling of languages when he wrote in French, Italian or Latin, for example. He said he inherited a good memory and wisdom from his mother.

When we would occasionally talk, we would sit opposite each other. I used to say to him, “Father, you have a gift for writing, so write.” He answered me: “It is others who have the gift for writing. I have a gift for translating, so I just translate. People benefit more from my translating than if I wrote something about myself or about prison” (OAA, 3, 2014).

**Under surveillance by State Security**

Mastiliak was aware that translation work was dangerous, but he was not discouraged. He kept working on his translations almost until his death, despite major health problems.

The state security knew of Mastiliak’s activities, that he was acquiring religious literature to use it for illegal formation and translations. One report states that between 1972 and 1975 religious literature was sent to Mastiliak from George Harastej and the Cyril and Methodius Institute in Rome (A ÚPN, f. B 10 II, inv.j. 1650). Mastiliak’s translation activities were reported to the State Security by a Greek-Catholic priest with the code name Dunajecký, who abused Mastiliak’s trust (A ÚPN, f. B 10 II, inv.j. 1785). Among other things, he reported that Eva Holá painted pictures with religious themes for Mastiliak, which he then used in the publication of religious literature (A ÚPN, f. KS ZNB S STB Košice, oz, a.no. 9997). Other materials of the State Security also state that it was aware...
of the illegal production and distribution of samizdat, and that it monitored this activity to a certain extent, but it never intervened more radically. Unfortunately, we do not yet know what led the responsible State Security officers to take this position.

Mastiliak’s activities were not directed against the communist regime. He only tried to use the gifts and talents he had for the good of the Church and the people. He was not a person who had radicalism in his nature; on the contrary, he was a conciliatory and peaceful person who sought understanding and unity with other people, not quarrels and tensions. However, the totalitarian regime and its servants, led by the State Security Service, considered his activities to be anti-communist and dangerous to the socialist establishment.

He prayed daily for the fall of the totalitarian regime and the conversion of the communists to God. He was in the same prison cell with the Czechoslovak president and convinced communist Gustáv Husák for three months, (Mastiliak, 1992, p. 29) so he prayed for him with greater intensity. He did not live to see it, for he died on September 18, 1989, a few weeks before the events of November 17 and the subsequent so-called Velvet Revolution.

**The importance of Mastiliak’s translation work**

He organized the process of acquiring suitable literature, its translation, reproduction and distribution of translations as samizdat. Of course, in each of the aforementioned areas he had his colleagues, thanks to whom valuable Christian literature reached its addressees. However, these were not only clergymen and believers of the Greek Catholic Church, but basically everyone who was interested in religious literature.

In the environment of the Greek Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia, Mastiliak was basically the only one who systematically and to such a large extent engaged in illegal translation activities between 1968 and 1989.

To compare this with the functioning of the Fatima Society, for example, is of little significance. Tens of clergymen and mainly lay people, who had much greater technical and financial possibilities,
were involved in the samizdat activities of the Fatima Society (Šimulčík, 2019).

Mastiliak’s translation activity inspired Bernadetta Pánčiová, who used the pseudonym Miriam Liptovská, and Otílija Matiašovská, who used the pseudonym Bernadeta Matejovská.

The first one, at Mastiliak’s suggestion, wrote her own texts, Morning Contemplations for the Whole Year, while the second one translated from Polish, for example, the work of the moralist Stanisław Olejnik.

Many people who held in their hands the samizdat translated by Ivan Marianov had no idea who was hiding behind this pseudonym.

On the other hand, however, the circle of people with whom Mastiliak met and whom he gifted this samizdat knew his identity and thanked him for the effort he made in translating and spreading good Christian literature. With the great scarcity of religious literature, he gave many people the opportunity to educate themselves and grow in their faith.

Bibliography

Archives

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ARCHIVE OF THE REDEMPTORISTS OF MICHALOVCE (ARM)


Author’s personal archive (Slovak abbreviation: OAA)

5 cssr – Slovak abbreviation for the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, Redemptorists.
6 GDR – German Democratic Republic.

**Literature**


7 Slovak abbreviation for the Institute of the Memory of the Nation.


**SEOLIC. Daniel Atanáz Mandzák, CSSR (1972)** – a Greek Catholic priest and monk – a member of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer (Redemptorists). He studied philosophy in Krakow (Wyższe Seminarium Duchowne Redemptorystów) and theology in Tuchow and in Rome – at the Pontifical Urbaniana University and the Pontifical Oriental Institute. He is currently working in the Redemptorist monastery in Michalovce, Slovakia, as the editor-in-chief of the Publishing House Misionár and the magazine Misionár. In his historical research, he is primarily dealing with the history of the Greek Catholic Redemptorist Vice-Province in Slovakia. His publishing activity is focused on the Redemptorists and their personalities, the beatified martyr Dominic Methodius Trčka and the Servant of God Ján Ivan Mastiliak, of whom he is also the vice-postulator of the process of canonization. In recent years, he has published, for example, Documents on the Trial of Augustin A. Machalka and Co., Bratislava 2009, Documents to