

MANIFESTATIONS OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN PÁL ZÁVADA'S NOVEL PRIRODZENÉ SVETLO [NATURAL LIGHT]

¹ZUZANA VARGOVÁ

Faculty of Central European Studies, Constantine the Philosopher University, Institute of Languages and Culture of Central Europe, Dražovská 4, 949 01 Nitra, Slovakia
email: zvargova@ukf.sk

This contribution was created with the support of VEGA project no. 1/0143/21: Anti-Semitic ethnic stereotypes in the media and literature of the V4 countries.

Abstract: Our paper aims to examine how Anti-Semitism, its determinants, and its forms appear in Pál Závada's selected novel and, based on this analysis, to evaluate the extent to which its various forms are represented. The paper calls for more attention to the stereotypes and prejudices underlying various manifestations of intolerance.

Keywords: Anti-Semitism. P. Závada. Prirodzené svetlo [Natural Light]. Stereotypes.

1 Introduction

Central European history is marked by multicultural dialogue and the formation of various prejudices and manifestations of intolerance.¹ We could also include anti-Semitism, which can be generalised, albeit with considerable simplification, as an irrational, hateful attitude towards the Jewish ethnicity, its culture, and religion (Budil et al., 2013, p. 57), which is related to the perception of them as an alien, hostile, undesirable group (Bauman, 2003, p. 70). The concept of anti-Semitism is vague, linguistically imprecise in the sense of a negative attitude directed against the Jewish ethnic group. The Semitic ethnic groups include other ethnic groups (Arabs, Amharas). The term entered scholarly discourse at the end of the nineteenth century in Germany, during the period of European nationalism, to obscure the attacks against Jews (Danics - Kamín, 2008, p. 128; Nižňanský, 2016, p. 2).² Despite the objections above about the terminological designation of antagonistic attitudes towards Jews, we will apply this term in the context of this paper for two reasons: first, because it is a widespread and generally accepted term, and also because the attitudes referred to as anti-Semitic were explicitly directed against Jews.

According to the sociologist of Polish origin Z. Baumann, the Jewish ethnicity had the special status of "foreigners within" (2003, p. 71), who crossed "a vital border that should be clearly marked, untouched and impassable" (2003, p. 71). Hatred towards them has manifested itself in various forms throughout history. In addition to social conditions, the ideological motivation of the state's anti-Jewish policy, which sought to achieve the loyalty of the majority population to its own group/ethnicity by articulating otherness, incompatibility, or hostility towards Jews, was a determining factor in their emergence. Words were soon transformed into anti-Jewish practices, and "sick criminality" left a fatal trace in the history of European states. Even decades after the war, the collective consciousness/conscience is coming to terms with the aforementioned hateful mark by reflecting on the artistic representation of the period.

¹ Ján Gallik, in his study *Manifestations of Anti-Semitism as a Subject for Literary Satire*, also points to the current social discourse, in which "One can perceive several forms of hatred and aggression, which - not only on social networks - have been further accentuated by the global pandemic caused by the Covid-19 virus and, as if that were not enough, the long-accumulated hatred of Russia's political leaders towards Ukraine, but also towards the Baltic States, America and Central and Western Europe, has grown to horrific warlike proportions, the likes of which the European continent has not seen since the end of the Second World War. Once again, society is hearing about denazification. However, the term is being heavily used this time for Putin's propaganda and cited as the main reason for Russia's wartime invasion of Ukraine" (2022, p. 31).

² The adoption of the Jewish Emancipation Act (1861 in Baden, 1864 in Württemberg, 1871 in Bavaria) led, from 1878 onwards, to more pronounced manifestations of anti-Semitism; anti-Jewish political campaigns were organised and publications in a similar spirit were published (Wilhelm Marr: *Judentums über das Germanentum*, 1879; Eugen Karl Dühring: *Die Judenfrage als Frage der Racenschaedlichkeit*, 1881) (Vargová, 2011, p. 37). The German journalist W. Marr was the first to use the term anti-Semitism instead of the older term Judenhass (hatred of Jews) (Danics - Kamín, 2008, p. 128; Nižňanský, 2016, p. 2).

Art, and therefore literature, allows us to express what should not fall into oblivion, to capture anti-Jewish activities and anti-Semitic sentiments through the portrayal of Jewish characters and our relationship to them. Among these literary examples, we can also include P. Závada's novel *Natural Light*. However, the critical depiction of Jews is not precisely at the centre of the author's attention; it only enters the novel in connection with the representation of the horrors of the Second World War and situations of moral dilemmas. On the example of the work mentioned above, we will try to outline those forms of anti-Semitism that are assessed as the most influential/important in research on the causes and consequences of anti-Semitism in Central and Eastern Europe until the end of the Second World War.³ These are specifically anti-Judaism, racist anti-Semitism and anti-Semitism based on the stereotype of a Jewish world conspiracy.⁴

2 On the foundations of Závada's concept of the past

Pál Závada is one of those contemporary Hungarian authors whose work resonates with the events of the 20th century. They and the resulting trepidation, the sense of shame and guilt, as the author mentions, for example, in a round table discussion at the Slovak Institute in Budapest⁵ or in a documentary prepared by Czech Television⁶, become the creative impulse of his work to understand Hungarian and European history (Krause, 2021, p. 291). Historical events society perceives as traumatic need to be re-evaluated for social relations, peaceful coexistence between ethnic groups, and mutual understanding (Pál Závada, 2021, [online]). This reassessment is possible by opening up "new perspectives" on "sensitive and taboo topics", for example, by multiplying the perspectives of characters who "do not let history solidify into a grand narrative of collective memory, but work on it critically, constantly correcting it" (Görözdi, 2017, p. 434).

This understanding is determined by the informative/narrative value of the preserved documentary material but also by its confrontation and comparison. Assmann emphasises that "the group secures its identity" by remembering the past (2001, p. 50). Moreover, although the unreliability of memories is evident (affections and motives determine them, a person can get access only to a part of memories at any given moment), the "culture of remembering" (Assmann, 2001), based "on various forms of relation to the past" (Assmann, 2001, p. 33) and referring to a group, presupposes both "the observance of a social obligation" (Assmann, 2001, p. 31) and a resolution of what actually must not be forgotten (Assmann, 2001, p. 31). Assmann thus links memory to identity and the memory that underpins the community (Assmann, 2001, p. 32). A. Assmann makes a

³ On this, see the study *Antisemitismus-Definitionen und ihre Bedeutung für die Bekämpfung von antisemitischem Denken und die Verfolgung antisemitischer Straftaten* (2013, p. 10 – 11), a proceedings edited by B. Soukupová (2020).

⁴ Others include historicizing anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. *Antisemitismus-Definitionen und ihre Bedeutung für die Bekämpfung von antisemitischem Denken und die Verfolgung antisemitischer Straftaten* (2013, p. 11).

⁵ "What selects or what controls (...) is the shame. That stirs my conscience and does not let me rest. So sometimes a person - whether guilty of it or not - suddenly comes across some problem, event, or a life history phase, which comes across some paper, document, I do not know what, and they are filled with shame. What is most embarrassing to dissect, what is most challenging to say, what I am least willing to admit about myself, my family, my village, my country, my blood, Hungarians and non-Hungarians, excites me. And, of course, the shame is somehow dissolved if you approach it in such a creative way, then you get a kind of work fever, and you feel something else." (translation by H.O.)

"Hogy mi szelektál, vagy mi vezérel (...) a szégyen. Ami nekem megindítja a lelkiismeretemet, és nem hagy nyugodni. Tehát olykor az ember -, ha vétkes benne, ha nem - egyszer csak találkozik valamilyen problémával, vagy valamilyen eseménnyel, vagy egy élettörténeti fázissal, ami találkozik valami papírral, dokumentummal, nem tudom mivel, és áthatja a szégyen. Ami legkínosabb boncolgatni, amit a legnehezebb elmondani, amit a legkevésbé szívesen vallok be magamról, családomról, falumról, hazámról, véreimről, magyarokról és nem magyarokról, az izgat. És persze a szégyen valahogy oldódik, ha ilyen kreatívan közelítünk hozzá, akkor valamiféle munkalát: kapja el az embert és akkor valami mást érez." (Németh, Z. et al., 2015, p. 58 – 59).

⁶ On this see Pál Závada (ČR, 2021, [online]).

similar point when she states, “We define ourselves through what we remember and forget collectively” (Assmann, 2018, p. 68). K. Jakubovská and V. Jakubovská also address the issue of remembering and forgetting in the context of individual and collective memory is also addressed by (2023, p. 33-52).⁷

P. Závada’s novel *Natural Light* supports these aspects: “[...] man, after all, is not an ox, which we can just walk from one pasture to another. And that, after all, it is not only their physical and mental personality, their name and craft that make one human, but also their environment, memories and past, acquaintances, friends, and even enemies. [...] Every written and unwritten relationship defines man, every connection and invisible pact, that is, everything that defines his life and personality [...]” (Závada, 2021, p. 52 – 53). The novel is an example of a literary elaboration – supplemented by black and white photographs – of the “traumatic experience” of the inhabitants of the village of T. in the years 1931-1947, but also a testimony to crimes, denial of one’s guilt or silence, while in the memoirs, Hungary’s responsibility in the Second World War and the “liquidation” of the Jewish population figure prominently in the memoirs.

The relationship to the past presented by Závada can be described in terms of M. Rothberg’s typology as “multidirectional memory”, in which memories of specific events do not suppress other events but, on the contrary, help them to form an effective remembering strategy (Kisantal, 2020, p. 47).

P. Závada uses the oral history method⁸, presenting the memories, recollections of witnesses and their interpretations of lived historical experiences. This remembrance is marked by reliving and longing to return to a particular place where they used to live and where they could find familiar things and people. The very first chapter expresses the relation to space in the description of the photograph: “*Standing in the sun-drenched Weisz studio around the wine barrel rolled in the middle, all of them testify at the same time that in us Slovaks – even in the inhabitants of T. – there can be a piece of true Hungarianism, especially if we have been strengthened not only by the truth of the restoration of the Upper Land, Ardiel or the Southern Land but also by the defensive force in the fight against Bolshevism... Most would not trade their fatherland for anything in the world ...*” (Závada, 2021, p. 11), but also in the introduction of one of the main characters, the narrator, Jan Semetka, who moved to Czechoslovakia with his daughter at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s, and who is visited by a delegation from his native village: “*Well, for whose sake was there a need to leave home? If only I could understand that! Once a person is at home where they are, how can they be convinced that they will be more at home elsewhere, blimey?!*” (Závada, 2021, p. 30).

At the same time, it is most remarkable that the fictional setting, whose characters stand at the centre of the narrative, is referred to only by the initials T., or, after Semetka’s relocation, it is the village of M. One can only assume that this is the author’s intention to express through referentiality/representation the disruption of the bond with space, forgetting and the disintegration of identity. Unlike the abbreviated village names of T. and M., the other geographical names and places in which the novel is set are identifiable (given in total), not only directly in the text but also through the historical maps shown on the book’s inside covers. The novel also alludes to the modification

of the political map of Europe, e.g. the annexation of northern Transylvania to Hungary.

Although the novel presents the individual coping of the narrators/“remembering subjects/witnesses” with the past, it is evident that it is a “collective” effort to grasp the past, to rescue it from oblivion, to revive it and to re-evaluate it (Hodrová, 2006, p. 378). The novel’s peculiarity is the abundance of multiple narrative voices. “The ‘re-construction of memories’, the various stories of “present” characters/narrators, is carried out by Závada through – as he calls it – “our” and “your narrator” (Závada, 2021, p. 505). It is reminiscent of Bakhtin’s polyphonic novel, in which every experience or thought of the narrator is intrinsically dialogic and polemically coloured, yet it is a “replica” of an unfinished conversation (Bakhtin, 1973, p. 241). Through the realised interviews and testimonies of the characters – equal narrative voices – Závada allows observing and glimpsing into the transformations of a person’s inner life and the social reality that the work “uncovers”.

At the same time, the very title of the novel indicates the reception of the work as a “penetration” into a little-known space, i.e. overcoming the silence about certain “indelible traces”, events that we do not like to confront. According to S. Kraus (2021), the adjective in the title and the symbolism of light are essential, referring to the objectivity of the view of history, the plausibility and testimonial capacity of the interviews, letters and photographs. However, in recollection, the narrator himself draws attention to the process of creating the fictional text: “*One simply interconnects the cracks in their memory – whether they are from childhood or a later period – and constantly wants to stitch them back together, always trying to cover up the empty spaces with false patches*” (Závada, 2021, p. 394).

2.1 Anti-Judaism

Anti-Judaism, or religiously motivated anti-Semitism, considered the oldest form of anti-Semitism, finds the cause of the Jews’ “negative morals” and all misfortunes in the Jewish religion and the Talmud. It can be seen as negative attitudes towards the way of life and behaviour of Jews, which are determined by religious rules and regulations on diet and cleanliness (Danics – Kamín, 2008, p. 130). C. Iacu also gives concrete examples in this connection namely works such as *The Jew, Judaism and Judaization* by Gougenot des Mousseaux and *Jewish France* by Édouard Drumont, which draw attention to the dangers due to the “infiltration” of society by Jews and the “Judaization” of Christian Europe, or France.

The aspect of confessional difference is present marginally and differently in Závada’s work, depending on the different parts of the novel.

In the pre-war period, the coexistence of ethnic groups in terms of “religious identity” did not appear to be problematic. The Jews are an integral part of T.’s community, and religious distinctions with the rest of the population are illuminated minimally, briefly mentioning the characters’ religious affiliations. The fact that they are “inverts” is conveyed to us by one of the narrators – Mária Semetková, for example, in a letter addressed to her friend: “*After all, almost all of my friends play in the girls’ evangelical mandolin orchestra – except for Juci Weisz, who is deaf as a doornail and is Jewish, and also for our community piano artist Anna Ágoston, who is a pianist. ... You know, my Bözsika, ever since the Slovak theatre group performed the play *A tót menyecske*, that is, *The Slovak Bride*, the official copy of which was obtained by the honourable lady, and we have been frequent guests at subsequent rehearsals - with or without the mandolin, as musicians, singing dancers, and even as actresses. [...] Nevertheless, a few boys also got on stage in the same meandering way I did – more out of social requirement than out of a desire to stand on stage. Such as the painter’s assistant Bandi Ackermann, who paints the props, but is also an extra, although he has no singing voice and, as an Israeli, he*

⁷ In the article *Culture of Reminiscence as a Part of Cultural Education*, they write, “Our individual memory relies on the collective memory of the group of people to which we belong (family, school, interest groups). Every one of us forms individual memory during our socialisation. Although collective memory derives its permanence and strength from a whole group of individuals, only individuals are the ones who remember. Collective memory differs from individual memory in that collective consciousness cannot be explained merely based on knowledge about the individual psyche because the society that creates it greatly exceeds human individual capabilities” (Jakubovská, K. – Jakubovská V., 2023, p. 33-52).

⁸ The oral history method of recalling destructive events related to the Holocaust is used in his work, for example, by P. Vilikovsky. More about it see Antoňová, 2022, p. 37-43.

does not even speak Slovak” (Závada, 2021, p. 38 – 39). The above excerpt documents that the narrator communicates the religious identity of the characters in a neutral “mode” when describing events or when portraying the characters – residents of the village of T., although, in their early days, even the members of the Hungarian political parties did not see the limited practice of religion as problematic. P. Závada refers to the March Front movement and its press organ, the magazine *Válasz* (Answer – Z.V.’s note), in order to draw attention to the strengthening of the ruling policy and the “Fascization” of Hungarian society by reflecting on the “rhetoric” of the members of the March Front movement: “*And if it comes to the point that those as mentioned earlier (the Jewish population - Z.V.’s note) get their hands not on weapons, but on work tools, let our youth take it with the understanding that in their spare time, they are always coming together to practice their faith, and then we will not snatch their holy scriptures out of their hands for no reason*” (Závada 2021, p. 84). Although it is only one of the “Hungarian political groupings”, his choice is intentional in order to signal fundamental changes in Hungarian social life: the adoption of a new press law in 1938 and a law limiting the representation of the Jewish population in the state and public administration in 1938 (Bata, 1974, p. 956 – 957; Vargová, 2011, p. 53 – 54). The change in the political climate thus influenced the position of the Jewish ethnic group in Hungary in 1938. Despite the anti-Jewish legislation⁹, however, it took some time for the mobilising potential of ideas activating hatred and anti-Jewish ethnicity to result in open violence. However, changing the religious beliefs of the Jewish ethnic group was not the goal of the growing influence of Germany and its Nazi regime. Religion was applied only as a distinctive marker to differentiate a Christian from a Jew.

However, the phenomena of religious life are present in the novel to show the difference between the Jews themselves, some of whom already had more liberal attitudes towards religious (dietary) habits. The Ackermann family still represents “conservative” Judaism: “*It is good that she (Éva Koleszár - Z.V.’s note) no longer thinks of Bandi Ackermann, his father at that time was portioning and measuring kosher meat and from time immemorial he observed all religious principles – including the fact that he could ride in a wagon with his son for a ritual bath as far as the Mures River*” (Závada, 2021, p. 120). Religious affiliation in the first part, unlike the second, does not become a kind of stigma. However “*it is the observance of the rules of kashrut that separates the Jew from their social surroundings and prevents them from assimilating... It should be noted, however, that kashrut did not and does not mean social isolation, because Jews everywhere, wherever they are accepted and respected, strive for the well-being of the country, and they have friends among non-Jews as well*” (Slivka et al., 2013, p. 70).

Antagonistic attitudes towards the Jewish population only escalated due to the German occupation of Hungary. The second part of the novel consists of István Semetka’s memories of the Eastern Front and the battles of the Hungarian army alongside Nazi Germany. The memoirs confront us not only with the relationship to the Jewish labour servants, given over to the “will or ill-will” of Hungarian officers [*“One unexpected memory comes to the surface: on the way here, while handing out lunches to the labour servants, I slapped a Jew for insolent back talk”* (Závada, 2021, p. 155)], but also to Hungary’s participation in the liquidation of the Jewish population. There is no shortage of detailed and naturalistic descriptions of the physical liquidation of the “Transcarpathian Jewish community” (Závada, 2021, p. 201), or mention of this human ruthlessness and cruelty recorded through photographs: “*Two pictures show people being forced to undress at the head of a large snaking mass, another shows the naked victims in groups of ten, one group standing on the left, a second group in the middle just approaching the pit,*

and a third group on the right being ordered to lie down on top of the naked corpses lying in the half-full pit. In the fourth picture, lying people are being shot in the back of their head, and in the fifth, you can see a close-up of a pit with corpses and that some are still raising their heads or hands. [...] I wondered what if the eyewitnesses would tell all this one day” (Závada, 2021, p. 174).

Belonging to Judaism is revealed through an insinuation of the typical Jewish man’s appearance with payot. Payots or sideburns are characteristic primarily of Orthodox Jews. Their wearing is based on the Third Book of Moses and “*symbolises the edges of the fields at harvest time, which, according to tradition, were not reaped so that widows, orphans and strangers could gather the remains of the produce. Cutting off the payots meant turning away from orthodox dogmas and the will to assimilate with the outside world*” (Hradská – Molnárová, 2006, p. 119). The basic tenets of the Jewish religion also underpin a strong sense of togetherness and unity for survival.

Along with the image of the Jew – a devotee of Judaism – the presence of religiously motivated anti-Semitism is also identifiable in the novel’s second part. We can speak of four forms of it here.

In the first case, it is the image of the Jew as a morally inferior “element”, causing not only general indignation by his behaviour but also violating the religious rules established by the Old Testament. Thus, for example, in the novel, we are confronted with the image of the violation of eating habits¹⁰, the prohibition against eating meat from a horse and carcasses: “*[...] and this here is a frozen horse, the soldiers and Jews used to go to it for days, pick it, gnaw on it and sometimes when they had just managed to build a fire, they cooked a piece of it*” (Závada, 2021, p. 262). An image/contrast is thus formed between the Jew and the moral man.

The second form is the ridiculing of the Jews for their religious customs, specifically the covenant of circumcision, which originated in God’s covenant with Abraham.¹¹ P. Závada here draws attention, among other things, to the cruelty and practices by which the Hungarian soldiers did not lag behind the German officers. “*In the second case, only the Hungarian Raven unit was present. Near the lake at the edge of the village, they dragged about a dozen naked Jewish men, supposedly partisans, up into the trees with fallen crowns. However, the two corporals were not satisfied with this; they stripped the corpses of their genitals, cut the skin on the lower abdomen on two sides and – as if in jest – put their hands ‘in their pockets’*” (Závada, 2021, p. 172).

The narrator presents the third one through the emphasised confessional affiliation of the majority and their antagonistic attitudes in the gathering and transfer of Jews to the ghettos: “*When fellow Christian citizens rushed to the streets and in the language of the commandants started shouting, Jews out, deploy quickly, one-two and so on, logically it was supposed to speed up the whole process, but it was the other way around, these unnecessary spiteful remarks, shouting and rushing somewhat disrupted the smooth course of the evacuation*” (Závada, 2021, p. 377).

However, the fact of setting fire to Jewish synagogues as symbols of Jewish faith and culture, as well as the indifference of the inhabitants to their rescue, cannot be overlooked either. “*[...] one night, at the beginning of October, when the arrival of the Russians – [...] – was only a few days away, a fire broke out in the centre of Sarvaš. [...] It was a synagogue that burned to the ground; only ruins remained; many watched, but the firefighters did not come, and no one even moved to put out the fire. [...] After all, their domination, which persecuted us and evicted us from our homes, will finally come to an end; the moment is approaching when they will have to come out with*

⁹ The first anti-Jewish law in Europe was adopted in Hungary (it restricted the admission of Jewish students to universities as early as 1920). However, it may be noted that it was the Hungarian Jews who were the most closely aligned with the majority nation (Vargová, 2011, 53).

¹⁰ See Holy Bible, 2002, Leviticus 11: 1-47

¹¹ On this see Holy Bible, 2002, Genesis 17: 9-13.

colour and say where that many people have disappeared, but instead of bitterly regretting it, instead of being at least additionally horrified at what they have done, [...] at the last moment they will still burn down the synagogue. Moreover, in Sarvas, it hardly bothers anyone anymore. Who should be concerned? They shrug because there are no Jews in Sarvas anymore" (Závada, 2021, p. 487).

Anti-Semitism concerning religious traditions and customs in the post-war years remains outside the author's attention in the last part of the novel, perhaps because "those who were classified as Jews could no longer return home, and those who could also prefer to go away" (Závada, 2021, p. 525).

2.2 Racist anti-Semitism

Although anti-Semitism initially had a religious character, it gradually took on the character of racial discrimination, which the Nazis used as an instrument of mobilisation. They could transform the concrete Jew into an abstract Jew and, against negative connotations, perceived them as a socio-political problem that had to be solved. They were inspired by the works of authors who defined the racial characteristics of Jews, such as R. Knox (*The Races of Men*, 1850), J. A. Gobineau (*Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines/Essay On The Inequality Of Human Races*, 1853-1855), or drew attention to the fateful encounter and struggle of the Aryans with the Jews, such as E. Drumont (*La France juive*, 1886; *La France juive devant l'opinion*, 1886; *Le Testament d'un antisémite*, 1891) and H. S. Chamberlain (*Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 1899).¹²

In a situation where confessional segregation was gradually losing its justification¹³ in terms of Jewish identification, the racial discourse was used to emphasise the superiority of the Aryan race and the danger of degeneration due to the mixing of races, and thus the racist justification of the need for anti-Jewish measures. The racial overtone was not decisive for the novel's antagonistic attitudes towards the Jewish population. Instead, it was a deliberate conflation of ethnic and racial differences. We assume that the reason for this lies in the fact that in the interwar period, the feeling of Hungarian ethnic awareness¹⁴ was dominant among Jews, and the process of cultural assimilation to which P. Závada refers is also traceable: "And I will be honest, my Klárka, Margó continues, the most incomprehensible thing for me is that my parents from Nagyvárad and I have long since freed ourselves from the outdated Jewish rules, not to mention Dezső, who is a complete atheist, and yet they consider us to be the same Jews as those who go around bearded in a kaftan or a wig and observe all the religious rules, I do not understand this, I do not understand why" (2021, p. 353). Unlike religiously motivated anti-Semitism, Jews, according to the racist idea, could never get rid of their "Jewishness"; it was given by their origin, appearance, and clothing, determined by faith and government regulations.

In Hungary, the "Race Protection Act" defined "Jews" more broadly than the Nuremberg Laws (Iacu, 2014, p. 149), which inadvertently gives the impression that "the Hungarians were more ruthless than the Germans themselves" (Závada, 2021, p. 405). Despite the primacy of the legislative anchoring of discrimination¹⁵ motivated by anti-Semitism, the "reality of everyday life" was different. As Paul Lendvai, an Austrian journalist of Jewish descent born in Budapest, notes, "Despite Jewish laws, nowhere in Central and Eastern Europe could more than 800,000 Jews (including converts) have lived as long and in such relative safety as in Hungary at that time," (2002, p. 336), although, on the other hand, "Nowhere in Central and Eastern Europe, however, were Jews so quickly and so brutally

sent to their deaths as in Hungary" (Lendvai, 2002, p. 405). In his novel, Závada indirectly and casually encourages us to reflect on the "reality of the war years" and the relationship of the majority to the Jewish population in the individual Central European states with notes as if on the margin, the narrator's little significant "inputs" from the point of view of plot development, or employing the characters' speeches. The following passage is an example of this: "Will they (occupiers - note Z.V.) observe any of the civilized standards? Personal property, personal freedom, expertise, Christian faith and morals, culture and in general, basic human contact, honesty or decency? And what behaviour is recommended if there is no satisfactory answer to these doubts? There is no guaranteed recipe, my dears, from now on one can behave as one pleases, and most often the unpredictable adversity of fate decides here" (Závada, 2021, p. 461).

Anti-Semitism became an ideological tool that could very quickly unite against the "supposed evil" and demand that Hungarian youth - as the novel also captures - "love their breed even more than they hate Jewry" (Závada, 2021, p. 84).

However, these are rare instances where the novel refers to antagonistic attitudes based on racially connoted discourse. We assume that anti-Jewish sentiments were primarily conditioned by the political situation in the country, which appears to be "the land of the Jews" (Závada, 2021, p. 641).

2.3 Anti-Semitism based on the stereotype of a Jewish world conspiracy

P. Závada "revives" several negative Jewish hetero stereotypes in the novel, including the stereotype of Judeo-Bolshevism as a complot of world Jewry (Slivka et al., 2013, p. 193). The Jews' adherence to communism and membership in communist organisations was conditioned by the idea of a social system guaranteeing equality for all people. This very circumstance was perceived as a threat in the 1930s, and Jews were accused of trying to take over the world. This stereotype enters the novel through an ironically tinged conversation between Jakab Weisz and Matyi Koleszár: "Listen, Kóbi, pokes Koleszár under Jakab Weisz's rib while we are waiting for the bus to Makó, the guys here say you are a Marxist. [...] He has not read a line from the person in question, but why couldn't he be a Marxist? [...] And when asked whether this Marxmania is any characteristic racial trait among them, he replies that, of course, it shows up clearly in the examination of the foreskin and the blood; it is now even an organic part of the Talmud. [...] Jakab knows very well that this Marx is just an ordinary, well-built backstabber and, in our way, a horrible, unpleasant Jew. [...] Well, Mr Weisz, I am not looking forward to it. You'd better give everyone the same respect, please, whether someone is a stinking Jew or not" (Závada, 2021, p. 79). Závada reinforces the stereotype of the Jew as a communist/socialist citizen here with the attribute of the stinking man as the originator of many problems/diseases of the individual and society, but also as a parasite.

The image of the smelly Jew is anchored in multiple dimensions. It also refers to the inhumane treatment of Jews during the transports to the extermination camps, their "cramming" into freight cars without the possibility of personal hygiene. "We assume that Jakab, who tries to board an overcrowded carriage to his parents in Csaba, is pushed away with a stick by the policeman, to whom Erna will later approach with a plea in Debrecen. She said she saw her son on the train that had just arrived, so she begged the commander nicely to be so good as to allow her to meet him so they could exchange at least a few words. [...] Erna is allowed to approach the carriage Jakab is in, she is allowed to shout at him, and soon he appears in the deflected doorway. [...] The policeman commands, "Forward and march"; when only five steps separate Jakab and Erna, the command "Stop standing, stinking Jew" is heard. And the filthy bastard gets orders to take his pants off. Did he go deaf? Pants. And if he needs to be petitioned to take his shitty pants off. Or maybe they should have some Jewish whore brought in. And then Jakab Weisz is ordered to grab his circumcised dick. Jakab

¹² See Budil et al., 2013, p. 227-229.

¹³ This categorization faded as Jews converted to save themselves from deportation.

¹⁴ As a result of this ethnic identification, some Hungarian historians consider, such as Gy. Ránki, the tragedy of the Jewish population is also the tragedy of the Hungarians (Lendvai, 2002, p. 337).

¹⁵ As a result, for Jews, including the "fictional Juci Weisz," for example, "a teaching career becomes only a longed-for dream" (Závada, 2021, p. 279).

clutches his penis in his palm, and the policeman immediately hits him with a wooden club, after which Jakab falls to the ground; Erna jumps up to him with a scream, she manages to touch her son, but two armed men immediately drag the prisoner away, and he, while he is being pushed into the carriage, shouts, it is okay, mom, do not worry, nothing is wrong, mom” (Závada, 2021, p. 398). In this realistic depiction, Závada confronts us with a devastating dishonesty of human existence, making the inhumanity of the conditions visible, referring to the rhetoric of the time and the portrayal of Judaism as a contagious disease or “parasites of civilisation”.

3 Conclusion

The innovativeness of Závada's novel lies in the author's creative inventiveness in underlining the tragedy of human destiny, the amorality of actions, including the absurdity of racial, ethnic and cultural intolerance. With its “multivocality”, the novel provides a “truer” – albeit not unambiguous – account of a world that can find justification for amoral actions, of a survival strategy, but also of the meaning of human being anchored not only in “cultural constraint” but also in moral “endowment”. Závada's novel captures the destructive nature of the historical violence caused by anti-Semitism, revealing its extent in the population and the prevalence of the religious level of anti-Semitism in close connection with other forms of anti-Semitism. P. Závada does not name the culprits of the (Central) European cataclysm of unprecedented scale: “*But why do they lie to us so much? Why did we have to come here, and for whom did so many people die? Who are the perpetrators? We, commanders, who, according to the German Major General Brinzei, were sparing the blood of conscripts? We, with the lowest rank, who suffered together with the foot soldiers (...)? Is that why we are Azazels, fallen angels?*” (Závada, 2021, p. 518 – 519). The novel portrays the pre-war and war years from 1931 to 1947 not only as a tragedy for Jews but also for other participants and passive witnesses, i.e. all those who were somehow affected by the war events.

Looking back at the “panorama of history” does not mean simply learning from the “milestones of history”, but - referring to Z. Bauman - “*the control of the past enables the control of the future*”, and in the name of this future it is “*necessary that those who are in control of the present do not allow the past to be manipulated so that the future becomes inhospitable and uninhabitable for humanity*” (Bauman, 2003, p. 330).

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Primary Paper Section: A

Secondary Paper Section: AB, AL, AO