John Steinbeck in East European Translation

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A Bibliographical and Descriptive Overview

By

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PREFACE

Since the Scarecrow Press publication of the first Steinbeck bibliography in 1967, several scholars have meticulously catalogued Steinbeck's work, providing a plethora of citations from a wide range of publications and other media, including full-length studies, journal and newspaper articles, book reviews, master's theses, PhD dissertations, sound recordings, stage productions, and similar. Among the prominent scholars who have taken on this bibliographical task, Tetsumaro Hayashi and Michael Meyer undoubtedly deserve the most credit for presenting Steinbeck's wide-ranging reputation. However, their listing of foreign publications, and those in Eastern Europe in particular, shows many gaps. Viewed from the perspective of foreign publications of Steinbeck's works, including those in Eastern Europe, Kenneth and Karen Holmes's bibliographical catalogue is considerably more resourceful, but still far from satisfactory. The lack of comprehensive information of this kind fuelled my decision to take on the bibliographical task of bridging this gap.

In addition to two descriptive chapters that discuss Steinbeck's critical fortunes in East European countries and comment on the volume and quality of translations, this book records Steinbeck translations in book form, as well as sound recordings and stage performances of his works in Eastern Europe from the early 1940s, which marked the first translations of Steinbeck's work in this area, up to the present. Eastern Europe is here considered in terms of the political division between Western Europe and the Soviet-dominated East. It refers to a region that, despite having several distinctive features, shares an important fact: it used to be positioned east of what Winston Churchill in 1946 dubbed the Iron Curtain. This book thus encompasses publications in the post-communist countries of the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia, in the former German Democratic Republic, as well as in Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Romania. Publications in Slovenia are catalogued separately in the third chapter. This is because, for Slovenia, the book also records publications of Steinbeck's works in newspapers and magazines, and provides a catalogue of Steinbeck critical material. The names of translators and the authors of accompanying studies in translations are listed in chapter four.

Living in this area and being able to communicate in some of the languages of the countries in focus made the task of compilation comparatively easier for me than for someone not familiar with any of these languages. However, this does not mean that I did not experience difficulties; nor does it mean that my record is complete and entirely consistent. At its best, it is comprehensive, containing significantly more foreign publications in East European languages than any bibliographical catalogue compiled so far. Most entries include information about the title of the book in the foreign language, the source book title in English, the name of the translator and publisher, the year of publication and the number of pages. Some entries provide information regarding the accompanying study or even mention the illustrator, whereas some fail to report on the translator or the number of pages. To reduce these inconsistencies as much as possible, I searched various sources in each country and both electronic and card catalogues, but this sometimes complicated rather than facilitated the matter, because the information provided did not match.

Another challenge was in transcribing foreign book titles, personal and geographical names. My aim was to render the text accessible to target English-language readers, while also preserving the phonological characteristics of foreign editions. With this in mind, I translated all bibliographical data into English, except the names of the places of publication. The latter are written as they appear in foreign editions, hence the city names *Beograd* for *Belgrade*, *Bucureşti* for *Bucarest, Moskva* for *Moscow*, *Praha* for *Prague*, *Sofija* for *Sofia*, *Warszawa* for *Warsaw, Tiranë* for *Tirana*, etc. Book titles, too, are cited in the standard orthography of the language in question. For example, in most Slavic alphabets, sounds such as *tʃ*, *ʃ*, and *ʒ* are represented as *č*, *š, ž*, while the consonant *j* is sounded like *y* in the word *year*. In addition to several consonant clusters, such as *nj* and *lj*, which are difficult to pronounce, another peculiarity of Slavic languages is the alphabetic representation of the sound *ts* as *c*. Several alphabets, such as Czech, Slovak, and Hungarian, feature diacritical marks to define the length and/or quality of letters. All of this is preserved in my transcription. However, Russian and Bulgarian Cyrillic scripts are rendered in Latin following the conventional transliteration system and the common practice used to romanise these alphabets.

Translations are grouped according to the language in which they were published, although this criterion proved to be much more problematic than it first seemed, given that the political, economic, and socio-cultural changes caused by the disintegration of the political system in the early

1990s occurred parallel with the change in the linguistic situation in the region. For example, in the former Yugoslavia (officially the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), all publications with the exception of those in the Socialist Republics of Macedonia and Slovenia were in Serbo-Croatian. Created by the communist government to ease tensions between the various nations, Serbo-Croatian was regarded as a common language with different variants and dialects, and was used in the Socialist Republics of Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, and Montenegro. Today, Serbo-Croatian is considered politically incorrect, so the official language in Croatia is Croatian; in Serbia, it is Serbian, and the standard forms of Serbo-Croatian in today's Bosnia and Hercegovina and in Montenegro are Bosnian and Montenegrin, respectively. Slovene and Macedonian, on the other hand, have remained the languages of today's independent Republics of Slovenia and Macedonia. In cases where the language of translation was defined as Serbo-Croatian (in some older catalogues), I grouped the translation according to the place of publication.

Similarly, because of Soviet policy since 1938 to universalise knowledge and the use of Russian, most publications in the fourteen Soviet states were in Russian. These include publications in today's sovereign states of Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, and others. It was only after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, when old hostilities and tensions between various national and ethnic groups re-emerged, that Russian lost its long-standing prestige. According to the catalogues that I searched, aside from a single Steinbeck publication in Armenian and three in Ukrainian, publications in languages other than Russian have appeared in Georgian, as well as in Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian, the languages of the first three Soviet republics to declare their sovereignty. Languages are listed in alphabetical order.

The book *John Steinbeck in East European Translation: A Bibliographical and Descriptive Overview* narrows a huge gap in regard to Steinbeck translations in Eastern Europe. As the only volume of its kind, and although intended for both literature scholars and the broader arts community, it will hopefully be an important contribution to Steinbeck and American literature studies, and useful for scholars of Slavic and the other languages concerned.

The libraries and resources that I consulted to compile the catalogue of Steinbeck translations in the languages of Eastern Europe include:

National Academic Library of Information System
The European Library
Index Translationum

Croatian Library and Information System
The National Library of Slovakia
The National Library of Russia
Russian State Library
The National Library of Georgia
The National Library of Monte Negro
The National Library of Romania
The National Library of Bulgaria
The National Library of Poland
The National and University Library of Slovenia
The National Library of Estonia
The National Library of Albania
The National Library of the Czech Republic
The National library of the Republic of Moldova
The National Széchényi Library
The National Library of Latvia
The National Library of Belarus
The National Library of Serbia
Hungarian National Library
German National Library
Karlsruhe Online Catalogue
Stanford University Libraries
The Ball State University Libraries

Bibliographies and other sources of bibliographical information about Steinbeck foreign editions include:

John Steinbeck: A Concise Bibliography, 1930-65
A New Steinbeck Bibliography, 1929-1971
A New Steinbeck Bibliography. Supplement 1: 1971–1981
The Hayashi Steinbeck Bibliography, 1982-1996
The John Steinbeck's Bibliography, 1996-2006
John Steinbeck: An Annotated Guide to Bibliographical Sources
The Steinbeck Research Center at San Jose State University: A Descriptive Catalogue
Steinbeck Bibliographies: An Annotated Guide
John Steinbeck: A Descriptive and Bibliographical Catalogue of the Holmes Collection
A Guide to Soviet Russian Translations of American Literature
John Steinbeck: An Exhibition of American and Foreign Editions

John Steinbeck: A Bibliographical Catalogue of the Adrian H. Goldstone Collection
A Guide to the Collection of the Salinas Public Library
A Catalogue of the John Steinbeck Collection at Stanford University
Steinbeck Editions: A Bibliographic Checklist
John Steinbeck: A Collection of Foreign Editions

The list of online catalogues and detailed bibliographical data are provided in the Bibliography.

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Danica Čerče
January 2017

INTRODUCTION

LUCHEN LI

In the field of Steinbeck studies since the 1960s, a few great bibliographical works have been published; while some focus on the record of the writer's publications, others archive the research and productions based on Steinbeck's fiction and non-fiction. Little has been catalogued, however, about publications or translations of Steinbeck's writings outside the United States, especially in Eastern Europe. *John Steinbeck in East European Translation: A Bibliographical and Descriptive Overview* is the book that fills the gap. This volume closes a gap and, to some extent, reveals a mystery regarding Steinbeck translations in Eastern Europe. This gap was historically created because of political impasses and because there had been too little interaction between the intellectual communities of Eastern Europe and the West in Steinbeck scholarship.

In modern history, the region which we traditionally call Eastern Europe has gone through its expansion and shrinkage, both politically/ideologically and geographically. In this volume, Danica Čerče considers Eastern Europe both in terms of the political division between Western Europe and the Soviet-dominated East, and in accordance with the languages to which Steinbeck's works were translated and published in this particular part of the world. While this demarcation pays due respect to Winston Churchill's dubbing of the Iron Curtain at the dawn of the Cold War era, this bibliography is comprehensive enough to include publications in the post-communist countries. Because of evolving changes in sovereignty, political ideologies, and geography in the countries/states of the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia, for instance, cataloguing Steinbeck translations in a chronological order, thematically or linguistically, is no doubt a natural challenge. Scholar and bibliographer Danica Čerče has carefully evaluated the scenarios and structured the volume in such a thoughtful and practical order with four distinct chapters: 1) Steinbeck and East European Publishers; 2) A Catalogue of Steinbeck Translations in the Languages of Eastern Europe; 3) Steinbeck in Slovenia, with some facts and statistics about Steinbeck's critical fortunes in Slovenia, a qualitative overview of Slovene translations, Steinbeck

publications in Slovene newspapers and magazines, and a checklist of critical material in Slovenia; and 4) the list of translators and authors of accompanying studies.

Danica lives in Slovenia and speaks some of the languages of Eastern Europe. This gives her unique access to, and perspectives on, other publications. By organising the entries according to the language in which they were published, the volume allows the reader to get a feel for "the political, economic, and socio-cultural changes caused by the disintegration of the sociopolitical system in the early 1990s occurred parallel with the change in the linguistic situation in the region" (viii-ix). Because of the rich variety of languages and their political implications in today's "political correctness," the book carefully uses the "correct" language" – another way the writer measures the contemporary political as well as the literary landscape in Eastern Europe. An example of such care may be seen in the expression "Croatian" instead of Serbo-Croatian to refer to publications in Croatia. The entries include information about the title of the book in the original language, accompanied by other important information about the source book, the name of the translator, publisher, and the year of publication. However, Danica's purpose in this volume is to help readers, although she has kept the names of places, such as *Beograd* for *Belgrade*, *Bucureşti* for *Bucarest, Moskva* for *Moscow*, *Praha* for *Prague*, *Sofija* for *Sofia*, *Warszawa* for *Warsaw,* with the proper "foreignness."

The utmost strength of this volume, intentionally or unintentionally, serves as a political barometer of responses to Steinbeck's works, as they were "allowed" to be translated during the Cold War time. Often, these translations were dictated by ideology and the political climate that affected the literary interpretations of Steinbeck's works, in the Eastern camp as well as in the Western camp. Such "climate changes" may have contributed to the manipulation and misunderstandings of the overall contour of Steinbeck's literary legacy.

Despite the challenges, this groundbreaking volume not only documents Steinbeck publications with historical accuracy, but also respects history and explains why certain titles are placed as they are. For instance, the "Russian grouping" also contains several Steinbeck works published in today's sovereign states of Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, and others, which reflects the Russian influence on the fourteen Soviet states from 1938 to 1991.This is a great strategy to show to the reader how political ideology at the time of the former Soviet Union must have had an influence on translations and publications of the American "proletarian" writer.

Distinguished from typical bibliography, this volume is enriched by Čerče's highly valuable discussions in her chapter "Steinbeck and East European Publishers," which offers a scholarly discussion on the Arnoldian and Spivakian theoretical frameworks to evaluate Steinbeck translations. Such an approach reminds scholars of debates over the purpose of literature: aesthetics, or art for art's sake, versus the call for art to serve social, moral, or political purposes. To a great extent, this explains the "why" – why a specific Steinbeck book, such as *In Dubious Battle*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, or *East of Eden*, was translated at a particular time in a given country. Although one may wish to read more on such rhetoric, the volume sticks pretty strictly to its main purpose as a bibliography.

From the breadth of the entries and the list of libraries, archives, and online links, it is clear that Danica Čerče conducted superb research, maximising the use of the available resources across the Atlantic for the book to be inclusive and comprehensive. Her efforts in searching for this important American theme through an authentic American writer and her zest in the research remind me of my incidental meeting with a Romanian scholar in Bucharest in 2004 who at the time was completing her first book manuscript, *Travels with Steinbeck: In Search of America*. While many scholars and readers continue to read Steinbeck to better understand America, the world, and themselves, *John Steinbeck in East European Translation: A Bibliographical and Descriptive Overview* will undoubtedly help the English-speaking world see how translators, publishers, and readers have "travelled" with Steinbeck to explore the Western world through Steinbeck's perspectives provided by the plethora of "political," "aesthetical," and "historical" texts. As the only and first volume of its kind, the book will prove extremely valuable for literary references, for literature scholars, and for the broader academic and intellectual communities. At the same time, it is an important contribution to Steinbeck and American literature studies.

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CHAPTER ONE

STEINBECK AND EAST EUROPEAN PUBLISHERS

Despite the current tension within literary studies between those who, by acknowledging literature's "entanglement with the politics of its moment" (Levine 2000, 383), assimilate or reduce literature to politics and ideology, and those who yearn for a return to "disinterested" enquiry, based on the notion of aesthetic value (Gonzales, Agostini 2015), it is impossible to deny the political implications of literary works. The history of the discipline has shown that these, together with literary discourses, have the potential to either reinforce structures of domination and suppression or "disrupt the exercise of power" and "help create a desirable community" (Levine 2000, 384, 387). Perhaps the utilitarian conception of "what constitutes the literary" (Levine 2000, 378), reminiscent of an Arnoldian concept of the role of literary art as a form of public good, albeit tinged with a trace of elitism (Gonzales, Agostini 2015, xvi) was nowhere more noticeable than in Eastern Europe in the era following the imposition of communism. In these countries, the production and reading of literature were strictly controlled by the state, and interest in literature in general was predominantly politically motivated.

It should be remembered that, under the dominance of Soviet political ideology and power,[1] all East European countries experienced a long history of censorship, confiscation, police harassment, and imprisonment. In this climate, adverse to speculative thought and governed by the philosophical and ideological imperatives declared by the ruling regimes, there was no room for critical thinking or a creative imagination. The only permissible ideas were those which comported with the idealistic communist model of social improvement. The flow of information was also rigidly controlled, so it was almost impossible to obtain reliable information about the world west of the Iron Curtain. The capitalist world

[1] The former Yugoslavia under the leadership of President Tito and the Communist Party initially followed the Soviet model of collectivism and a planned economy, but in 1948, after a resolution of the Cominform, Tito's alliance with Stalin ended (Divjak 2006, 22).

was portrayed as "largely degenerate, if not wholly evil" (Kopecký 2011, 205). The United States was particularly subjected to negative propaganda; in its ascent to economic and military superpower and in promoting the American style of capitalism, individualism, and the free-market economy, it represented the biggest menace to the communist social model. In the circumstances, it is not surprising that Steinbeck's depiction of the working-class experience and his indictment of the myth of California served as an important source of information about the capitalist world and as an effective means of communist propaganda.

Indeed, as I discuss in some other studies, including *Reading Steinbeck in Eastern Europe* (2011), in communist post-war Europe, literature was considered "one of the paths to social progress, ultimately guiding social and political actions" (Guran 2003, 109). Literary works that accorded with communist rhetoric were manipulated by communist propagandists and performed an important political function. Critical judgment, too, was affected by sociopolitical and cultural circumstances, and evinced a powerful propagandistic tone. Because of their potentially dangerous implications, books had to undergo a radical ideological revision before they could be published. Clearly, the value of a literary work depended on its political complicity, rather than on artistic merit. When, instead of taking both potentialities of literary works into account, "literary criticism [is] assigned the status of a practical and militant philosophy, of a technique of ordering cultural energies" (Nemoianu 1978, 185), as it was in Eastern Europe, the result is the disappearance of important works from academic curricula, Harold Bloom points out (2000, 225). The second and third chapters of this volume present ample evidence of how Steinbeck's works were either praised or scrutinised or wholly ignored on the grounds of the writer's political views rather than their artistic merit. Approaching the works with preconceived notions regarding Steinbeck's philosophy in them, critics paid scant regard to the writer's intentions in these works before judging their success or failure. Of course, the politicisation of interpretation and the rejection of an aesthetic reading of literature could hardly offer valuable insights into literary texts, which is perhaps most evident in the fortunes of Steinbeck's first novel from the Great Depression, *In Dubious Battle*.

Judging from the low number of relevant entries in our bibliographical catalogue, *In Dubious Battle* (1936) was one among many other books consigned to oblivion because of its potential to foster independent thinking and subvert the oppressive regime. Since the concept of literary greatness was related to external criteria such as the work's sociopolitical function and the author's political views rather than to the book's aesthetic

value, it is not surprising that Steinbeck's unrelenting critique of the American socio-political scene and his exposure of the deficiencies of capitalism in his Depression-era novels appealed to the literary tastes of state-controlled critics and publishers. These works inadvertently served political regimes, whereas several others, particularly those that had no agenda of social solutions and thus failed to meet the demands of prevailing literary fashion, were unjustifiably marginalised. Only recently, following the change in the political system, have Steinbeck's works begun to be approached from the various angles of contemporary critical engagement. This is manifested in the recent publication of works that, if not neglected altogether because of their lack of social relevance and commitment or because of their potentially dangerous political implications, had formerly been received with scepticism, prejudice and misunderstanding. The critical fortunes of the above-mentioned *In Dubious Battle* are a good example.

In the entire area in focus, *In Dubious Battle* has until very recently been relegated to dusty shelves and may perhaps have been purchased only in second-hand bookshops. In the Czech Republic, for example, the novel was translated in 1945 and 1959, in Slovenia and Croatia in 1952 and 1953, respectively, whereas the only Hungarian publication dates from 1960. Only in Bulgaria and Romania, was *In Dubious Battle* brought out in a new edition in 2001 and 2012, respectively, after its first publication in 1947 and 1958. The first and at the same time the only Russian translation of this novel was published in 1989, whereas in Poland, it was not translated until 2014. The translation of the title itself deserves some attention. While the Croatian, Bulgarian, Russian, and Slovene titles are word-for-word translations of the English title, in Czech, although accompanied with guidelines for "correct" reading, the novel was entitled *Bitva*, meaning *battle*. The source book's title was also reduced to *battle* in the first Romanian translation, entitled *Pătălia,* whereas the second Romanian-language edition from 2012, *Nehotărîţii sorţi ai bătăliei*, retained the collocation from the English title. True to Petr Kopecký's observation, the adjective *dubious* was probably omitted, because it may have raised ideological doubts and problematised the endeavours of the working class in their struggle for social change (2011, 209). The Hungarian title *Késik a szüret*, meaning 'the vintage is late,' evinces more literary finesse than other titles, but also suggests the same editorial policy as outlined above.

Of course, it is hardly surprising that in most communist countries the novel's reputation had declined since the 1950s, although it was initially exploited for propaganda purposes (Čerče 2004, 2011, 2013). A glance at

what Gerard Genette refers to as "paratexts," i.e. those textual elements of translated works that are not part of direct translations of the source texts, but shaped independently by the publishers, translators, and editors (1997), such as the eye-catching front cover illustrations of some translations of an angry worker with threatening clenched fists, the symbol of the power of the labour force, suffices to prove this claim. The blurb highlighting Steinbeck's political correctness due to his "progressive social thought" (Bordon and Furlan 1952, 245) functions in the same way. Several accompanying studies loaded with inflated claims and rhetorical flourishes are further evidence that literature was part of the communists' struggle for power and control. In the study accompanying the first Slovene translation, for example, Bordon and Furlan write that the novel depicts the "misery of homeless agricultural workers struggling for survival […] after capitalism had thoroughly changed what was once such an idyllic country" (1952, 245), whereas Rapa Šuklje claims that the novel "announces a bright future with justice, equality and humanity" and makes you believe that "such a future cannot be far ahead" (1954, 173–174). Clearly, on the basis of the reputation Steinbeck established with *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) as a writer who denounced economic injustice, early Slovene critics saw *In Dubious Battle* as an attack on the corrupt capitalist system. There was hardly any mention of the book once they had gleaned its full meaning.

In fact, *In Dubious Battle* is solidly anti-communist, and several communist critics from all parts of the region objected to Steinbeck's emphasis on the organisers' calculated manipulation of the strikers, as well as his depiction of communist ideology. Perhaps the sharpest indictment of the novel came from Czech critics. Miroslav Jindra (1987), for example, claims that Steinbeck "naturalistically and negatively distorts the characters of the communist organisers," while Vladimir Vendyš (1960) and A. J. Šastný (1959) censured Steinbeck for not drawing "conclusions from the disturbing situation he had witnessed" and for knowing "only a distorted form of dialectical materialism" (Kopecký 2005, 85). In Poland, "they interpreted the book as hostile and banned it," writes Cliff Lewis (1995, 30), whereas in some other countries it was tactfully expunged from the literary record.

It is also relevant to mention that critical studies were rarely written by qualified literary critics, but by book reviewers and journalists, who only occasionally managed to go beyond a cursory description of the fables. In most cases, they did not perceive the ironic undertones in Steinbeck's wording, let alone unravel the complexity of mythical and literary allusions that add several shades of meaning to his seemingly one-

dimensional and readable stories. No less important is the fact that the "ideological ballast" with which the critical texts were loaded was more or less a necessity or a "deliberate concession to the censors" to get the book published (Kopecký 2011, 209). The tendency to assign a special role to discourses that empowered the idealistic prejudices of popular Marxism and Leninism, which led critics to pursue the social aspects and progressive elements in literary works, is also reflected in the reception of *Of Mice and Men* (1937). Except in Hungary, which boasts three consecutive publications in the 1940s and two in the 1950s, in other countries, the novel was far less often on the desks of translators and publishers.

One of the main reasons for the absence or rather limited circulation of *Of Mice and Men* may have been the same as in Slovenia, where reviewers perceived the protagonists' repeatedly articulated longing for a plot of their own land as "striving for private property" (*Celjski tednik* of 26 March 1948, 6). Given a marked contrast between private property and the communal ownership of all resources and means of production as the main tenet of communism, the novel must have constituted a menace to the all-permeating ideology. In Slovenia, it was placed on the 1948 list of works that were forbidden to be translated or published (Gabrič 2008, 67, cf. Trupej 2015, 125). When the novel was finally allowed to be translated following the decrease in tension between Yugoslavia and the United States, the reviewer Ivan Skušek did not forget to mention that the main protagonists' tragedy reveals the cruel side of American reality and must be viewed as exemplary of the masses of migrant workers searching in vain for a better life in the insensitive capitalist system (1952, 7). Clearly, Skušek's study demonstrates his preoccupation with promoting the precepts of social realism.

Another shared characteristic in the reception of Steinbeck's works in communist Europe is the publishers' lack of interest in the novel *The Moon Is Down* (1942). In contrast to Nazi-occupied Western Europe, where the book met an "extraordinarily positive reception" (Coers 1995, xiii), it received little attention in Eastern Europe. In most countries until very recently, it has only been reprinted once since its translation in the 1940s or 1950s, or it has not been reprinted at all. Only in Hungary was the first publication followed by three subsequent publications before the collapse of the communist regime, and an additional two since then. In Slovenia, on the other hand, the first translation of the novel dates from 2012, whereas the Romanian version was first published in 2007. In Serbia, Macedonia, Albania and some countries of the former Soviet Union, *The Moon Is Down* has still not been translated. The first Russian

translation in 1947 has had two later printings, both in 2000. In line with the customary fashion, critics were more interested in predicting the book's potential as propaganda than in evaluating its artistic merit. In his *Novi svet* study, "O socialnem romanu v ZDA (About socially-engaged novels in the United States)," the Russian critic A. Starcev asserts that, unlike *The Grapes of Wrath*, which shows Steinbeck as a daring social critic, *The Moon Is Down* […] show[s] him as a "sceptical individualist whose art does not go beyond the sheer preoccupation with itself" (*Novi svet* 1947, 133). Like several Western critics, such as Clifton Fadiman and James Thurber, who accused Steinbeck of being soft on the Nazis by depicting them as human beings with normal feelings, justifying their invasion and pleading for understanding (Coers 1995, xi), Eastern reviewers did not like Steinbeck's allegedly over-tolerant stance on the Nazi invaders or his truth about wars as being pernicious for both conquered and conqueror.

As our bibliographical catalogue also reveals, Steinbeck was introduced to and first acclaimed by East European readers when *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) was published. The translation of this novel as early as 1941 in the Czech Republic, Russia, Hungary and Bulgaria, 1943 in Slovenia, 1947 in Slovakia, 1948 in Poland, and two years later in Croatia, was part of the great international upsurge of interest in Steinbeck following the novel's publication by Viking Press. Given that the book uncompromisingly exposes and attacks the unconscionable dynamics of corporate farming in the United States, which—according to the prevailing socialist opinion in Eastern Europe—symbolised all the evils of a corrupt social order, it not only conformed to, but also strengthened, the "bleak picture" of the United States systematically presented by the "state-controlled media" (Kopecký 2011, 205).

On the basis of this novel, and because he was meeting the criteria of political correctness by expressing his overt objection to institutional and historical processes which had maintained the political and economic exploitation of farm workers, Steinbeck was received as a politically progressive writer. More than that: because of his fierce critique of social and economic conditions, Steinbeck "ceased to be regarded as an individual and became a political tool" (Čerče 2006, 65), an "expedient object employed in the ideological campaign on the literary front" (Kopecký 2011, 204). Both his work and personality served higher purposes, namely the "legitimisation of the workers' struggle against their capitalist exploiters" (Kopecký 2011, 204). In the ensuing years, East European countries constituted an eager market for Steinbeck's works. The writer was particularly popular in the 1960s, with nineteen translations

of his books in the former Czechoslovakian market, eighteen in the former Yugoslavia, and twelve in Poland.

All of these countries also witnessed a dramatic change in the domain of critical appraisal of Steinbeck's works: the initial enthusiasm was replaced by critical antipathy and even antagonism when, after the publication of *The Grapes of Wrath*, the writer abandoned his socially engaged attitude and began to explore new subjective topics, such as the dimensions of individual choice, romantic and domestic relationships and ethical consciousness. Several critics shared the opinion of the above-mentioned Russian critic that Steinbeck had betrayed the working-class by "ignoring the analysis of social conditions" (Starcev 1947, 133). In reviewing *Cannery Row* (1945), the Czech critic Jaroslav Bouček, for example, describes Steinbeck as "corrupted by the ruling taste" (1952, 84), while the Croatian critic Stjepan Kresić condemned *East of Eden* with the claim that Steinbeck was merely exposing social problems "without showing any plausible solutions" (1956, 668). Marija Cvetko, among other Slovene critics, underrated *Travels with Charley* (1962), pointing to the "lack of intensity of the writer's critical insight" (1964, 7). However, it was not until after Steinbeck overtly showed his support for the U.S.A.'s involvement in Vietnam due to the alleged communist threat that his popularity faded. "You betrayed your principles and everything you had ever fought for," accused him the Bulgarian writer Blaga Dimitrova (1967, 92), one of many unforgiving if not antagonistic voices in the late 1960s. In the same year, Arnošt Lustig, a prominent Czech writer and journalist, wrote: "But what must be in the air that it changes the spirit and opinions of a man who has, until now, represented the best in America?" (Kopecký 2011, 212). This keen sense of disappointment resulted in a lack of interest in Steinbeck's work.

New Steinbeck editions were especially rare in the 1980s. While in Slovakia and Romania, this was a Steinbeck-free decade, only two books were published in the Czech Republic and Poland, respectively. Interestingly, Slovenia excelled with five Steinbeck editions then, but ranked much worse in the 1990s and after the turn of the millennium. In the former Soviet Union, Steinbeck publications experienced their worst track record in the 1970s, with only four translations in the entire period. Perhaps it was also because of the shared cultural trend in the 1980s among writers and critics in Eastern Europe to withdraw from politics and refrain from expressing their ideological involvement or lack of it, and to reflect on and understand events with the help of philosophy, religion, and science instead, that Steinbeck, who was at that time still known primarily

for his social criticism, failed to arouse the interest of translators, publishers and literary historians.

Steinbeck's rehabilitation has been slow, but consistent. At present, and although he is still poorly represented in literary history and criticism, there seems to be a level of acceptance of the writer. His works are considerably widely translated in most of the countries of the area under consideration. In the former Yugoslav republics, too, Steinbeck has begun to regain his lost prestige. As for Slovenia, several critical studies published since 2000 and drawing readers' attention to the universal relevance of Steinbeck's texts have fuelled new critical debates and inspired new readings and translations of his books. In the last two decades, seven Slovene translations have appeared, compared to the single translation in the 1990s. In the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia, on the other hand, a new wave of Steinbeck translation began soon after the end of the communist era (1948-1989). In the 1990s, twenty-eight Steinbeck translations were published in Poland and Hungary alone (eighteen in Poland and ten in Hungary). This number is even more impressive, given that there was only one Steinbeck publication (*Tortilla Flat* in Slovene language) in the former Yugoslavia in the same decade.

This veritable explosion of Steinbeck publications and works by other American and West European writers in most of post-communist Europe must have been associated with a cultural need in these countries to learn about the outside world. Yugoslavia, including Slovenia as its most developed republic, experienced the cultural renaissance a decade later, which was probably due to the country's unique status within communist Eastern Europe. It has to be remembered that, after the 1948 expulsion of the Yugoslav Communist Party from Cominform (the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties, founded in September 1947) due to its defiance of Soviet authority, Yugoslavia not only abandoned the Soviet model of collectivism and a planned economy, but also developed its own model of socialism based on self-management. More importantly, unlike in other countries behind the Iron Curtain, where the western borders were tightly closed until the end of the communist era in the late 1980s, in Yugoslavia, they became increasingly relaxed after the Tito-Stalin split (1948) and opened fully in the first half of the 1960s. This also explains why opinions as to whether the former Yugoslavia was behind the Iron Curtain are divided.

Be that as it may, since the year 2000, the Czech Republic has boasted the most translations, with twenty-seven publications to date. During the whole period of Steinbeck's presence in the Czech cultural arena, there have been seventy-three Czech editions, beginning with the publication of

The Grapes of Wrath in 1941 (*Hrozny hněvu*). Poland, too, has developed a cultural environment conducive to translations of Steinbeck works: twenty-four of them (out of a total of seventy-one since 1948) have been published in the last ten years. In Hungary, the statistics for this millennium have improved due to increased publishing activity in the last few years: since 2007, their bookshops have been enriched by seven of Steinbeck's books in Hungarian. The figures have also improved in Slovenia and Serbia, with seven translations in the former and six in the latter. The upsurge of interest in Steinbeck's work is particularly evident in post-communist Romania. As if the country were seeking to make up for its cultural belatedness, it has seen a string of translations of Steinbeck books since 2002, with ten publications in 2010 and 2012 alone, and a range that includes works from virtually all the creative venues the writer entered. Of a total of thirty-two publications since 2000, only a few novels have been published more than once.

An account of Steinbeck's popularity in the countries that were politically grouped into the communist bloc would be incomplete without some other relevant information. While in the past, particularly in the immediate post-war years, publishers liked to choose Steinbeck's Depression-era novels, with the writer's social concern and critical attitude to the American social and economic system, today they opt for works with a different set of stylistic, thematic and philosophical bearings from the earlier books that stirred up great contention. In most cases, these are the same texts once marginalised by critics who evaluated literary works according to their sociopolitical functions. Clearly, as a consequence of long-lasting censorship, there was a great demand for literary works that transcend the "confinement of an ideological source and explanation" (Hoffman 1968, 193). In Hungary, for example, the recently published Steinbeck works include *Burning Bright* (2002), *Cup of Gold* (2001), *East of Eden* (2001, 2007), *The Pearl* (2000), *The Winter of Our Discontent* (2008), *The Moon Is Down* (2014) and *A Russian Journal* (2009). For Slovakia, these publications include *The Wayward Bus* (2002, 2010), two subsequent publications of *To a God Unknown* (2003, 2004), *Cannery Row* (2005), *Sweet Thursday* (2008) and *East of Eden* (2012). In Slovenia, where seven Steinbeck translations have recently been published, these include *East of Eden* (2004), *To a God Unknown* (2009), *The Moon Is Down* (2011), *The Pastures of Heaven* (2012), and *The Short Reign of Pippin IV* (2013). The most recent Russian publications include *The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights* (2010), *Sweet Thursday*, *Cup of Gold*, *The Wayward Bus* and *Travels with Charley*, all four published in 2011, while Poland has recently seen the publication of *Once There Was a*

War (2005) and *The Log from the Sea of Cortez* (2006). The latter was virtually unknown before, and the track record of the former is only slightly better. Similar statistics apply to *A Russian Journal*, an eyewitness account by Steinbeck and the photographer Robert Capa of their journey through the Soviet Union in 1947. Depicting the depressing reality of early Cold War Soviet life, the book was not in favour with the ruling communist regimes. Interestingly, the book saw its first translation in Russia (in 1989); in 2002 and 2005, it was also available in Bulgarian and Georgian, respectively. The most recent publication dates from 2009, when it was first published in Hungarian. Only in Romania has *A Russian Journal* been published twice, in 2010 and 2015.

Considering the contours of the political milieu in pre-revolutionary Eastern Europe, it is not surprising that *The Grapes of Wrath* has been published at least ninety-two times so far. What is intriguing is the fact that there have also been at least sixty-three publications of *East of Eden* (1952), a novel that is representative of entirely new frontiers in Steinbeck's writing, clearly testifying to the writer's departure from proletarian themes to the exploration of issues of human nature, freedom, individual choice, and relationships. *East of Eden* has been popular in all the countries under consideration, but nowhere more than in Slovenia. With seven publications, compared to eight in all the other Yugoslav republics, with which Slovenia was closely connected before gaining independence in 1991, and taking into account the total volume of Steinbeck publications in a particular country, *East of Eden* has surely sparked the greatest interest among Slovene publishers.

To assess fully the popularity of this novel in Slovenia, some additional statistics beyond Yugoslavia's borders would not be amiss. Among other East European countries, only Poland boasts more translations. *Na wschód od Edenu*, as the book was entitled by the Polish translator Bronislaw Zielinski, has been published nine times, first in 1958 and most recently in 2011. However, considering that altogether there have been seventy Polish publications of Steinbeck's works, compared to only twenty-six in Slovenia, the numbers speak for themselves. Of a total of sixty-six Hungarian publications, seven were of *East of Eden,* which ranks the country, together with Slovenia, close after Poland. Another country with a good ratio is Romania, with six out of forty-six Steinbeck publications. In Bulgaria, *East of Eden* has been published five times. Despite the respectable number of publications (sixty-six) in the Czech Republic, *East of Eden* has managed to attract Czech publishers only five times. In Slovakia, the novel seems to have been even less fortunate, with only three publications to date. The first Russian translation was as late as 1989,

when it was published by Moscow's Pravda under the title *Na vostok ot Edema*. It has since been published only once, and under a slightly different title, *K vostoku ot Edema* in 2003. As for the other countries of the former Soviet Union, only Estonia and Latvia possess this novel in their own languages: the Estonian editions date from 2001 and 2010, the Latvian ones from 1994 and 2003. *Jenseits von Eden,* as *East of Eden* was entitled in the German translation, was published by the German Democratic Republic publisher in 1962 only. *East of Eden* has not yet been translated in Albania.

Speculating on the reasons for the novel's popular appeal among Slovenes, it is relevant to note that, despite the poor critical response to the novel, literary criticism with its pragmatic concepts regarding the creative potential of fictional worlds nevertheless significantly contributed to the book's success. Although in terms of serious critical writing, reference to popular magazines might be considered unreliable, in the past, it was mainly this kind of media that formed public opinion. In the 1958 issue of *Naša žena*, a popular read of many Slovenes interested in social and cultural topics, Rapa Šuklje initiated a very tolerant critical position regarding the novel and continued to express her appreciation in several accompanying studies. Embracing the need for politically and ideologically committed reading, Juš Turk, the translator of the novel, emphasised the writer's "struggle against any kind of Puritanism and accompanying social exploitation" (1958, 767). According to Turk, this view guaranteed Steinbeck a secure place in the league of progressive American writers who had provided a "genuine portrayal of America's disturbing times" (Turk 1958, 767). The grip of the regime's control, with its ideological imperative, is also distinctly noted in Turk's 1980 accompanying study, worth mentioning here only because of the critic's claim[2] that Steinbeck always "showed appreciation for Yugoslav President Tito's opinion" (1980, 540).

Without giving further examples, we can conclude that the ideological ballast and inflated descriptions of the novel as "one of the most beautiful literary gifts ever available to Slovene readers" (541), as Turk describes it in the study accompanying the 1980 publication of the book, certainly boosted interest in the novel. However, the popular appeal in Slovenia may also be partly because of the book itself. Advocating issues of individual choice and freedom rather than ideological clichés, and being informed by personal vision rather than group psychology and social consciousness, it seems to have attracted those readers who resist the

[2] No record has been found showing Steinbeck's affinity for President Tito.

temptation to use all the information provided by critics or editors and prefer to "consume" the story simply for its "narrative pleasure" (Srikanth 2010, 148). In doing so, they are similar to Western readers; since its first publication, and unlike the critics, these have also been challenged by the book itself and found it pleasurable to read, either because of the familiar Biblical framework of the story, which offers a wide array of references and readings or because of the novel's open, reflective form. This type of intimate reader response would probably not have been possible if Slovenia had been equally influenced by the "Kremlin's official doctrines," like the neighbouring countries in the region, which were trapped into "viewing the world as either black or white" (Kopecký 2011, 214).

Even on this narrow scale of comparison, as it is offered here, and despite some differences which should more appropriately be regarded as a result of intellectual choice rather than of a shared intellectual project, it is not hard to see how similar socio-political circumstances in these countries accounted for the similar status of Steinbeck's works, both in the field of criticism and publishing activity. With Katherine Arens, "specific texts or authors are given privileged or canonical status as prototypes for their speech genres within literary history and in the community of cultural producers" (2005, 139). Clearly, within an East European's horizon of expectations about literature, Steinbeck has been regarded until very recently primarily as a social realist writer, and the credit for his popular acclaim has gone to his initial role as an objective social chronicler of the Great Depression. Because of his uncompromising exposure of social ills and liberal beliefs, his works not only served as a credible source of information about the American sociopolitical and economic scene, but also inadvertently assisted the communist regimes in their struggle against the social order of capitalism.

It is true that, read simplistically and tendentiously, almost any text can serve political interests (Guran 2003, 96), because "we always eventually find, at the edge of the text, the language of ideology, momentarily hidden, but eloquent by its very absence" (Spivak 1988, 122); however, it is a gross simplification to regard Steinbeck as merely a chronicler of 20th century America and marginalise or even ignore the literary merit of his works. The mere fact that, today, according to Letitia Guran (2003), a number of East European scholars show a clear preference for an aesthetic reading of literature against a politically committed reading does not guarantee that Steinbeck's works will finally be assessed with the same aesthetic criteria that are applied to the best literary works. It is the recent renaissance of interest in the whole of Steinbeck's oeuvre, demonstrated in