

O N S O N G S F R O M S U L K O V E C A N D S U R R O U N D I N G S

It is a happy coincidence that a large collection of folk songs from Sulkovec and its surroundings is available among the collections of the Institute of Ethnology of Academy of Science of the Czech Republic in Brno. Only a few communities of western Moravia can boast about such a collection. Western Moravia, known as Moravian Horácko among ethnographers, is generally considered, together with the adjoining Podhorácko, as a region where people sing less; especially when compared to other ethnographic regions of Moravia: the South, South-East, and the East.

A collection of a single community, Sulkovec, refutes the general negative meaning. An instrumental figure of singing activities in Sulkovec was Josef Kovářík, who worked at a local one-room school since 1886. It was quite a large one-room school; in one of his letters Kovářík writes that he takes care of seventy-two pupils! Kovářík defines himself as a school administrator, which may be a misleading description from today's point of view. Do not take him wrong, he was a village teacher with all it needed, including an interest in music and singing.

The evidence can be taken from the memories of direct witnesses. Ms. Anna Jandlová from Sulkovec (born 1905) remembers, that teacher Kovářík had many songs written down in his notebook. He led his pupils to singing; he accompanied pupil's voices on a harmonium, and each pupil had to take an active part in singing. The school repertoire included mostly popular patriotic songs, such as "Moravia, Moravia" by V. Hanka and L. Dietrich, "Bohemia Beautiful, Bohemia Mine", "Songs are the Daughters of My Spirit" by V. J. Pick, and "I am Moravian, and I am Proud of It" by V. Novotný. Traditional folk songs were sung as well, such as "There is Old Kudrna Riding Around Brno", "I Am a Good Artisan from the Region of Trenčín", and "Mother Please Look After Me", among others.

The evidence of a similarly rich repertoire can be seen in the surviving collection of the folk songs of Horácko. It is well known that one of the village teacher's duties in those days was promoting music and songs. Kovářík was proud of his music abilities, and suggested a bit about his qualities in a letter of May 23, 1910, addressed to the composer Leoš Janáček:

"Your Honor!

I remember that in the years of 1878-1882 you were my teacher at the Brno Institution, and you graded me in music and voice always very good. I also remember the late Berth. Žalud!

I wish to the Lord Almighty that you were kept alive for the needs of our nation for a long time!

Your Honor, this is yours very sincerely,

Josef Kovářík,

Your former and grateful student,

now a school administrator in Sulkovec in Moravia,

Post office Rovečín. “

There is no doubt as regards Kovařík's abilities. This is evident in the songs which he wrote down in his neat teacher's handwriting. He managed to capture all the song forms which people sang in the region one hundred years back from now. The folk songs from the western part of Horácko, which includes Sulkovec and surrounding villages, are qualified as the songs of the western type, especially because of their music character. Moravian folk songs are usually divided geographically; it is the Morava River which is considered the border between the western and eastern types.

Western Moravian songs share many features with Czech (Bohemian) song tradition, such as the prevalence of songs in major keys, no modulations in other keys, and a high number of songs in triple measures. Dance songs with changeable measure can be found in Horácko as well. Within one stanza, triple and two-four measures alternate; alongside this change, dancers have to switch to different steps, such as from the Waltz to the *Obkročák*, an alternating step dance. Such dances are often called confusing dances or mixers, but they have other names as well. They can be mostly found in the Czech lands, but they have also spread into the northern part of Horácko, which is the region we are interested in. Speaking about other music features, legatos are strikingly frequent: for one syllable of the text, singers hold on two or more notes. This suggests that the songs of Sulkovec and surroundings share a lot with folk songs from the neighboring Czech region, where this feature is quite frequent. In eastern Moravia, legatos are quite rare. As to the lyrics of the songs, the motives and topics

found in Sulkovec have frequent counterparts in the Czech lands, as well as in Moravia and Silesia; some of the songs even have parallels in Slovakia.

What is an origin of such an important song collection? The answer can be partly found in the letters of Josef Kovářik addressed to Leoš Janáček, which are deposited in the archives of the Institute of Ethnology in Brno. At the beginning of the 20th century, a large collecting effort was initiated in the lands of the former Austrian monarchy. It was directed from Vienna, Austria. This activity is known in German as Das Volkslied in Österreich, which can be translated as The Folk – or better, in the spirit of that period – The National Song in Austria. The title explains a lot about the aim of the effort: to collect and publish the folk songs of all nations, which lived together under the Austrian rule. Outstanding professionals who were gathered in a special committee directed the whole project; its headquarters were located in Vienna.

Individual countries established their own work committees to direct and coordinate the work. In 1905 in Brno, the Work Committee for the Czech National Song in Moravia and Silesia was established. Its head was Leoš Janáček. The committee addressed teachers and musicians, asked them for help, and requested them to take part in the project. It was Janáček personally who put together a large handout. In its heading, there was this proclamation: „We are collecting Czech national songs in Moravia and Silesia.“ Janáček also shaped precise instructions for possible collectors. General public learned about the project from newspapers and magazines as well. This is also how Josef Kovařík learned about it, which is evident from his letter of May 1910. He answered one of the later appeals, because the whole project had been launched before. Perhaps this can explain why the tone of Kovařík’s letter is a bit accusing.

“Your Honor!

Two days ago I read in the daily news that the committee for collecting the Czech national songs (in Moravia) had already gathered about 6,000 songs, and it was going to finish its work soon. Such news has startled me a lot, because I have been collecting songs of my community and surroundings since the New Year, and I am ready submit about 125 to 130 songs to the renowned committee. However, the whole collection, both lyrics and tunes, has so far been written down in a pencil only, and it is accompanied by an alphabetical list of titles. Being a teacher at an over-crowded one-room school (72 pupils), I am very busy with school

and administrative work, and moreover, my sight is very poor, so I cannot write in the evenings, only in the bright day.

For this reason I have planned to finish the work for the renowned committee during the school vacations, but it seems to me now that it perhaps will be too late. Provided you can take only some 5 – 10 songs of my whole collection, I would feel sorry for the rest, which would be doomed to oblivion.

That is why I request you to kindly consider whether I still can send the songs, and by which date. I believe I should be granted some time, because it is quite demanding to rewrite the whole material in pen – especially as regards to my job.

I am eagerly looking forward to your kind reply.

As a good musician, I have written down all tunes perfectly.“

Josef Kovářik faced the whole project in a very peculiar way. Not regarding the leading authorities, he was quite critical as to the organization of the project:

“Please allow me to add this:

The respected imperial and royal school committees send us a call last November (not a command) to collect national songs (the 1st mistake!). Then no deadline for submitting songs was given (the 2nd mistake!).

It may be that many a colleague still has the songs with him – same as me.

May I ask the respected imperial and royal school committees in Moravia to ask the teachers to report about an actual completion of the command? Or, ask the teachers to submit the songs immediately to the respected committee?

Hundreds of songs would be saved this way.“

Kovářik' letters inform us closely about his attitude towards folk songs, and about his collecting activities. At the same time we learn about the collection which documents what was recorded in Sulkovec and its surroundings at the beginning of the 20th century. Considering the possibilities of passing songs in that period, the collection had to include the songs which were sung there decades ago.

In his letter to the Brno work committee, Josef Kovářik announces that he has sent 129 songs which were recorded in Sulkovec and its surroundings. They are quite old, as we have

suggested above. As to the specific locale, the collector mentions a place not only with the songs that he recorded, but also in the accompanying letter. He stresses that, *“it was quite demanding to gather all those lyrics and tunes.”* And further on he says: *“When possibly publishing the songs, the place of the origin should be stated as well. – I have made quite an effort to learn where does a song come from; though I have not succeeded in all cases.”* It can be concluded that in some cases the songs were not part of a living tradition, and not passed orally any longer. If the collector was unable to find where was the song coming from, or where were people singing it, it was probably such a song which was disappearing, or has already vanished from the singing repertoire.

Nevertheless, the collector was successful in most cases, and he could state the exact place where the song was at home, or, what was the song’s journey to Sulkovec and surrounding villages. The data is quite interesting. Kovářík provides a long list of songs (including *“Lístečku dubový, nepadej do vody”*, *“Není lepší jako zjara”*, *“Za krásných dnů mé mladosti”*, *“Zakukala zezulenka na našem dvoře”*, *“Zpívá slavík, zpívá, až se háj rozlívá”*, *“V poli stojí kříž”*, *“Jaké je to hezké v tom brněnském městě”*, among others), and remarks that the songs *“were brought over here by our soldiers (mainly from the cities of Brno and Hodonín), and by tailors from Prostějov”*. (In a letter from July 27, 1910).

Such seemingly unimportant details cannot be found with most of the later collectors, which is a pity; if they are present, they are far from the exactness of Kovářík. Also other Kovářík’s insights reveal an unbelievable clairvoyant view, considering the time. Present day collectors and scholars could be inspired by Kovářík’s words:

“By the way, the origin of many of the soldier’s songs perhaps is in the barracks – which means that the songs come from the people, and many of them deserve publishing (provided their contents is suitable enough), not regarding the “cuksfíry, laufšřity” and similar [army] stuff – I would say that typical – for Austria. Our nation can appreciate such songs as really rare within 200 or 300 years.

Respected committee, forgive me kindly for giving you propositions – not at all! – I just pass my opinion knowing that the respected committee, as a corporation, is more competent, and it will follow its own way in the choice, an experienced and good one.”

In his search for folk songs, Kovářík focused on witnesses first of all. *“I was curious to learn from elderly people which of the submitted songs were very old. The following songs*

were denoted (...). Other songs were depicted as the songs which “we did not sing in our times“.”

Josef Kovářík does not provide comments on songs alongside the notation, nevertheless, in the accompanying text, he grouped the songs (or, their numbers according to the original numbering) according to their contents and functions. As a result, his collections includes the songs which the collector denoted as follows: 42 love songs, 29 soldier’s songs, 20 epic songs, 3 wedding songs, 1 carols, and 34 songs marked as “various”.

In his decision whether a song is an epic one or not, Kovářík uses a charming point of view: he includes the songs which are “similar to a fairy-tale and a ballad”. One of them which is worth mentioning is an ancient ballad known as “The Warrior Daughter”; the ballad was named so in a [previous] collection by František Sušil. The most famous ballad, about a girl who poisoned her brother, comes from Sulkovec, and was recorded by Josef Kovářík.

And the last example, the song about St. Dorothea is a remainder of a folk [miracle] play which was performed at the beginning of February, on the name day of this saint. The variant of Sulkovec was recorded and preserved by Josef Kovařík as well.

Out of the following enclosed examples, I would like to remind you of a very unusual tune in a widely popular song known all over Moravia, “Borovinka boroví”, and the textual contamination in the song “Červená růžička modrým kvítkem pučř”, which has combined two ancient and well-known love songs. A complete text, which cannot be found elsewhere in such an extent, can be seen in the songs “Na sulkovském poli dvě růže červený”, and “Ty musíš, má milá, na mě něco vědět”. We could go on and on, one song after another. The following examples allow the reader to enjoy the variety and a good state of preservation, as well as the artistic and documentary values of the recorded songs.

Josef Kovářík not only recorded songs and submitted them to the work committee, he is also the author of many bright and informed comments on the nature and origin of the songs. Such comments are today linked with the notions of life and environmental issues, or better, the ecology of folk song. What is today considered a progressive method and a special approach in the work of a collector, Kovářík had already applied at the beginning of the 20th century. Some of his comments and insights about the life of folk songs can be found in the conclusion of his letter [see the handwriting]:

Finally, here are some comments:

a) Older songs are written in a dialect, nevertheless, it differs a little from the standard Czech language; see the words like: *vychováł, milováł, večír, bílej, mně (m. mne, mně i mne), ouzká, chodijou, bijou, ju (m. ji), ňu, ňou (m. ni, s ní), vorál, vostuda, český hoši hezký sou, s něma, dragoun, dycky, nejakej, tři leta celý, vovísek, děvčátko krásný atd.*

b) Young people of the village like to sing quite often and very much. Whenever possible, they sing in thirds; see songs number 39 and 84.

c) I have also included some well-known national songs (“A já vždycky, co mne má hlavička pobolívá”), because here they use a different melody; see numbers 6, 9, 22, 24, and 43.

d) The following songs are performed mostly by children: numbers 89, 94, 100, 101, 121, and 122 (while tearing feather in winter).

e) Song number 66 [see the example] has a special comment alongside the melody.

I wish to the Lord that you have chosen many of my songs (at least one fourth!). I will be looking forward for the printed version of the songs – though I am afraid it will take a long time from now! I am ready to answer any questions immediately.

1. “Borovinka boroví”

[The song refers to a pine grove, and it is about cheating in love].

1. Borovinka boroví,
Roste na ní stromoví,
Chodili k nám dva mládenci,
ale už k nám nechodí

2. Chodijou k nám dvě jiný,
ty nejsou tak upřímný;
dej si, holka, dobrý pozor,
jeden z nich tě ošidí.

3. Ošidí tě jedenkrát,
dvakrát, třikrát, čtyrykrát –
škoda je tě, hezké děvče,
škoda je tě nastokrát!

2. “Byla svatá Dorota”

[The lyrics of the song are based on an old legend about St. Dorothea – she loved Jesus Christ so much that she refused an earthly king and his love. She was put in prison, tortured, questioned again, finally sentenced to death, and proclaimed saint.]

1. Byla svatá Dorota
nábožného života.
Šla jednou přes královský dvůr,
vyšel za ní sám pan Brún.
2. Chceš, Dorotko, chceš má být?
Já si tě chci oblíbit.
A já nechci žádného,
já mám Ježíše svého.
3. Král se na ni rozhněval,
do vězení sedět dal,
do vězení sedět dal
a na vojnu odjel sám.
4. Sedum let na vojně je,
osmý rok domů jede.
Na Dorotku vzpomene,
je-li živá nebo ne?
5. Dorotka v žaláři je,
nic tam nejí, nepije.
Z žaláře ji vyvedli,
před krále postavili.
6. Chceš, Dorotko, chceš má být?
Já si tě chci oblíbit.
A já nechci žádného,
já mám Ježíše svého.

3. “Červená růžička”

[“Red, Red, Rose” is a song about unfulfilled love, told from the point of view of an abandoned girl.]

1. Červená růžička modrým kvítkem pučí,
pročpak vy pláčete, moje modré oči?
2. Pročpak vy pláčete, smutně naříkáte,
čemu ste navykly, tomu odvykejte.

7. Král se na ni rozhněval,
na oleji smažit dal.
Na oleji smažená,
čím dál krásnější byla.
8. Chceš, Dorotko, chceš má být?
Já si tě chci oblíbit.
A já nechci žádného,
já mám Ježíše svého.
9. Král se na ni rozhněval,
katovi ji pod moc dal.
Kat ji vede po městě,
rozmlouvá s ní po sprostě.
10. Chceš, Dorotko, chceš má být?
Já si tě chci oblíbit.
A já nechci žádného,
já mám Ježíše svého.
11. Kat ji mečem udeří,
ona se mu pokoří.
Pane kate, pravda je,
Dorota že svatá je.

5. A já se nedívám, dívají se oči,
jak se můj syneček s jinou v kole točí.
6. S jinou v kole točí, s jinou se povede,
ještě se podívá na náš dům vesele.
7. Na náš dům vesele, na naše stavení,
srdce ho zabolí, dyby měl z kamení.
8. U Dunaje stála, vody nabírala,
šohajova máti na ni zavolala.
9. Naber mně, ceruško, vody do žbánečka
a já ti za to dám našeho synečka.

10. Já sem jí nabrala místo vody vína:
Tu máte, matičko, za vašeho syna.
11. Po roce zkázala, abych se vdávala,
na jejího syna abych nečekala.
12. Já sem jí zkázala na tuto otázku:
Uvaž si ho, babo, doma na provázku.
13. Doma na provázku na čtyry neděle,
až ty starý baby všecy čert pobere.
14. Ty starý pobere, ty mladý nastanou,
aspoň ty klevety na světě přestanou.

4. “Minula hodina“

[Two lovers speak over the closed door: she does not want to let him in because he is too late; he does not believe that she is there alone.]

2. Toulá se, toulá se, nemůže trefiti,
nechce mu jeho milá, Nánynka rozmilá,
dvěře otevřítí.
3. Otevři, otevři malované dveři,
bych se moh podívat, bych se moh podívat,
kdo u tebe leží.
4. Neleží, neleží, neleží tu žádný,
dyž ty tady nejseš, dyž ty tady nejseš
je místečko prázdný.

5. “Na sulkovském poli”

[A soldier thinks about his love from Sulkovec. When he sees her after a three-year- service in the army, he asks her mother not to keep the girl from loving him].

1. Na sulkovském poli dvě růže červený,
ještě jsem daleko, již mně jedna voní
2. Růžičko červená, růžičko voňavá,
tys mně zavoněla tři leta bezmála.
3. Tři leta bezmála, na vojně každý den,
počkej, ty dceruško, my k vám večer
přijdem.
4. Přišel šohaječek o jedné hodině,
počal si stěžovat o smutné novině.
5. Má drahá matičko, nebraňte nám nikdy,
jaké je to hezké, když se dvě milují.
6. Když se dvě milují, panenka, mládenec,
když si zachovají svůj zelený věnec.

7. Můj zelený věnec na hlavičce skáče,
ale tvá poctivost na kolíbce pláče.

8. Kdyby se poctivost na poli rodila,
tu každá panenka by na ni chodila.

6. “Pásla husy na dolině”

[An old ballad: two soldiers are seducing a girl, she poisons her brother to be with them, they refuse her attention after it, and give her to an executioner].

1. /:Pásla husy na dolině,:/

/:na tej bílej jatelině.:/

2. /:Přijeli k ní dva huláni,:/

/:pojed', holka, pojed' s námi.:/

3. /:Já bych s vámi ráda jela,:/

/:jenomže mám bratra doma.:/

4. /:Bratra můžeš otrávit,:/

/:potom můžeš s námi jeti.:/

5. /:Jakpak bych ho otrávila,:/

/:dyž sem se to neučila.:/

6. /:Jdi do háje dubového,:/

/:chytni hada jedového.:/

7. /:Uvař mu ho v teplém mléce,:/

/:bude po něm v malé chvílce.:/

8. /:Již Pepíček z lesa jede,:/

/:narovnané dřevo veze.:/

9. /:Pojď, Pepíčku, k snídaničku,:/

/:na stolečku máš rybičku.:/

10. /:Copak je to za rybičku :/

/:bez hlavičky, bez ocásku?./

11. /:Hlavičku sem sama snědla,:/

/:ocásek mi kočka vzala.:/

12. /:Když ten první kousek snědl,:/

/:hned na jedné tváři zbledl.:/

13. /:Dej mi, sestro, dej podušku,:/

/:já si položím hlavičku.:/

14. /:Přinesla mu tvrdý kámen: :/

/: Spi, Pepíčku, s Pánem Bohem!./

15. /:Teď bych s vámi ráda jela,:/

/:již sem bratra otrávila.:/

16. /:A teď s námi nesmíš jeti,:/

/:mohla bys nás otrávit.:/

17. /:Pepíčka už k hrobu vezou::/

/:a Nányinku kati vedou.:/

7. “Pod Sulkovcem louka”

[Moving a meadow in the moonlight, a girl asks her lover to stay with her, he refuses].

1. Pod Sulkovcem louka, pod šest mír je
velká,

ta má být do rána posečená, tralala,

ta má být do rána posečená.

2. Sekli ji sekáči, měli ostré kosy,

za něma hrabala moje milá, tralala,

za něma hrabala moje milá.

3. Když trávu hrabala, smutně zaplakala:

Zůstaň tu, můj milý, až do rána, tralala,

zůstaň tu, můj milý, až do rána.

4. Já tu nezůstanu, já musím jít domů,

koničky pucovat, pryč pojedu, tralala,

koničky pucovat, pryč pojedu.

8. “Svět, měsíčku, svět”

[A story of two lovers; he is late for a date, she is too proud and refuses to see him when he appears].

1. Svět, měsíčku, svět,
přes ten Boží svět
Svět, měsíčku zdejší,
mojí znejmilejší,
kolo udělej.

2. Kolo udělej,
na ni zavolej,
by nebyla pyšná
a za mnou ven vyšla
sama jediná.

3. Ona nevyšla,
poslala posla:
A ty, milý posle,

vyříd' to tam dobře
jako já sama.

4. Přes ten panský most
teče vodička,
napoj mně, má milá,
Mařenko rozmilá,
mého koníčka.

5. Já ho nenapojím,
já se koně bojím;
kdyby se odvázal,
on by mě pokousal,
jak se vyhojím?

9. “Ten sulkovský kostelíček”

[The song is about a blue-eyed girl and a young man from Sulkovec, who was recruited to the army against his will].

1. Ten sulkovský kostelíček,
okolo něj černý les
Ještě se podívám,
brzo-li uhlídám,
jede-li můj milý dnes.

2. Ach, on jede, jede, jede
na svém vraném koníčku;
ještě si připíná,
ještě si připíná
na levý bok šavličku.

3. Když tu šavli sobě připjal,
na svůj dům se ohlédl –
a tak smutně vzdychal
a tak smutně plakal,
až pod ním kůň zarehtal.

4. Ach, matičko, máti drahá,
což vy mne snad neznáte?
Že vy mě s mým koněm
před tím vaším domem
tak dlouho stát necháte.

5. Máti jak to uslyšela,
na ulici vyběhla:
Vítám tě, můj synu,
kdo tě dal na vojnu,
kdo je toho příčina?

6. Kdo by toho příčina byl
než kunštátský milostpán!
Ten jak mě uhlídal,
provazy mě svázal,
ještě ke mně vartu dal.

7. A ta varta u mě stála
od večera do rána –
a když pán Bůh den dal
a kohout zazpíval,
odvedli mě do Brna.

8. Když sme k Brnu přijížděli,
na vše zvony zvonili:
Otvírejte vrata,
vedem vám legruta
z tej sulkovskej dědiny.

10. “Ty musíš, má milá”

[A song about two lovers who are very poor; the girl's mother refuses the boy, she wishes somebody rich for her daughter instead].

1. /:Ty musíš, má milá, něco na mě vědět,:/
/:že tvé modré oči,:/
že tvé modré oči
nechcou na mě hledět.

2. /:Copak bych, můj milý, na tebe
věděla?:/
/:když tys k nám chodíval,:/
když tys k nám chodíval
každý den zvečera.

3. /:Každý den zvečera, když sluníčko
zašlo,:/
/:za hory, za doly,:/
za hory, za doly,
za to černé mračno.

4. /:Za to černé mračno, za červený
Dunaj,:/
pověz mně, má milá, Nányňko rozmilá,
pověz mně, má milá,
kdo k vám víc chodívá.

5. /:K nám žádný nechodí, k nám se každý
bojí,:/
/:že moji rodiče,:/
že mojí rodiče
sou tuze chudobní.

6. /:Chudoba, chudoba, ta je na světě zlá,:/
/:přec mě má matička,:/
přec mě má matička
ledaskomu nedá.

7. /:Než by mě matička ledaskomu dala,:/
/:radš by mně hlavěňku,:/
radš by mně hlavěňku
načisto ut'ala.

8. /:Hlavěňku ut'ala, do vody hodila,:/
do vody, voděňky, co se kolem točí,
pro tebe, Pepičku,
že máš modré oči.