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**Academic Interpretations of Islam in Communist Czechoslovakia:  
Rudolf Macúch, Karel Petráček and Ivan Hrbek\***

**Abstract**

The research of religions in former Eastern Bloc countries is often presented in terms of a loss of contact with the Western academic tradition and ideological bias. This paper attempts to show however that the study of Islam in individual countries was not homogenous. Islamic Studies in communist Czechoslovakia (1948–1989), although to a significant degree limited by the ruling atheist ideology as reflected in Marxist-Leninist dogmatism, did not develop in isolation from Western scholarly debates. In fact, major works published in Slovak and Czech language by three respected Islamicists; Rudolf Macúch, Karel Petráček and Ivan Hrbek; show clearly that Czechoslovak scholarship on Islam was to a wide extent connected with Western concepts, including the issues of methodology and the Orientalist discourse.

Due to the bipolar division of the world until 1989 there has been in wider Europe only a superficial knowledge of the interpretations of Islam behind the Iron curtain, and the orthodox Marxist presentations, mainly by the Soviet authors, were considered ever present in Central Europe, too. This is, however, an incomplete and to a certain degree false view. As major academic works on Islam published in Czechoslovakia between 1948–1989 were, albeit for very specific reasons, without references to the classical Marxist-Leninist formulas and contained ideas elaborated within the Western intellectual debate, I suggest that despite numerous limitations there was a clear connection between the Czechoslovak and Western scholarship in the field.

As religious faith was supposed to be dying out anyway and the spirit of atheism taking its place under the communist rule, publishing activities concerning Islam have

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been traditionally sparse. Czechs and Slovaks interested in Islam were, however, happy in so far that they had the possibility to read publications from two specific periods. First, after the communist takeover in February 1948 some publishing houses, for instance Tranoscius in Slovakia, were still continuing their work for some time. And secondly, the freedom of press and *de facto* freedom of speech during the period of Prague Spring 1968 – and more generally in the second half of 1960's – permitted to publish numerous high-quality works. After the occupation of the country by the Warsaw Treaty armies severe censorship was gradually reinstalled.<sup>1</sup>

First and foremost, from my analysis it will be clear that unlike the late French Islamicist Maxime Rodinson I do not think that researchers in all communist countries, given the intellectual climate in Eastern Europe, “retreated into the scholarly areas of empirical and detailed works”, such as preparing dictionaries of high quality.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, the words of Bernard Lewis, the acclaimed doyen in the area of Islamic Studies, are of a great relevance here, namely that the work of ‘Marxist scholars’ shows often “far more respect for fellow Orientalists of other persuasions than for fellow Marxists with other conceptions of scholarship.”<sup>3</sup>

Generally speaking and viewed from the Czechoslovak perspective, it is useful to remind that Islamophobia – using the words of Czech Islamicist Miloš Mendel – “has not been cultivated in the country, not even from a position of scientific atheism.”<sup>4</sup> On the part of the communist one party-state one could observe a lack of interest in Muslim religion, last but not least because unlike the ruling structures in, let's say, the Soviet Union or Bulgaria, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia had no domestic Muslim communities to face.<sup>5</sup> Since Iranian revolution in 1979 Islam was considered by the Communist bloc even as an appropriate “anti-imperialist” tool in fighting the capitalist West, so that the ideological differences with Islam has been occasionally played down. Hence, it can be assumed, to use Maxime Rodinson's words again, that “[i]t is only by taking into consideration the situation in Eastern Europe that the advantages and the difficulties of freedom of expression can be understood. When confronted with the mass of more or less inept works appearing daily in the West, about the only solace one can find in it all is that... it does represent freedom of expression.”<sup>6</sup>

If questions were asked about the most outstanding post-war Czechoslovak Islamicists, Rudolf Macůch, Ivan Hrbek and Karel Petráček would be without hesitation the leading figures. Professor Rudolf Macůch (1919–1993), semitologist and linguist who left Czechoslovakia after the communist take-over, spent his whole academic life in Teheran, Oxford and West Berlin where he got intensely involved in the study of the

<sup>1</sup> In fact, the Prague Spring 1968 was primarily an attempt to impose ‘plurality of Marxisms’ and certain universalistic values at the expense of rigid and dogmatic Soviet-style Marxism-Leninism.

<sup>2</sup> M. Rodinson, *Europe and the Mystique of Islam*, London 1988, p. 110.

<sup>3</sup> B. Lewis, *Islam and the West*, OUP, Oxford 1993, p. 107.

<sup>4</sup> M. Mendel, B. Ostřanský, T. Rataj, *Islám v srdci Evropy*, Academia, Praha 2007, p. 137.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 137–138.

<sup>6</sup> Rodinson, op. cit., p. 110.

Mandaic language.<sup>7</sup> Ivan Hrbek (1923–1993) is associated among other things with the highly respected translation into Czech of the *Holy Qur'ān*, his contributions to the *Cambridge History of Africa* and the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* and his participation in the UNESCO program of the *General History of Africa*. Professor Karel Petrůček (1926–1987) was active primarily in the field of Arabic linguistics and literature, comparative Semitic studies, and classical as well as modern Islam. In this account I discuss especially their three major works: Macůch's *Islam a křesťanstvo* ("Islam and Christianity"), Petrůček's *Islám a obraty času* ("Islam and the Turn of Time") and the biography of *Muhammad* that was written together with Hrbek.

Although the work and thought of Hrbek and Petrůček does not belong to the category of rigid Marxist type of approach, it is certainly true that both of them have been obliged to certain degree to apply the 'double-think' approach in order to escape the limitations brought by the ruling ideology. To clarify what is the difference between both approaches I would like to put forward the following examples. Rigid Marxism applied in Oriental studies was exemplified among others by the Russian Academician S.P. Tolstov who saw Muhammad as a shamanistic myth, or Professor E.A. Belayev who described the *Qur'ān* as the ideological expression of a slave-owning ruling class. On the other side, 'double-think' approach means that one cannot break certain limits, for example, one could hardly criticize or enter into polemics with ruling materialist assumptions of Lenin, Marx or current Soviet Marxist theorists. Therefore, similarities between Western and Czechoslovak Islamic Studies should not be carried too far.

It is evident from what was said that my choice of authors neglects those who through the period of communist Czechoslovakia (1948–1989) contributed to Islamic studies with conventional works written within the framework of 'Marxist dogmatism' for ideological and political purposes. While I think that those works do not create the backbone of Islamic studies in Czechoslovakia between 1948–1989, this kind of discourse is not the focus of attention in this paper.

This contribution examines the works of three Islamicists in order to show that writing on Islam in communist Czechoslovakia, although sparse, did not occur in isolation from Western scholarly debates. In so doing this essay further suggests that Czechoslovak scholarship in the area of Islamic studies did openly and widely borrowed from Western concepts on issues of methodology. More concretely, the paper deals in detail with two issues as presented in the writings of the three authors: biography of the prophet Muhammad and issues confronting 20th century Islam. What's more, a critical assessment is offered of their overall perspective of both themes. Also, on the basis of examples taken from their writings, this contribution attempts to ask to what extent did these three Czechoslovak Islamicists escape the "errors of method" for which Orientalists generally have been attacked by the Palestinian-American theorist and cultural critic Edward Said

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<sup>7</sup> His *Kritik der monotheistischen Religionen: Religionsgeschichtliche und religionsphilosophische Betrachtungen zum christlich-islamischen Dialog* in three volumes was completed only in the 1990's, but remains still unpublished and unavailable.

and his followers, but also earlier by the left-wing Orientalist Anouar A b d e l - M a l e k and A.L. T i b a w i, whose objections to Orientalism were religious.

### Biography of the prophet Muhammad

Three Czechoslovak Orientalists have paid great attention in their writings on Islam to the biography of the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>8</sup> These biographies, it must be emphasized, are not phenomenological and therefore generally unacceptable for the Muslim reader, with spiritual aspects of Muhammad's life treated too briefly to be satisfactory whereas the authors concentrate on the political, social and military aspects of his life. But their underlying methodological concepts are indeed showing a great respect for fellow Orientalists. Besides Rodinson or Gruenebaum, very influential upon the ideas of Hrbek and Petráček was also William Montgomery Watt, the author of *Muhammad in Mecca* and *Muhammad in Medina*.<sup>9</sup>

Hrbek and Petráček based their theory on the assumption that according to the objective truth Muhammad was wrong when assuming that the revelation was not his creation but came directly from God.<sup>10</sup> Petráček's scholarly writings are equally the proof of the dynamics in the presentation of the Prophet Muhammad. Whereas in 1964 he thought that Muhammad was a psychopath, only three years later he considered this most unlikely.<sup>11</sup> Theories about Muhammad being a psychopath are more or less outdated now but thirty years ago even Maxime Rodinson went so far as suggesting that Muhammad could be mad when speaking about Muhammad's "nervous crisis of a definitely pathological kind." The main objection to these kind of arguments has been expressed by M. Benaboud when saying that to "apply psychoanalysis is difficult enough in the case of those who are alive, let alone those who are dead."<sup>12</sup> Also, neither of the three Islamicists to my knowledge was a trained psychologist. Indeed, observing the psychological aspects described by Islamicists Benaboud notes that "considering that the Prophet died... fourteen centuries ago, is it possible to apply psychoanalysis to him without abusing this method?"<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> I use the term Czechoslovak not only because I tried to find a common denominator for these three Islamicists, but also because I think that all of them would agree to be labeled that way. I certainly did not want to withhold their nationality: Czech in case of Hrbek and Petráček, and Slovak in case of Macůch.

<sup>9</sup> W. Montgomery Watt has been writing basically for the Western reader, but he also tried to minimize the contradictions between the Muslim and Western reader, so that his approach could be called ecumenical.

<sup>10</sup> I. Hrbek, K. Petráček, *Muhammad*, Orbis, Praha 1967, p. 39.

<sup>11</sup> Compare K. Petráček, *Z dějin literatur Asie a Afriky II. – Arabská literatura*, SPN, Praha 1964, p. 24 with Hrbek, Petráček, 1967, p. 88.

<sup>12</sup> M. Rodinson, *Mohammed*, London, Penguin Books, London 1977, p. 53, 78; and M. Benaboud, *Orientalism on the Revelation of the Prophet: The cases of W. Montgomery Watt, Maxime Rodinson and Duncan Black MacDonald*, "American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences" 1986, 3, p. 318.

<sup>13</sup> Benaboud, 1986, p. 318.

The mental state that Muhammad experienced during his revelations is compared to the ecstasy of mystics by Hrbek and Petráček, while quoting from H. Grabert.<sup>14</sup> Much of the problem of Hrbek and Petráček lies, however, in the fact that like many of the Islamicists of the time they “have tried to explain a purely spiritual experience in purely materialistic terms” and so chose “to rationalize the Prophet’s claim to have received Revelation, without believing it to have been true.”<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, it is true, they did not think that Muhammad was a charlatan because he honestly differentiated his ideas from the ideas of God. Occasionally Hrbek, a Czech Muslim convert, even criticized European Orientalists for having misgivings about Muhammad’s claims to be chosen in order to spread the Revelation.<sup>16</sup>

As far as Macúch is concerned, he refers to great extent to Western scholarship, authors such as Monteil, Hirschfeld, Goldziher or Brockelmann appear in this respect, and his overall standpoint is close to the attitudes of Samuel M. Zwemmer, a missionary of the American Reformed Church who in 1911 established “The Muslim World”, famous scientific journal. Like Zwemmer, Macúch admitted Muhammad’s genius, but he found the prophet of Islam to be an opportunist. And again, like Duncan B. Macdonald, Macúch argued similarly about the moral decline of the life and conduct of Muhammad, especially after Muhammad’s journey from Mecca to Medina (*hiğra*). His observations end with lamentation that Muhammad did not reach a Father – Son relationship with God as Jesus did.<sup>17</sup>

Hrbek and Petráček have criticized Christian and Western polemics for reproaching Muhammad for his “immorality and sensuality.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, what is for Macúch passion and polygamy, for Hrbek and Petráček is a proof of Muhammad’s masculinity. The latter two interpreted Muhammad’s marriages in terms of political contracts and charity.<sup>19</sup> All three authors noted nevertheless that it would be mistaken to denounce Muhammad from our present point of view because the Prophet lived in a completely different environment where polygamy was perceived as acceptable according to old customs. Nonetheless, to tell the truth, argues Macúch, Jews and Christians could not but ridicule the Prophet “who constantly received revelations in order to marry another woman.”<sup>20</sup>

When Macúch analyzes the similarities between Islam and Christianity, he asserts that the political history of Islam is analogous with the attempt of the Catholic Church

<sup>14</sup> See Hrbek, Petráček, 1967, p. 88; and I. Hrbek, *Korán*, Odeon, Praha 1972, pp. 94–95.

<sup>15</sup> Benaboud, 1986, p. 313.

<sup>16</sup> Hrbek, 1972, p. 44. It is noteworthy that in his translation of the *Qur’ān* Hrbek did not accept the canonical order of suras according to Uṡmān’s recension. He rather followed the chronologies proposed by Nöldcke, Schwally and Blachère and produced a chronological arrangement showing dynamic features of the revelation in progress. The extensive commentary of individual verses makes this translation very gripping and detailed.

<sup>17</sup> R. Macúch, *Islam a kresťanstvo. Historické a kultúrno-náboženské štúdie o islame*, Tranoscius, Liptovský Sv. Mikuláš 1951, p. 105.

<sup>18</sup> Hrbek, Petráček, 1967, p. 84.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Macúch, 1951, p. 19.

to attain worldly power, because both Roman Catholicism and Islam tried to organize worldly affairs on religious base.<sup>21</sup> The absence of originality in Islam is demonstrated by the example of Sufism. According to Macúch, Sufism emerged under the influence of hermitic Roman Catholic and Orthodox movements.<sup>22</sup>

### Issues Confronting Twentieth Century Islam

The second area where Czechoslovak Islamicists widely borrowed from Western methodological concepts is connected with twentieth century Islam. In the second half of the 1960's the *Zeitgeist* was still with the world leftist movements in Czechoslovakia, and so, methodological questions were approached mainly from the leftist angle. The underlying concept of Petráček when treating contemporary Islam is explicitly that of French leftist sociologist Anouar Abdel-Malek and Moroccan sociologist Abdallah Laroui. On the whole then, Petráček divided modern Arab thinking into *Islamic fundamentalism* and *liberal modernism* as two contrasting currents.<sup>23</sup> Islamic fundamentalism for him represents a return to the sources of Islamic faith for which "the future is a mirror image of the past."<sup>24</sup> Unlike today, when Islamic fundamentalism is identified mainly with political activism, totalitarianism, exclusivism and anti-Westernism, Petráček, who adopted the liberal Marxist perspective of Abdel-Malek, labeled all non-secular Muslim thinkers as being fundamentalists.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, liberal modernists are those who took their cue from the ideas of European renaissance and who underline the spirit of science, philosophical rationalism and political liberalism.<sup>26</sup> "For them the future works", argues Petráček, because fundamentalism, which is in this case equal with Islamic faith, is a false portrait of the problems of our world. Liberal modernists perceive Islam as a cultural phenomenon which is assigned if not subordinated to nationalism, argued Petráček.<sup>27</sup> Altogether, Petráček believed that Islam was facing a crisis which would not result in a reformulation but lead to an end.

In many ways the question of democracy and freedom in Islam is developed by Petráček along the fundamentalist – liberalist dichotomy. At the heart of the fundamentalist interpretation of freedom is a mere reinterpretation of those passages

<sup>21</sup> Macúch, 1951, p. 106.

<sup>22</sup> Macúch, 1951, p. 108.

<sup>23</sup> K. Petráček, *Islám a obraty času*, Praha 1969, p. 17.

<sup>24</sup> Petráček, 1969, p. 28.

<sup>25</sup> Petráček, 1969, pp. 20–21. According to him not only the Wahhabis or Muslim Brothers, but also 'Alī 'Abd ar-Rāziq, Ġamāl ad-Dīn al-Afġānī and Muḥammad 'Abduh were fundamentalists. The whole concept is deduced from Abdel-Malek's scholarship, who discussed the issue in terms of conflict between rightest reactionary dogmas and leftist progressive ideology. See also Donald P. Little, (1979) *Three Arab Critiques of Orientalism*, "The Muslim World", 69/2, p. 115.

<sup>26</sup> Petráček, 1969, p. 21. Nowhere in his writings can we find the traditional Marxist argument that liberalism is inherently defective because of its market morality and 'subverted values', such as liberty.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

in the *Qur'ān* which are detrimental to man's freedom.<sup>28</sup> Islam itself, which is unable to develop, personifies the factors that inhibit democracy, observes Petráček.<sup>29</sup> He suggested furthermore, that the liberal modernists have coped more easily with democracy and freedom because they identified the lack of freedom mostly with the despotism of previous centuries, including the impact of Islam.<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, they are in harmony with the logic of modern society. As soon as the Arabs will stride out towards industrial society, they "will retreat from the ideals defended by Islam."<sup>31</sup>

Simplifying a little bit, it can be said that Rudolf Macůch generally did not see a radiant future for religion as such in 1951.<sup>32</sup> With this view, he suggested, the outlook for the unity of the Muslim world is bleak. Although religious tradition was still influential, the idea of the caliphate had died out for good, he added.

Macůch's attitude towards modern intellectual trends in Muslim thinking is observable through his perceptions of *Qur'ānic* exegesis (*tafsīr*). For example, he ridicules the modernist approach in *Qur'ānic* exegesis because, as he sees it, it is apologetic and tries to prove that Islam is progressive. In contrast, he observes with admiration that classical medieval exegesis aspired to clarify the text of the *Qur'ān* "in its true and original meaning."<sup>33</sup>

### Critique of Orientalism

In sum, it can be argued that in spite of rich orientalist tradition, the debate on Orientalism has never really reached Czech and Slovak academic circles as well as the public.<sup>34</sup> It is noteworthy that Islamicists of both countries did not try to apply the critique of Orientalism to their local scholarship on Islam so far.<sup>35</sup> More than an intention to criticize then, the following lines should be understood as an attempt to look at this method in terms of 'national' Orientalism.

Said's radical social criticism, although by now partly outdated, represented an attempt to demonstrate how power and knowledge are intertwined. It was Edward Said who shifted the study of colonialism and Islam towards its discursive operations, pointing at the intimate connection between language and forms of knowledge developed for the

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 1969, p. 103.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 1969, p. 44.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 1969, pp. 189–190.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 1969, p. 27.

<sup>32</sup> Macůch, 1951, p. 45.

<sup>33</sup> Macůch, 1951, p. 53.

<sup>34</sup> The translation of Said's *Orientalism* into Czech has been finally published only in 2008, thirty years after its English version, under the title *Orientalismus*, although *Orientalistika* would be probably more appropriate translation. See E.W. Said, *Orientalismus*, Paseka, Praha 2008.

<sup>35</sup> See Mendel, Ostránský, Rataj, op. cit., p. 248, also pp. 71–91.

study of cultures and the history of colonialism and imperialism.<sup>36</sup> The fact that our three authors have given only limited space to theological issues could be criticised as pure Orientalism, those issues however, are sometimes given marginal space also in the works of various modern *mufasssirs* (exegets).<sup>37</sup> If Saïd's critique is reduced to a challenge over the neutrality of science then, of course, all three authors are reproachable.

What follows are some cases taken from the works of three Czechoslovak Orientalists that illustrate the "errors" for which Islamicists were generally attacked by the critics of Orientalism:

1. Petr áček explicitly thought that philological training enables one to solve many problems concerning Islam. And so, for example, he tries to explain Houari Boumedién's – former Algerian President – attitude towards Islam by examining his name. Originally called Bū Kharrūba, Boumedien changed his name to give respect to famous Algerian 18<sup>th</sup> century marabout Sīdī Abū Madyān. Furthermore, Houari, meaning volunteer, is a French form of the Arabic Hawwārī. Therefore, argues Petr áček, Boumedien's attitude to Islam will certainly not be more tense than the attitude of his predecessor, Ahmed Ben Bella.<sup>38</sup> This reasoning could be called linguistic reductionism in the works of Czechoslovak Orientalists and Arabists.

2. On the one hand Petr áček admits that Islam may be less fatalist than Christianity and Judaism, but on the other hand, in much of his work of the same period he cumulatively insists that Muslims are guided and limited by the fatalism of Islam.<sup>39</sup>

3. All three authors stressed many times the dependency of Islam on Christianity and Judaism, but they hardly ever mentioned the eclecticism of the Judeo-Christian tradition. There is rarely any reference to how much came to the Old Testament from Assyrian and Babylonian mythology or how far Neoplatonism and paganism influenced Christianity. The negativist method used by all of them is often the one comparing Christianity and Judaism with Islam to later's disadvantage.

4. Likewise, Petr áček's and Hrbek's argument that the Arabs did not conquer new territories in order to spread the faith of the Prophet but in order to enlarge the area under Muslim hegemony is highly disputable and contests the missionary character of Islam as well as its attempt to reform the world.<sup>40</sup> As A.L. Tibawi remarked, "in all this 'distortion' little effort is made at least to state the traditional view in full, side by side with every aspect of the 'innovation'."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> R. Young, *Colonial Desire*, Routledge, London 1995, p. 159. Although critiques of Orientalism date back to the 1960's. The most important pioneer of critique of Orientalism was the left-wing scholar of Egyptian origin Anouar Abdel-Malek, he himself an Orientalist. See A. Abdel-Malek, *Orientalism in Crises*, "Diogenes" 1959, 44, pp. 103–140. See also Little, op. cit., pp. 110–131.

<sup>37</sup> K. Zebiri, *Mahmud Shaltut and Islamic Modernism*, OUP, Oxford 1993, p. 166.

<sup>38</sup> Petr áček, 1969, p. 16.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 81; Hrbek, Petr áček, op. cit., p. 100.

<sup>40</sup> Hrbek, Petr áček, op. cit., p. 110.

<sup>41</sup> A.L. Tibawi, *Second Critique of English-speaking Orientalists*, "Islamic Quarterly" 1979, 23/1, pp. 3–54, p. 5.

5. Macůch's refutation of Islam is expressed in religious terms whereas Hrbek and Petrůček refute Islam within the secular framework and they are more ambivalent towards the interrelationship of major monotheistic religions. Macůch judged Islam by the standards of his own Protestant tradition, more exactly by its liberal theology, and so Baháism and Babism were the right reforms how to bring the principle of love into Islam. Consequently, he highlighted aspects of Babism that are missing from his own account on Islam, such as that Babism, like the apostle Paul, interprets religious law according to the spirit of religious law and not according to its letter.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, Macůch's quotations of Martin Luther are not only frequent but also shape his understanding of Islam. Overall, he was undoubtedly convinced that Christians possess the truth and are preordained to save the world.

### Conclusion

The very important change that was happening in the West in recent decades was more conciliatory writing about Muhammad no matter whether the author departed from Marxist standing (Rodinson), Protestant standing (Montgomery Watt), Catholic (Guillaume) or Liberal one (Gaudefroy-Demombynes). It is noticeable that much recent analysis has moved out of the disputed territory into far more universal problems. Since neither the absolute objectivity nor the ability to wholly identify oneself with the Muslim view is possible in the case of 'infidels', personal opinions and anxieties of the writers shaped their view of the character of the Prophet Muhammad.

Having said this, it does not mean that the three Czechoslovak Islamicists' contribution to the study of Islam in Czechoslovakia was invalid, in fact, the contrary is the truth. Therefore, I freely reproach myself for being frustratingly brief when speaking about positive sides of their writings. The Czechoslovak Islamology generally speaking has not been lagging behind in comparison with Western Orientalists. In simple terms, the work of Ivan Hrbek is instrumental in this respect. In the UNESCO *General History of Africa* Hrbek tried to present Islam as it is for the Muslims themselves and generally abandoned the approach of a foreign observer.<sup>43</sup> Altogether, in this work Hrbek not only refers to Western scholarship but also becomes in certain sense a part of it. Also, we should bear in mind that it would be unfair to expect Macůch in 1951 or Hrbek and Petrůček in the 1960's to live up to the present standards.

Similarly to the Orientalists in the West, Islamicists in Czechoslovakia had serious worries about the abilities of Muslims to introduce democratic principles, which is, of course, somehow ironic after decades of authoritarianism under communist rule in Central and Eastern Europe. The value of their writings and the principal contribution lies in the fact that all of them tried to familiarize the Czechoslovak public with the history

<sup>42</sup> Macůch, 1951, p. 93.

<sup>43</sup> I. Hrbek, M. al-Fasi, *The coming of Islam and the Expansion of the Muslim Empire*, in: M. al-Fasi, I. Hrbek (eds.), *General History of Africa*, Vol. III, UNESCO, London 1988.

of Islam and consequently treated problems in their complexity. The most significant developments were probably the transition from hypercritical and intransigent approach of Rudolf Macůch through critical approach of Hrbek and Petrůček towards new emphasis on indigenous discourses in later works of Ivan Hrbek.

In as much as Petrůček and Hrbek are concerned, their stands are much more sincere than those of the majority of rigid Marxist writings in Czechoslovakia aiming at research of the class struggle or revolutionary democratic tendencies in Muslim countries with socialist orientation. While Hrbek and Petrůček were in their writings on Islam motivated rather by social, economic and political factors, Macůch's motivations were theological as well.