

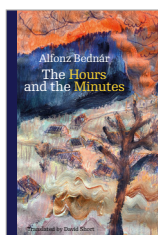
## MODERN SLOVAK CLASSICS



paperback, 220 pp.,  
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### THE LAST THING Leopold Lahola

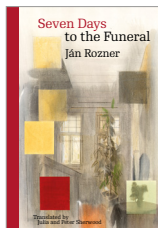
Slovak Jewish writer Leopold Lahola escaped deportation to a concentration camp and fought in the resistance only to find himself forced into exile by the postwar communist regime. He was able to return to his homeland in 1968, when his short story collection *The Last Thing* appeared in Slovakia. The collection's title proved sadly prophetic, with the author suffering a fatal heart attack in January 1968, just before his 50th birthday. The nine stories which make up *The Last Thing* range from the prewar rise of fascism and its dangers for the Jewish community through the concentration camps and the partisan fight against the Germans, concluding with a devastating summation of all that had been lost and destroyed in the war. Lahola writes masterfully outside of conventional tropes, exploring moral ambivalences where others work comfortably within the simple opposition of good versus evil. Lahola's World War II stories offer not only a compelling read but starkly new perspectives on the tragedy and grandeur of that momentous time in history.



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### THE HOURS AND THE MINUTES Alfonz Bednár

*The Hours and the Minutes* was first published in Bratislava in 1956, the year of Nikita Khrushchev's "secret speech," in which the Soviet leader formally acknowledged Stalin's tyranny and opened the way to destalinization in culture and society throughout the Eastern Bloc. Bednár's writing was one of the first free of nationalist and communist propaganda, rejecting earlier ideologization of life by both the Fascist right and Stalinist left in their didactic, schematic literature, and finding more empathetic ways to explore human fallibility and the complexity of human experience. His novels from the Slovak National Uprising during WWII and communist 1950's defy traditional heroic depiction, instead showing suffering, fear, hatred, cruelty and betrayal, thus portraying the human individual, his relations and morality as the subject of history instead of a utopian collectivist ideology. But in the end, it is his spare, lyrical style and devotion to plot and dynamic narration which render *The Hours and the Minutes* a genuine modern Slovak classic and gripping read.



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## SEVEN DAYS TO THE FUNERAL

### Ján Rozner

*Seven Days to the Funeral* is the fictionalised memoir of Ján Rozner, a leading Slovak journalist, critic, dramatist, and translator. Rozner and his wife Zora Jesenská were champions of the Prague Spring and were black-listed after the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. When Jesenská died in 1972, her funeral became a political event and attendees faced recriminations. A painstaking account of the week after his wife's death, *Seven Days to the Funeral* is a historical record of the devastating impact of the period after the invasion. Rozner wrote with brutal honesty not only about himself, his emotions and past experience but about key figures in Slovak culture, providing a fascinating cultural history of Slovakia from 1945 to 1972. It is also a moving love story of an unlikely couple. When this compelling work of autofiction was posthumously published in 2009, it catapulted the author, who had died in exile and been almost forgotten in Slovakia, to posthumous literary fame.



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## BUT CRIME DOES PUNISH

### Ján Johanides

In Ján Johanides' riveting Slovak novel, you (the reader) are thrust *in medias res*, assuming the role of a silent partner in a one-sided conversation with someone you know nothing about. As the pages turn, you must grasp onto significant details to piece together who you are, who the narrator is, and why you have sought him out. As the story unfolds you come to learn that the old archivist, who can't seem to stay on point, has both a tragic history and the keys to unlocking your family's darkest secret. A secret that may or may not involve the Czechoslovak secret police, American and Soviet intelligence, Israeli politics, and a tire full of 90,000 dollars. Set after the fall of Communism and the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, casual paranoia permeates the novel as it reveals how the madness of the Communist era has led to the instability of the present. Written in 1995, this haunting novel that evokes the spirit of John Le Carré and the style of Carlos Fuentes shines a spotlight on issues that plague post-Communist Europe today.

