FORUM HISTORIAE Journal and Portal for History and Related Disciplines
ISSN 1337-6861

Forum Historiae, 2022, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 1–8

www.forumhistoriae.sk

Intellectuals and the "National Question" in Post-1918 Central and Eastern Europe (An Introduction)

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Keywords
nation, nationalism, intellectuals, intellectual history, nationalist discourse

DOI
10.31577/forhist.2022.16.1.1

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Cite
BUZÁSSYOVÁ, Barbora – VÖRÖS, László. Intellectuals and the "National Question" in Post-1918 Central and Eastern Europe (An Introduction). In *Forum Historiae*, 2022, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 1–8, doi: 10.31577/forhist.2022.16.1.1

Abstract

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This article provides introduction and context for the papers published in the current issue. Seven case studies examine the conceptions of "nation," national existence, national history and national art in the writings of influential intellectuals active in a variety of fields—historians, literary critics, artists and art critics, and a philosopher—in Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and their successor states throughout the 20th century. Individual cases are analysed within the context of period nationalist discourse and policies of nation-building with special attention devoted to various aspects of the intellectuals' strategies in adapting concepts and theories from foreign sources and appropriating them to domestic national(ist) ideological contexts and doctrinal needs via assimilation, bending existing doctrines or deconstruction. The articles presented here provide readers an opportunity to learn about the intellectual's relationship to the ruling powers, and about their efforts to legitimise or delegitimise regimes, national ideologies and policies, construction of narratives about nation-states' deeply historical origins and the nature of national art and literature.

The rise of ethno-centric nationalism in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe[1] sparked another intense debate on the role of national imagination in the legitimization of sovereign states and the appropriation of a subjectively felt right to self-rule. An underlying tension began to grow between the nationalists, which saw many prominent intellectuals arguing for the long-term essentialist, inherently ethnic and cultural-linguistic view of "their" nations, and social scientists who, drawing on methodological innovations from mostly western sources, reconceptualized the "nation" as a socially constructed community. Within the regions of Central and Eastern Europe, the debate unfolded in different forms and with differing intensity, producing a range of political and public outcomes. In some countries, such as Slovakia, this debate did not develop properly at all and all cautious attempts to draw attention to constructivist approaches to the study of nationalisms were marginalized or openly ignored. However, in other countries, methodological nationalism still represented a dominant interpretative framework through which "the past" was approached and understood. Given this almost incontestable position of a national imagination in social and political practices of the region, an examination of the intellectual roots of this state of affairs must be sought.

1 CORDELL, Karl – JAJECZNIK, Konrad (eds.) *The Transformation of Nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe. Ideas and Structures.* Warsaw : University of Warsaw, Faculty of Journalism and Political Science, 2015.

Throughout the larger part of the 20th century, the "nation" in Central and Eastern Europe functioned primarily as a fundamental political and cultural category that was understood by most as referring to a substantial reality of deeply historical and natural collective social entities. Historians and scholars had asked questions regarding the ontological and epistemic status of a "nation" only to a limited extent—questions concerning the mode of existence and knowability of "nations" had had appeared marginally and almost exclusively within the context of controversies concerning different notions of the national existence, national culture and language, and national territory.

Particularly in the case of the two polyethnic states on which the authors of this issue have focused, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia (and their successor states), the debates were framed in terms of the genuineness or artificiality of nations, or those concepts of "nation". This was primarily a (de)legitimating discourse, not a critical analysis of the nature of the existence of "nations". Any assumed distinction between the "real," "original" and "historical" Slovak or Croatian, Slovenian etc. nations on the one hand, and the "artificial," "constructed," "ahistorical" Czechoslovak and Yugoslav nations on the other framed, to a significant extent, the underlying theoretical ontological and epistemological points of departure in the debates. [2]

Participants in the debates on both sides sought to "primordialise" and profoundly historicise "their" nations. However, on the side of the "Czechoslovakist" and "Yugoslavist" authors, these attempts were hardly convincing and failed to effectively counter the basic political argument by the representatives of particularist nationalisms, according to whom the notions of Czechoslovak and Yugoslav nations were in fact "proxy concepts" of Czech and Serbian "national imperialisms." Despite the particularistic nationalisms gaining dominant ground after the Second World War, the statist concepts of the Czechoslovak and Yugoslav nations did not disappear altogether and discussions on the authenticity and deep historicity of the "real nations" and "artificiality" of the constructed notions of composite "state nations" came to a definitive end with the demise of state socialism in both federations, only to be replaced with an intensification—rather than resurgence, as is often suggested—of nationalist motives in the national histories in the early 1990s, now removed of Marxist jargon and terminology.

2 For more details on both cases see: HUDEK, Adam – KOPEČEK, Michal – MERVART, Jan (eds.) *Czechoslovakism*. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York : Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2022; BAKKE, Elisabeth. Czechoslovakism in Slovak history. In TEICH, Mikuláš – KOVÁČ, Dušan – BROWN, Martin D. (eds.) *Slovakia in History*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 247–268; LASS, Andrew. "What are we like?" National Character and the Aesthetics of Distinction in Interwar Czechoslovakia. In BANAC, Ivo – VERDERY, Katherine (eds.) *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe*. New Haven : Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1995, pp. 39–64; DJOKIĆ, Dejan (ed.) *Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed Idea, 1918–1992*. London : Hurst & Co., 2003; DJOKIĆ, Dejan – KER-LINDSAY, James (eds.) *New Perspectives on Yugoslavia: Key Issues and Controversies*. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York : Routledge, 2010; BELLAMY, Alex J. *The Formation of Croatian National Identity: A Centuries-Old Dream?* Manchester : Manchester University Press, 2003; BANAC, Ivo. Historiography of the Countries of Eastern Europe: Yugoslavia. In *The American Historical Review*, 1992, vol. 97, no. 4, pp. 1084–1104.

In the recent scholarship on nationalism, there is a broad agreement that the perceived reality of "nations" is an outcome of social practices, institutionalised education and indoctrination, symbolic representation (both material and discursive) and cultural production.[3] The role of intellectuals—and particularly historians and scholars from other disciplines of humanities—in the production, reproduction and corroboration of ideas, theories and narratives that have made "nations" appear to be substantially real, tangible entities have been instrumental in the past one or two centuries.[4] Though at the phenomenal level, the transfer, translation or rendering of ideas from a narrow scholarly and professional discussions to the various public discourses that inform social practices is an immensely complex, multifaceted and multifactorial process, the importance of intellectuals in their role as "guarantees of truth" in modern societies should not be overlooked.

In recent years, quite a heated debate has occurred among academics on the status and continual relevance of intellectual history as a distinct field of inquiry, a discipline contested over the last half-century. First, it was considered consumed by other, more fashionable approaches, namely cultural and social history. Then after the linguistic turn, it was suddenly returned to the spotlight with an unheard-of enthusiasm as, according to its most ardent proponents, everything could now be read as "text."[5] For the purposes of this volume, the broadest definition of intellectual history will be embraced, which can be summarized as "the study of intellectuals, ideas and intellectual patterns over time."[6] From the wide range of approaches available to be attached to the realm of intellectual history, inspiration will be drawn mainly from the methods of linguistic contextualism (Q. Skinner) and perspectives

3 For reference, a selection of the most influential works the social constructivist arguments on "nation-building" are based upon: GELLNER, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 1983; HOBSBAWM, Eric – RANGER, Terence (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge; New York : Cambridge University Press, 1983; ANDERSON, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London; New York : Verso, 1991; BILLIG, Michael. *Banal Nationalism*. London; Thousand Oaks : Sage, 1995; SKEY, Michael – ANTONSICH, Marco (eds.) *Everyday Nationhood: Theorising Culture, Identity and Belonging after Banal Nationalism*. London : Palgrave Macmillan, 2017; BRUBAKER, Rogers. *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. Cambridge; New York : Cambridge University Press, 1996; BRUBAKER, Rogers. *Ethnicity Without Groups*. Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 2004.

4 Cf. BAÁR, Monika. *Historians and Nationalism East-Central Europe in the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2010; DELETANT, Dennis – HANAK, Harry (eds.) *Historians as Nation-Builders Central and South-East Europe*. Houndmills; Basingstoke; Hampshire : Macmillan Press, 1988; BERGER, Stefan – LORENZ, Chris (eds.) *Nationalizing the Past: Historians as Nation Builders in Modern Europe*. New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2010; BERGER, Stefan – DONOVAN, Mark – PASSMORE, Kevin (eds.) *Writing National Histories: Western Europe Since 1800*. London; New York : Routledge, 1999.

5 For a brief overview, see MÜLLER. Jan-Werner. European Intellectual History as Contemporary History. In *The Journal of Contemporary History*, 2011, vol. 46, no. 3, p. 574–590. For more on the subject, see McMAHON, Darrin, M. – MOYN, Samuel. Introduction: Interim Intellectual History. In McMAHON, Darrin, M. – MOYN, Samuel (eds.) *Rethinking Modern Intellectual History.* Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 3–12; COLLINI, Stefan. The Identity of Intellectual History. In WHATMORE, Richard – YOUNG, Brian (eds.) *Companion to Intellectual History*. Oxford : Willey Blackwell, 2015, p. 7–18.

6 GORDON, Peter, E. What is Intellectual History? A Frankly Partisan Introduction to a Frequently Misunderstood Field. Unpublished essay, The Harvard Colloquium for Intellectual History, 2012. Available at https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/files/history/files/what_is_intell_history_pgordon_mar2012.pdf.

of cultural history, also with respect to the cultural efficacy of the ideas dispersed by intellectuals.[7]

Instead of gathering evidence on the spread and role of nationalist discourse in Central and Eastern European political practice, it is thus aimed to address the human agency behind the seemingly a priori existing national symbolism and imagining. The authors in this issue explore what Mark Beissinger calls the "quiet politics of nationalism,"[8] in which intellectuals play an indispensable role as consolidators of national ideologies and cultures. As demonstrated in these pages, their agency was crucial in shaping the national consciousness, in the propagation of values they projected as characteristic for the particular "nation," in disciplining the people internalizing these envisioned values and in describing the boundaries of who could and could not be considered part of a community. The studies presented here thus testify to the continual relevance of intellectual history as a lens through which contemporary European history can be studied and understood.

In the present issue, we look at the intellectual history of nationalistic thinking in Eastern and Central Europe after the First World War. This framework, from which the period of inward-looking romantic nationalisms of the 19th century was deliberately omitted, allows for a focus on different phases of the debate on "nation" and "state," which sought to simultaneously identify elements of "national" and "universal," and make sense of the relationship between them. The "national question" is understood to convey primarily the patterns of thinking about and working with the idea of "nation" developed by intellectual groups in diverse political contexts over time, stretching from the interwar period until the 1990s. Given this chronological and thematic scope, the focus is centred on those intellectual groups who proved to be instrumental in defining the social knowledge which is constituted part and parcel of nationalist discourses.

The current research sample includes predominantly historians, journalists, literary critics, artists and art critics, and a philosopher. By this approach, it is hoped to broaden the understanding of nationalism particularly in two dimensions—to examine the particular individual agency in the creation, legitimization, dissemination and preservation of national culture (national values); and to point out the diversity and scope of intellectual work involved in the production and invention of a national tradition. Such a perspective also enables to address a broader question of "cultural politics" behind particular nationalist discourses. As Katherine Verdery argued in her seminal work on national ideology under socialism: "Intellectuals engage in contests over different definitions of cultural value, competence and authority; they strive to impose their definitions of value and to gain recognition for their version

7 SKINNER, Quentin. *Visions of Politics. Vol. 1. Regarding Method*. Cambridge; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2002.

8 Particularly in regimes that officially proclaimed to be anti-nationalist, helped to define symbolic repertoires in which states and peoples might operate. See BEISSINGER, Mark, R. *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State*. Cambridge, UK; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 26.

of social reality."[9] The centrality of intellectuals in the process of nationalization of societies was emphasized by anthropologists Dominic Boyer and Claudio Lomnitz, who challenged the exclusively epistemological readings of nationalism and proposed a more phenomenological approach in which the schemes of national knowledge are linked with concrete aspirations and the social imagination of intellectuals themselves.[10]

The cases assembled in this volume provide an opportunity to reflect on what qualities were thought to constitute a "nation" in the minds of intellectuals within different political climates, on the aspiring visions of "national peculiarity" and regional variants of thinking about "national character." The answers to these questions could contribute to our understanding of the establishment and maintenance of communitarian relations based on social practices informed by nationalist history and culture narratives. By adopting this perspective, novel ways of understanding the contemporary history of Central and Eastern Europe are introduced and attention is brought to the shared as well as diverging patterns of operating and reframing the notion of "nation" in intellectual thought in this region.

By centring the analysis on "intellectuals," there is a conceptual difficulty to define such a group as an analytic category. Any attempt to make sense of the intellectual's work in a given period of time must start with the recognition that all knowledge developed during the process is the product of a "situated, motivated and gendered intellectual whose writing reflects a specific time, place and position in intellectual culture."[11] To reconcile the tension between "intellectuals" as an analytic category and as a category of social distinction, we draw on the observations of Boyer and Lomnitz, who proposed to perceive intellectuals as social actors who have "a differentially specialized engagement with forms of knowledge and their social extensions," rather than as carriers of a fixed set of attributes and characteristics.[12]

In what follows, nationalism mostly takes the form of an "imaginary universe,"[13] to borrow a phrase from Harry Harootunian, rather an aspiration of a group or individual than a materialized reality. However, the studies here demonstrate extensive patterns of reproduction of the "national idea" in a variety of political and social contexts.

Matej Harvát analyses the evolution of the discursive construction of the rulership of the medieval historical figure Pribina. Representations of Pribina as an alleged sovereign prince of the 9th century Nitra principality were produced and reproduced throughout the 20th century by generations of Slovak nationalist intellectuals, historians and archaeologists to legitimise the right

9 VERDERY, Katherine. *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania*. Berkeley : University of California Press, 1991, p. 18.
10 BOYER, Dominic – LOMNITZ, Claudio. Intellectuals and Nationalism: Anthropological Engagements. In *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 2005, vol. 34, p. 113.
11 BOYER – LOMNITZ 2005, p. 106.
12 BOYER – LOMNITZ 2005, p. 107.
13 HAROOTUNIAN, Harry, D. Commentary on Nationalism in Japan: Nationalism as Intellectual History. In *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 1971, vol. 31, no. 1, p. 59.

to independent Slovak statehood. Harvát studies the process of appropriation of this enigmatic historical figure portrayed as the "first ruler" of ethnic ancestors of contemporary Slovaks to serve current political needs. This case demonstrates the intellectuals' indispensable role in the dissemination of the official "state-building" narrative, by supporting it with supposed historical evidence—despite misinterpreting available sources—as well as credibility to win over the masses for the desired political project.

Silvia Seneši Lutherová investigates the construction of Slovak "national specificity" in modern applied art in the works of two proponents of artistic modernization reform, Josef Vydra and Antonín Hořejš. She explores their attempts to reframe the traditional conception of Slovak "national art" as strictly "folk" against the background of artistic innovation from abroad. Their endeavours could thus be viewed as an attempt to "modernize" the attributes of Slovak national culture to be more in tune with the latest international developments, which in their eyes, would help to culturally accredit the Slovak "nation." Interestingly, in the late 1920s, Vydra embraced the official Czechoslovakist discourse—abandoning his prior thinking focused on Slovak nation specifically—in order to, as Lutherová argues, gain political support to his own project of aesthetic reform (anti-folklorism). This case exemplifies the intellectuals' pragmatic relationship to power, able to switch sides to pursue and enforce their own visions.

Viliam Nádaskay explores the concepts of "Slovakness" in the works of three literary critics, each of whom is considered a proponent of a different stream of contemporary ideology – nationalist/autonomist (Stanislav Mečiar), Czechoslovakist (Andrej Kostolný) and communist (Michal Chorváth). Situating them in the midst of a Slovak battle with Czechs over the right to self-rule, he illustrates how their thinking on the Slovak "nation" shaped the symbolic language and themes of literary culture that would come to be characterized as typically Slovak and reveals a self-perceived duty to use their work to discipline recipients in national awareness, make them internalize the proper values and in effect, to legitimize the political right to national self-determination. Interestingly, what differed in the three conceptions was not as much whether to advocate or oppose the right to self-determination, but in their attitudes to "wordlines." That is, whether the national literature should speak exclusively to the Slovak people, carrying a rather national-educational function (Mečiar), or should it also possess some universal validity and thus be able to communicate to a broader international audience (Kostolný). For some, this would earn Slovak literature international recognition and legitimize it as a sovereign form of national literature.

Michaela Lenčéšová explores the shifting conceptions of the "nation" in the works of Slovak Catholic philosopher Štefan Polakovič during the wartime Slovak republic (1939–1945). She analyses Polakovič's inspiration from the German national-socialist concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* which he adapted to the local context, particularly in terms of its reconciliation with the official

Catholic critique of racism and chauvinism as expressed in the encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* issued by Pope Pius XI in 1937. Lenčéšová demonstrates the effort to enroot particularly the cult of Cyril and Methodius and the theory of the Svätoplukian crown into the broader national consciousness in order to manifest the ancient Christian origin of the Slovak state as well as to compensate for the otherwise missing tradition of Slovak statehood. Interestingly, Lenčéšová interprets Polakovič's historical constructions and flirtations with a notion of *Volksgemeinschaft* in purely pragmatic terms, against Hungarian nationalism and territorial ambitions, to enforce the revision of the Vienna Award which he saw as a violation of the—God-given—natural right of the Slovak nation to its national territory. This was also the reason why he later embraced the concept of "Slovak living space" and even predicted that deportations of Magyars would follow after Jews and Czechs. The study shows one of the ways Catholic intellectuals strived to come to terms with large geopolitical changes and take new positions in the changing world.

Lucija Balikić explores how the "national question" operated in the imagination of two camps of post-war Croatian historians; one group more receptive to the methodological inspiration from abroad, particularly the Annales School, and another who harboured more positivistic and teleological approaches, whether Marxist or nationalistic. Still, both groups were mainly preoccupied with the themes of Yugoslav and Croatian national movements. A focus is placed particularly on the work of Mirjana Gross who, although advocating for a more constructivist approach towards the study of Croatian nationalism and the ideology of Yugoslavism, left yet a rather contradictory legacy of giving ammunition to the nationalist-oriented narratives that gained momentum in Croatia during the 1990s. Particularly, it was her work on a 19th century Croatian writer and politician, Ante Starčević, which was misused by Croatian politicians, refashioning Starčević to a position of "Father of the Homeland." This example demonstrates how intellectual work sometimes took unpredictable trajectories and new meanings once it landed in public discourse. Historians' works were frequently used to legitimize the Croatian statehood and denounce the Yugoslav legacy, which went hand in hand with the rehabilitation of the Ustaša movement and Croatian rightism. The strong political pressure to provide a more "Croatian" reading of history for the purposes of state-building and legitimacy eventually marginalized the voices of those few historians who, like Gross, advocated for more constructivist approaches.

Adam Hudek's study considers the evolution of nationalistic thinking among Slovak communist intellectuals from the early 1920s until the late 1960s. He focuses on the diverse attempts of several generations of communist writers turned politicians and historians to reframe the Marxist-Leninist doctrine to be more in line with their own nationalistic narrative, which eventually crystallized into the programme of Slovak national communism. This study shows that for many communist intellectuals, the integration of nationalist discourse into their political project was not only a strategy of legitimization

and earning popular support, but also a manifestation of their own ideological self-identification with the—imagined—national community. Their program of linking the political project of social transformation with the pre-communist era tradition of national awakening demonstrates again how persistently the idea of national emancipation is encrypted in the modern history of Central and Eastern Europe, and how vividly the nationalist thinking operated, even in minds of proclaimed "internationalists."

Tjaša Konovšek analyses a debate by prominent Slovene historians—Janko Prunk, Peter Vodopivec and others—in 1993 on the pages of one one of the most read newspapers in Slovenia, *Delo*, concerning the conception of Slovene national history and the notion of the Slovene "nation." Prunk advocated for a rather primordialist understanding of the "nation," projecting a linear historical path of the Slovenes through centuries of hardships until national independence—using the fact that Slovenes eventually reached an independent national existence as confirmation and justification of his theory. This notion was challenged by Vodopivec who, on the contrary, argued that the emergence of the Slovenian nation-state is not a culmination of a decades-long effort, but rather an abrupt discontinuity with traditional political thinking in the Slovenian space that was forever inclined to forming federations. Vodopivec thus viewed the Slovene nation as an "abrupt" formation with an unknown future, not as an entity that "completed" itself with the establishment of independent state. This debate occurred immediately after establishment of the independent Slovenian nation-state, when the concepts of nationality and statehood were not yet consolidated and soon after years of mobilization of national sentiment from the late 1980s. Both actors became politically active later, with a direct impact on school syllabuses and many generations of history students.

FORUM HISTORIAE Journal and Portal for History and Related Disciplines
ISSN 1337-6861

Forum Historiae, 2022, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 9–31

www.forumhistoriae.sk

From Slavic Leader to National Ruler: A Modern Discursive Construction of the Early Medieval Rulership of Pribina († 861)

Matej Harvát

Keywords
Pribina, Principality of Nitra, discourse, national historiography, nationalism, medieval Slovakia

DOI
10.31577/forhist.2022.16.1.2

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Cite
HARVÁT, Matej. From Slavic Leader to National Ruler: A Modern Discursive Construction of the Early Medieval Rulership of Pribina († 861). In *Forum Historiae*, 2022, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 9–31, doi: 10.31577/forhist.2022.16.1.2

Abstract

HARVÁT, Matej. From Slavic Leader to National Ruler: A Modern Discursive Construction of the Early Medieval Rulership of Pribina († 861).

Pribina was a Slavic leader of unknown origin from the 9th century who was expelled by the Moravian prince (*dux*) Mojmir I. However, his rank in the territory north of the Danube before exile is a matter of an age-long scholarly debate. This article presents an analysis of historiographic discourse which has resulted in the national scholarly construction of an early medieval, hypothetical Slovak/Nitrian rulership of Pribina. The aim is to illustrate the gradual progression of scholarly concepts regarding this rather shadowy Slavic leader and his supposed ethnically distinct north-Danubian domain, which is typically presented in historiography as "The Nitrian Principality." In this study, the genesis of historiographic narrative about the putative "first ruler" of modern Slovaks' ethnic ancestors, adopted mainly by Slovak historians, archaeologists and intellectuals in general is traced. A discourse analysis of intellectual writings about Pribina and Nitra is used to demonstrate how the particular narrative of "national ruler" unambiguously correlated with modern socio-political transformations during the political creation of Slovakia after the First World War. The article suggests that the notion of Pribina as original independent ruler emerged in the late 19th century and was cemented in the scholarship only after 1918 due to the formation of Czechoslovakia and subsequent need for an official version of distinct Slovak history.

> "Here in Central Europe, first of all, we are all writing the national history. For us it is a discipline as any other and very easily we forget that it is a product for obvious demand. That was the case at least at the beginning, during the national 'awakening,' and this function still lies in the histories we are writing, independently of us."[1]
>
> Dušan Třeštík

It is no secret that the disciplinary and methodological roots of modern European historiography lie in the dynamic period of the so-called national awakening. Hence, the beginning of modern historiography as a scholarly discipline and a creative intellectual activity has always been closely linked to the concept of "nation."[2]

1 TŘEŠTÍK. Dušan. *Mysliti dějiny*. Praha : Paseka, 1999, p. 103.

2 See, for instance, IGGERS, Georg – WANG, Edward Q. – MUKHERJEE, Supriya. *A Global History of Modern Historiography*. London : Routledge, 2008, pp. 53–92; BERGER, Stefan. The Past and Present of European Historiography. Between Marginalization and Functionalization? In LOK, Matthijs – BRUIN, Robin – BROLSMA, Marjet (eds.) *Eurocentrism in European History and Memory*. Amsterdam : Amsterdam University Press, 2019, pp. 25–42; BERGER, Stefan – CONRAD, Christoph. *The Past as History: National Identity and Historical Consciousness in Modern Europe*. Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, 2015; WOOLF, Daniel. Of Nations, Na-

More precisely, the impetus for writing different histories originated in the endeavour to understand—or rather "discover"—the past of every modern nation. European intellectuals, and later even the wider public, across every country looked far into the distant past in an attempt to understand where "they" came from by searching for links between modern citizens or their ancestors with pre-modern societies and polities. For that reason, intellectuals keen on studying historical sources "discovered" national or ethnic continuity with the pre-modern medieval past thanks to the teleological and ethnocentric paradigm of history.[3] Such a historiographic model provided explanatory potential and scholarly relevance for the contemporary socio-political setting and the cultural politics of modern nation states.

Premodern Past in Modern Nationalistic Discourse

Scholarly exploration—or rather creation—of national history can be traced back beyond the 19th century to the pre-modern era, even leading some contemporary intellectuals to reach back to the Early Middle Ages or Antiquity for the sake of seeking out national beginnings.[4] Notwithstanding the social reality of particular demographics or cultural continuity across the centuries and pre-modern polities, it is obvious that especially during the 19th and 20th centuries, scholarly and public narratives around the Early Middle Ages were very often influenced by intrinsic, nationalistic biases, which stemmed from contemporary socio-political aspirations and prevailing cultural schemes. Such intellectual patterns and scholarly preoccupations were determined primarily—but not exclusively—by the concept of "nation."[5] Though popular, it remains a simplification to automatically link medieval communities with modern populations uncritically in the sense of "national origin" and uniform ethno-cultural continuity.[6] Nevertheless, the post-romantic generation of intellectual authorities on medieval studies widely adopted previous nationalistic historiographic schemes, but at the same time, new cultural categories and discursive tendencies were created due to the need to explain the ancient history of particular nations. As such, the early medieval history of

tionalism, and National Identity. Reflections on the Historiographic Organization of the Past. In WANG, Edward Q. – FILLAFER, Franz (eds.) *Many Faces of Clio. Cross-cultural Approaches to Historiography. Essays in Honor of Georg G. Iggers*. New York; Oxford : Berghahn, 2006, pp. 71–103.

3 GEARY, Patrick J. – KLANICZAY, Gábor (eds.) *Manufacturing Middle Ages. Entangled History of Medievalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Leiden; Boston : Brill, 2013; POHL, Walter. Identität und Widerspruch: Gedanken zu einer Sinngeschichte des Frühmittelalters. In POHL, Walter (ed.) *Die Suche nach den Ursprüngen. Von der Bedeutung des frühen Mittelalters*. Wien : ÖAW, 2004, pp. 23–36; GEARY, Patrick. *The Myth of Nations. The Medieval Origins of Europe*. Princeton; New Jersey : Princeton University Press, 2002, pp. 15–40.

4 JENSEN, Lotte (ed.) *The Roots of Nationalism: National Identity Formation in Early Modern Europe, 1600–1815*. Amsterdam : Amsterdam University Press, 2016; SCALES, Len – ZIMMER, Oliver (eds.) *Power and the Nation in European History*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2008.

5 WOOD, Ian. *The Modern Origins of the Early Middle Ages*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 94–221; GRAUS, František. *Živá minulost. Středověké tradice* a *představy* o *středověku*. Translated by Jan Dobeš. Praha : Argo, 2017, pp. 156–199.

6 See, for instance, GEARY 2002, p. 155 ff.; BREUILLY, John. Changes in the political uses of the nation: continuity or discontinuity? In SCALES, Len – ZIMMER, Oliver (eds.) *Power and the Nation in European History*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 67–102.

many European countries was not only reconstructed by scholars, but at the same time, also constructed through scientific discourse based on teleological explanations and subsequently, a dissemination of ideas to the (national) public.[7] It can be argued that these "national" biases and preconceptions or methodological points of departure have played fundamental roles not only in the public's understanding of early medieval history, but also in scholarly works and generally speaking, among intellectual discourse in both the Czechoslovakia and during the short era of the wartime Slovak State.[8]

The Slovak historiographic national master narrative, or national story, was constituted in the time of inter-war Czechoslovakia when the professional Slovak historiography was established.[9] The goal was to explain who Slovaks were historically and especially, in what period of history they came into existence or began act as a collective. The Slovak or Slavic speaking Upper Hungarian intellectual elite articulated conflicting versions of national history already in the period of enlightenment and especially the romantic era of the 19th century.[10] However, the "official" master narrative of Slovak history may have definitely been created and publicly disseminated only in the context of the common state of Czechs and Slovaks after 1918. Only from this time the Slovak conception of national history began in scholarly discourse with an early medieval individual who is known from medieval sources as *Privina* (Pribina).[11] Even though older conceptions of Slovak national history, or the history of Slavs from Upper Hungary, from the enlightenment and romantic era were also strongly linked with the Mojmirid (Great) Moravia and Cyril and Methodius, on the contrary, Pribina as a supposed distinct ruler was integrated into the national narrative only after the First World War (WWI).

7 THIESSOVÁ, Anne-Marie. *Vytváření národních identit v Evropě 18. až 20. století*. Translated by Pavla Doležalová. Brno : Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2007; BERGER, Stefan – LORENZ, Chris (eds.) *Nationalizing the Past. Historians as Nation Builders in Modern Europe*. London : Palgrave Macmillan, 2010; BERGER, Stefan – DONOVAN, Mark – PASSMORE, Kevin (eds.) *Writing National Histories. Western Europe Since 1800*. London : Routledge, 1998. For the Slovak national context, see VÖRÖS, László. *Analytická historiografia versus národné dejiny. Národ ako sociálna reprezentácia*. Pisa : Pisa University Press, 2010, p. 10 ff and passim; for the Czech national milieu recently, see SMYČKA, Václav. *Objevení dějin. Dějepisectví, fikce a historický čas na přelomu 18. a 19. století*. Praha : Academia, 2021. On teleological master narratives cf. CARR, David. Teleology and the Experience of History. In TURNER, Aaron (ed.) *Reconciling Ancient and Modern Philosophies of History*. Berlin; Boston : De Gruyter, 2020, pp. 311–326.

8 In that sense, one can agree with the apt words of Třeštík, quoted at the beginning of this article: TŘEŠTÍK 1999, p. 103. For the social function of national historiography, see VÖRÖS, László. Social Demand and the Social Purpose of History: What is Missing from Alun Munslow's Classification of Historiography? In *The Hungarian Historical Review*, 2017, vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 776–803; VÖRÖS, László. The Social Function of Historical Knowledge and Scholarly History Writing in the 21st Century. In *Historický časopis*, 2017, vol. 65, no. 5, pp. 785–797.

9 See HUDEK, Adam. *Najpolitickejšia veda. Slovenská historiografia v rokoch 1948 – 1968*. Bratislava : Historický ústav SAV, 2010; HUDEK, Adam. Slovak Historiography and Constructing the Slovak National Story Up to 1948. In *Human Affairs*, 2006, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 51–45.

10 See, for instance, HOLLÝ, Karol. The Historical Narration as a Political Programme. Analysis of Images of the Past in the Texts of the Slovak National Movement's Programmes from 1848 and 1861. In HUDEK, Adam (ed.) *Overcoming the Old Borders. Beyond the Paradigm of Slovak National History*. Bratislava : Institute of History, Slovak Academy of Sciences, 2016, pp. 45–58; KRIŠTOF, Pavol. Záborského neromantická koncepcia nacionalizmu. In *Forum Historiae*, 2013, vol. 7, no. 2, p. 25 ff.; HOLLÝ, Karol. Franko Víťazoslav Sasinek as the 'historiographer of Slovaks'. In *Leidschrift*, 2010, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 145–163.

11 In the following text, the variant "Pribina" is used, which is, unlike in the English and German historiography, commonly used in Slavic language historiographies.

Contemporary early medieval sources referring to the 9th century leader are scarce and ambiguous.[12] In fact, no medieval text explicitly states who Pribina was before his exile and subsequent governance of Pannonia after 840; there are only two sentences from a Salzburg source called *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum* (Conversio) connecting him with the regions north of the Danube. However, a rather strange mention of "his property in Nitrava" was possibly inserted into the source latter as an interpolated sentence by an unknown copyist.[13] As such, there are essentially two contesting interpretations among medievalists regarding Pribina's position. One explanation, considerably younger, claims that he was originally a gentilic ruler of a Slavic tribe or ethnic group centred in Nitra. Others on the contrary believe he could have been Moravian or another local leader, but subordinated to the *dux* Mojmir who eventually sent him to exile. In Slovak historiography, the former explanation resonates almost exclusively, which reckons a distinct tribal or ethnic rulership of Pribina possibly different from the Moravians, which is articulated in the scholarship as "The Nitrian Principality."[14] This stems from the fact that Pribina and his supposed tribe or even principality[15] were, in the course of the 20th century, appropriated by Slovak national historiography due to a reputed origin from Nitra in western Slovakia.[16] Currently, a consensus can be seen within the Slovak historiographic paradigm claiming that Pribina was actually the first domestic ruler of Slovak or Slavic origin. However, a number of historians and archaeologists throughout the 20th century, and also the older scholarship, did not agree with such an interpretation and an alternative explanation still exists in international scholarship treating Pribina as a lesser chief subordinated to the prince Mojmir. Furthermore and perhaps more interestingly, before the 20th century and specifically before the creation of the Czechoslovak republic, the Slovak intellectual elite did not

12 Cf. STEINHÜBEL, Ján. *The Nitrian Principality: The Beginnings of Medieval Slovakia*. Leiden; Boston : Brill, 2021, p. 111 ff.; WOLFRAM, Herwig (ed.) *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum. Das Weißbuch der Salzburger Kirche über die erfolgreiche Mission in Karantanien und Pannonien mit Zusätzen und Ergänzungen*. Ljubljana : Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, 2013, p. 183 ff.; SIEKLICKI, Jan. *Quidam Priwina*: Z zagadnień kształtowania się państwowości morawskiej w IX wieku. In *Slavia Occidentalis*, 1962, vol. 22, pp. 115–145; in short HARVÁT, Matej – KALHOUS, David. Written Sources: The Expulsion of Pribina according to the *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum*. In POLÁČEK, Lumír (ed.) *Great Moravian Elites from Mikulčice*. Brno : Czech Academy of Sciences, Institute of Archaeology, 2020, pp. 38–40.

13 "Cui quondam Adalrammus archiepiscopus ultra Danubium in sua proprietate loco vocato Nitrava consecravit ecclesiam." WOLFRAM 2013, Cap. 11, pp. 74, 76; LOŠEK, Fritz (ed.) *Die Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum und der Brief des Erzbischofs Theotmar von Salzburg*. Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Studien und Texte 15. Hannover : Hahnsche, 1997, p. 123, footnote no. 130.

14 In detail, see STEINHÜBEL 2021, p. 110 ff.

15 There are no exact written or archaeological data about such an entity, only more or less plausible presumptions based on an interpretative combination of different sources. Pribina's initial rank was unkown or unimportant in Salzburg, thus *Conversio* mentioned him as "quidam Privina" (some Pribina).

16 His origin from Nitra is contentious as there is only one ambiguous—probably not contemporary and therefore spurious—sentence connecting him with the "Nitrava." This sentence could have been fabricated perhaps after 880 and the temporary establishment of the Nitrian bishopric. Cf. BETTI, Maddalena. *The Making of Christian Moravia (858–882): Papal Power and Political Reality*. Leiden; Boston : Brill, 2014, p. 153ff.

understand Pribina as a distinct leader of their ancestors and surprisingly, not even as an independent ruler. Pribina's independent power and politically autonomous rulership were formulated in the scholarly (national) discourse expressly and decisively at the moment when the (Czecho-)Slovak national historical narrative was created. Before the political reality of the Czechoslovak state—as shown in the following pages—there was an almost total consensus among scholars that Pribina was not the leader of a distinct tribe different from Moravians and therefore was not appropriated and connected with (pre-modern) Slovaks exclusively.

The understanding of the origin of this Slavic leader, or Prince Pribina, is therefore an apt example of the changing narrative strategies that were influenced, and sometimes even conditioned, by prevailing political and cultural debates. In the following text I will try to demonstrate to what extent the historiographic explanation of early medieval past was influenced and/or determined by the "national question." For this purpose, the theory of discursive construction[17] will be employed to identify the intentionality and the narrative tendencies of intellectual writing ranging from the modern period before 1918, but mostly among Czechoslovakian scholars and partly, in public discourse as well. It will be argued that the case of Pribina is yet another example of "national" instrumentalisation of pre-modern individuals or communities. Such use—and abuse—of premodern history is interested in the medieval rulers and representatives of power who hold discernible appeal in the genre of narrative national history.[18] Historians and intellectuals with explicit or implicit "national concerns" in their works not only sought the qualities of a particular "national hero" in Pribina,[19] but may have created the medieval version of "Slovak history" not necessarily in accordance with available historical evidence.

17 WODAK, Ruth et al. *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*. 2th ed. Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 2009, (1st edition 1999); DeCILLIA, Rudolf – REISIGL, Martin – WODAK, Ruth. The Discursive construction of national identities. In *Discourse & Society*, 1999, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 149–173.

18 Cf. the case of historiographic instrumentalisation of the medieval "Samuel's State" in the Balkans: PANOV, Mitko B. *The Blinded State. Historiographic Debates about Samuel Cometopoulos and His State (10th–11th Century)*. Leiden; Boston : Brill, 2019; or the older interpretive schemes of Hungarian archaeology on the question of the "seizure of the homeland" BOLLÓK, Ádám. Excavating Early Medieval Material Culture and Writing History in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Hungarian Archeology. In *Hungarian Historical Review*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2016, pp. 277–304; see also GRAUS 2017, pp. 130–140, who shows how the local "barbaric" leaders, such as the Germanic Arminius and the Celtic Vercingetorix began to be nationalised and mythologised from the 19th century onwards. In doing so, these ancient leaders, who until then had not occupied a "nationaly" significant place in the works of scholars or in popular tradition, gradually acquired privileged positions as prominent "national heroes" in the eyes of nationalist-minded intellectuals. Subsequently, they became the first major rulers of the Germans (Arminius-Hermann) and the French (Vercingetorix).

19 For "national heroes" cf. GRAUS 2017, pp. 132, 140–43, 156–157; ZIELIŃSKI, Bogusław. Bohater narodowy w świadomości kulturowej Słowiańszczyzny. In RAŠTICOVÁ, Blanka (ed.) *Literární mystifikace, etnické mýty a jejich úloha při formování národního vědomí*. Uherské Hradiště : Slovácke muzeum, 2001, pp. 25–42, on p. 27 emphasizes that Pribina represented a historical figure forming the "pantheon of heroes-progenitors of Slovak statehood."

A Long Road to Independence: Pribina in Scholarly Discourse until 1918

After the 9th century, neither medieval writers nor cultural tradition showed any particular interest in the figure of Pribina. This historical individual, unlike the Mojmirid Moravian princes, did not find a place in medieval historical narratives, contrary to ruler Svätopluk and Cyril and Methodius, who appeared quite frequently in the writings of several chroniclers from the 10th to 15th century while the activities and events associated with them, real or fictional, sometimes played a role—albeit limited—in legitimizing narratives and the strengthening of cultural traditions in the clergy environment.[20] However, on the contrary, Pribina and his alleged principality based in Nitra remained an unimportant or even unknown historical topic from the Early Middle Ages. The first significant mention of Pribina comes at the end of the Middle Ages, in the chronicle of Bavarian humanist scholar and historian Johann Turmair, known as Aventinus, from 1517. According to him, "Brynno" acted both before and after expulsion in the north of the Danube as a kind of "minor king" of the Moravians.[21] As we shall see in the case of other older authors, Pribina was clearly thought of as a local Moravian leader. During the early modern period, it took quite a long time for Pribina to find his way into other historical works and narratives about the ancient Moravian past. His figure appears primarily in texts of the Moravian and Hungarian Baroque and Enlightenment historians, who regarded him consensualy and irrespective of social conditions or authorial tendencies as a Moravian or a Moravian-subordinate leader who was simply banished from the territory above the middle Danube by his sovereign prince Mojmir.[22] It should be stressed that

20 ANTONÍN, Robert. On the memory and oblivion of Great Moravia in the literary tradition of the Bohemian middle ages and in the modern historiography. In ANTONÍN, Robert et al. (eds.) *The Great Moravian Tradition and Memory of Great Moravia in the Medieval Central and Eastern Europe*. Opava : Slezská univerzita, 2014, pp. 123–141; ALBRECHT, Stefan. Das Großmährische Reich in der Historiographie des römisch-deutschen Reiches. In ANTONÍN, 2014, pp. 37–82; GYÖRFFY, György. Die Erinnerung an das Grossmährische Fürstentum in der mittelalterlichen Überlieferung Ungarns. In *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, vol. 17, 1965, pp. 41–45; MARSINA, Richard. Cyrilometodská tradícia na Slovensku. In *Studia Historica Tyrnaviensia*, vol. 5, 2004, pp. 25–36; BLÁHOVÁ, Marie. Cyrilometodějská tradice v českých zemích ve středověku. In BARCIAK, Antoni (ed.) *Środkowoeuropejskie dziedzictwo Cyrylo-Metodiánske*. Katowice : Societas Scientiis Favendis Silesiae Superioris, 1999, pp. 135–148; WIHODA, Martin. Cyrilometodějská tradice v paměti přemyslovského věku. In KOUŘIL, Pavel (ed.) *Cyrilometodějská misie a Evropa – 1150 let od příchodu soluňských bratří na Velkou Moravu*. Brno : Archeologický ústav AV ČR, 2014, pp. 298–301.

21 Ioannis Aventini Annales ducum Baioariae IV, X 27. In BARTOŇKOVÁ, Dagmar et al. (eds.) *Magnae Moravia fontes historici 1: Annales et chronicae*. 3rd ed. Praha : Koniasch Latin Press, 2019 (1st edition 1966), p. 388.

22 PESSINA DE CZECHOROD, Thoma Joanne. *Mars Moravicus. Sive bella horrida et cruenta* [...]. Pragae : Typis Joannis Arnolti de Dobroslawina, 1677, pp. 139–140. Pešina considered Pribina to be one of Moravia's "leading aristocrats" (*ex Optimatibus praecipuus*). The Jesuit Bohuslav BALBÍN writes, like Aventine, about one of the "little kings" of the Moravians *Epitome rerum Bohemicarum autore Bohuslao Balbino*. Pragae : Typis Universitatis Carolo-Ferdinandeae, 1677, p, 12; Similarly BEL, Matthias. *Notitia Hungariae novae historico-geographica divisa in partes quatuor, quarum prima* [...]. Viannae : Johannus Petrus van Ghelen, 1742, p. 315; PILARZ, Adolphus – MORAVETZ, Franciscus. *Moraviae historia politica et ecclesiastica cum notis et animadversionibus criticis probatorum auctorum. Pars prima*. Brunae : Joannes Silvester Siedler, 1785, p. 29.

such an interpretation, already present in the older scholarship, is possible precisely on the basis of contemporary written sources.[23]

At the same time, it was not only the Baroque and Enlightenment scholars from Moravia and the Kingdom of Hungary, but also other contemporary historians who understood Pribina as a subordinate lesser chief or a Moravian local leader.[24] Moreover, according to a considerable number of older scholars, it was only after his arrival in the Easterrn March and subsequent baptism that Pribina "received the land by the river Nitra" where he was meant to function in the Frankish service under King Louis.[25] Such an interpretation resulted primarily from a contradiction in the medieval source *Conversio*, which could have been due to the interpolation of the sentence about the church in Nitrava, thereby de facto distorting the chronological logic of the text.

Exceptionally, however, Pribina was also seen as a distinct leader of this time, even different from the Moravians. Samuel Timon, who is usually regarded as author of the first conception of the history of the Slovaks, or the Upper Hungarian Slavs,[26] mentioned him as a "Slavic prince" in his historiographical work *Imago antiquae Hungariae*.[27] Timon's historical construction, similar in this respect to that of Štefan Katona, Juraj Sklenár and other Upper Hungarian historians of the 18th century, was still treating the Great Moravian period, as well as Pribina, in a rather detached manner, without any significant effort to actualise it for the Slovak or Slavic context in the Hungarian monarchy.[28] Therefore, in Enlightenment writings, the theme of the ancient Moravian principality figured mostly only on the level of scholarly polemics on the localization of Old Moravia (*Altmähren*) or its power centre, eventually serving as an object to emphasize or trivialize the role of the Slavs in the Christianization of the regions of the Habsburg monarchy.[29] Thus, unlike

23 Cf. SIEKLICKI 1962; HARVÁT – KALHOUS 2020.

24 HANSIZIUS, Marcus. *Germaniae Sacrae Tomus II. Archiepiscopatus Salisburgensis chronologice propositus*. Augusta Vindelicorum : Sumptibus Martini Happach et Franc. Xav. Schlüter, 1729, p. 124; ASSEMANI, Josephus Simonius. *Kalendaria ecclesiae universae tomus tertius*. Roma : Faustus Amideus, 1755, p. 61. For the list of an older sholars treating Pribina, Koceľ and Nitra see BANÍK, Anton Augustín. Pramene, literatúra i podstata dejín o Pribinovi a Koceľovi. In *Kultúra*, 1933, vol. 5, no. 7/8, pp. 541–564.

25 E. g. DÜMMLER, Ernst. *Geschichte des ostfränkischen Reiches I*. Leipzig : Dunder & Humblot, 1887, p. 33; NOVOTNÝ, Václav. *České dějiny. Díl I. Část I. Od nejstarších dob do smrti knížete Oldřicha*. Praha : Jan Leichter, 1912, p. 292.

26 MARSINA, Richard. Samuel Timon a jeho predstavy o najstarších dejinách Slovákov. In *Historický časopis*, 1980, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 245–264; MARSINA, Richard (ed.) *Slovenský historik Samuel Timon 1675–1736: Zborník k 320. výročiu narodenia*. Trančianska Turná : Obecný úrad, 1995; TIBENSKÝ, Ján. *Chvály a obrany slovenského národa*. Bratislava : SVKL, 1965, p. 96 ff.

27 TIMON, Samuel. *Imago antiquae Hungariae*. Cassoviae : Typis Academicis Soc. Jesu, per Joan. Henricum Frauenheim, 1733, p. 276; on the corresponding page, moreover, it is written in margine "Privina dux Sclavorum Nitriensis exul."

28 Sklenár, for example, located Pribina and his domain south of the Danube, in the area around the Sava River. Adalram thus consecrated a church somewhere in the territory of the former province of Moesia and according to him, Nitra north of the Danube was conquered only by Svätopluk. SZKLENÁR, Georgius. *Vetustissimus Magne Moraviae situs*. Posonium : Ioannes Miachael Lander, 1784, pp. 62–64, 105, 109–112. Katona understood Pribina as the second prince of the Moravians in Nitra whom Mojmir "deprived of his rule" (*Privina principatus spoliatus* a *Moymaro*) KATONA, Stephanus. *Historica critica primorum Hungariae ducum*. Pest : Ioannes Michael Weingand, 1778, pp. 538–539.

29 Cf. ALBRECHT, Stefan. *Geschichte der Grossmährenforschung in den Tschechischen Ländern und in der Slowakei*. Praha : Slovanský ústav AV ČR, 2003, p. 24; TIBENSKÝ, Ján. Vznik, vývoj a význam

Svätopluk, the Slav Pribina played no role in debates about the legal-historical relationship of nationalities in Habsburg Hungary. At the same time, even the Enlightenment Hungarian historiography, emphasizing the nomadic origins of the settlement of the territories of the Kingdom of Hungary did not significantly diverge from predominant contemporary discourse on the position of Pribina before his expulsion across the Danube, treating him as the Mojmir's co-ruler who had governed the Moravian territories up to the river Hron.[30]

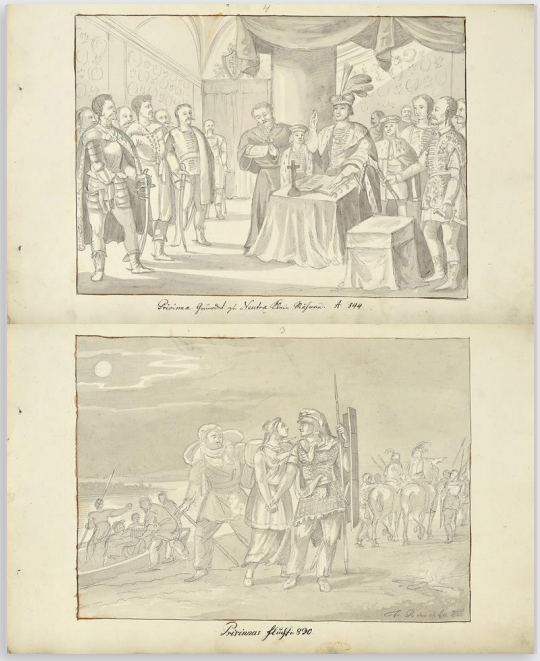

Fig. 1 Drawings of František (Franz) Xaver for the book History of Moravia depicting Pribina's escape across Danube (assigned year 830) and his supposed later rule in Nitra (assigned year 844), 1825. Source: Moravská galeria, online collections

From the point of view of current historiographic discourse, it may come as a surprise that even the first extensive "nationalistic" scholarly work on strictly Slovak history by Juraj Papánek from the late 18th century did not reserve any special place for the historical individual who is today most often understood as the first documented medieval ruler on the territory of Slovakia.[31] Pribina basically merges with the other Mojmirids, who were presented as "Slovaks." However, according to Papánek, he was not the ruler of a separate territory but o successor of the Mojmir. The nascent national historiography of the late 18th century had not yet embraced the character of an exiled leader or presumed "Slavic prince" who, on the basis of the Nitrava remark in the *Conversio*, may have been associated with the territory of Upper Hungary. In the search for continuity with the ancient—and at best, glorious—past, Princes Rastislav and Svätopluk, who resisted the "Germans" militarily as well as the "intellectuals" and saints Constantine and Methodius, served this purpose above all.[32]

veľkomoravskej tradície v slovenskom národnom obrodení. In HOLOTÍK, Ľudovít (ed.) *O vzájomných vzťahoch Čechov a Slovákov*. Bratislava : SAV, 1956, p. 146 ff. The Great Moravian history was more closely connected with the Slavs from Upper Hungary only by Štefan (István) Salagius.

30 See PRAY, Georgius. *Annales veteres Hunorum, Avarorum et Hungarorum*. Vindobona : Hermann Iosephus Krüchten, 1761, p. 288; SALAGIUS, Stephanus. *De statu ecclesiae Pannonicae libri VII*. Quinque-ecclesiis : Joannes Joseph Engel, 1777, pp. 72, 145.

31 PAPANEK, Georgius. *Historia gentis Slavae. De regno regibusque Slavorum atque cum prisci civilis et ecclesiastici, tum huius aevi statu gentis Slavae*. Quinque-ecclesiis : Joannes Joseph Engel, 1780, pp. 3, 183–184; Cf. ALBRECHT 2003, p. 24 ff.; KUTNAR, František – MAREK, Jaroslav. *Přehledné dějiny českého a slovenského dějepisectví*. Praha : Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 1997, p. 183; TIBENSKÝ 1956, p. 150; TIBENSKÝ, Slovenská historiografia v období slovenského národného obrodenia (1780–1830). In *Historický časopis*, 1980, vol. 28, no. 4, p. 531 ff.

32 See TIBENSKÝ 1980, pp. 531–553; HUDEK, Adam – ŠKVARNA, Dušan. *Cyril a Metod v historickom vedomí a pamäti 19. a 20. storočia na Slovensku*. Bratislava : Historický ústav SAV, 2013, p. 26 ff.; ŠKVARNA, Dušan. *Začiatky moderných slovenských symbolov. K vytváraniu národnej identity od konca 18. do polovice 19. storočia*. Banská Bystrica : UMB, p. 52 ff.

Similarly, historians from the era of the national-awakening (e.g. Pavol J. Šafárik, František Palacký, Jonáš Záborský, František V. Sasinek) did not associate Pribina with the beginnings of the political formation of Slovak ancestors.[33] This idea was articulated only later via assumptions about the alleged distinct (non-Moravian) principality. It was probably Czech legal historian and publicist Hermenegild Jireček, who in the second half of the 19th century as the first scholar developed a thesis of a separate "Nitra principality," which would become established as a new paradigm during the next century.[34] He also presented the wholly new notion that "this principality was associated with Moravia under Mojmir I."[35] Thus, it is quite possible that it was Jireček's texts that in some respects, challenged the previously unified paradigm and at the same time, considerably encouraged a new interpretation of Moravian conquest of the alleged independent principality of Pribina. At the end of the 19th century, Moravian archivist and historian of German origin Bertold Bretholz, without any secondary intention or immanent tendency,[36] contributed to the solidification of a scholarly interpretation of the Mojmir attack on the "Slavic prince" Pribina, which was not dissimilar to the views of Jireček, in stating that Mojmir had in fact attacked a Slavic prince, conquered his domain, annexed it to his principality and then expelled Pribina.[37] However, Bretholz claimed in a later work, like his predecessor Beda Dudík, that Pribina resided "im Osten Mährens."[38] In line with the transformation of the state of historical knowledge from the last third of the 19th century, Nitra in the Early Middle Ages, according to some authors, should have already formed the centre of a principality but still not a "tribal" one. Therefore, according to authoritative dictionaries from the Bohemian environment, which provide a summary of knowledge from the times of the late Habsburg monarchy, Pribina did not abandon the position of minor prince subordinate to Mojmir.[39]

33 See bibliography in BANÍK 1933, pp. 548–556. There is, however, clear nationalistic instrumentalisation of Pribina in the writings of Jozef M. HURBAN, for instance in his: Osudové Nitry. In *Almanach Nitra*, 1842, vol. 1, pp. 19–48.

34 JIREČEK, Hermenegild. Knížectví Přibinovy. In *Světozor. List pro zábavu a literaturu*, 1859, vol. 2, no. 16, pp. 313–317, esp. 316; JIREČEK, Slované nitranští. In *Světozor*, 1861, vol. 3, no. 8, p. 231 ff.; JIREČEK, Dějiny říše Moravské (Pokračování). In *Světozor*, 1860, vol. 3, no. 8, pp. 60–62; JIREČEK, Počátek biskupství nitránskeho. In *Světozor*, 1859, vol. 3, no. 22, pp. 374–380, esp. p. 374.

35 JIREČEK, Říše Moravská. Rozprava historická. In *Světozor*, 1859, vol. 2, no. 22, p. 362.

36 In the case of Jireček's periodical texts there is a noticeable effort to present the old "Slovak history" from the position of sympathiser of the national movement of Slovaks. The eventual contacts of Jireček with Slovak intellectual elites from the nationalist circle would be worthy of more thorough research. On Jireček's conception of Pribina and Nitra cf. BANÍK 1933, p. 546; SIEKLICKI 1962, p. 119.

37 BRETHOLZ, Bertold. *Geschichte Mährens. Erste Band, Erste Abtheilung (Bis 906)*. Brünn : Karl Winifer, 1895, p. 33: "Als Moimir seine Macht im Lande westlich von der March gefestigt hatte, griff er den östlich vom Flusse wohnenden Slavenfürsten Břibina an, der seinen Sitz in Neitra hatte. Er besiegte ihn und dehnte sein Reich, nach dem heutigen Ungarn hin aus." Cf. SIEKLICKI 1962, p. 119.

38 BRETHOLZ, Bertold. *Geschichte Böhmens und Mährens bis zum Aussterben der Přemysliden (1306)*. München; Leipzig : Duncker & Humblot, 1912, p. 48. The prominent 20th century Moravian historian L. E. Havlík also used the theory of the Nitra region as "Eastern Moravia."

39 Entry "Pribina". In *Riegrův slovník naučný VI*. Praha : I. L. Kober, 1867, p. 935. See also entry "Nitra". In *Riegrův slovník V*, 1866, p. 847; entry "Pribina". In *Ottův slovník naučný, dvacáty díl*. Praha : J. Otto, 1903, p. 665. It is symptomatic that Pribina, according to the dictionary entry, returned to Nitra after the (first) expulsion with East Franconian support. See also entry "Nitra". In *Ottův slovník náučný, osmnáctý díl*, 1902, p. 340.

Jireček's and Bretholz's interpretations thus represented a significant diversion from the established thesis, for instead of writing about the entrusted land, these authors described a separate principality or prince.

It is noteworthy also that in the still instructive Czech History by Václav Novotný pubilshed a few years before WWI, the following is said about Pribina's position before his expulsion: "What the nature of Pribina's princely power was cannot be ascertained today. Perhaps he was the last of the tribal princes to hold out until the time of Mojmir."[40]

Nevertheless, even Novotný evidently did not yet refer to a tribal prince in the sense of the later concept of *dux gentis*, but rather understood Pribina as one of the Moravian, or generally Slavic, leaders of the middle Danube.[41] In the spirit of the older Enlightenment tradition, especially Gelasius Dobner, Novotný assesses the consequences of his expulsion in terms of the unification of the two parts of Moravia: "With Pribina's expulsion, Mojmir became the autocrat of unified Moravia."[42]

Slovak intellectual elites and apparently even the first Slovak historians have not yet incorporated this alleged Nitrian prince into the otherwise widely instrumentalised Great Moravian tradition. At the end of the 19th century, only preliminary and rather marginal attempts to see Pribina and his people as "Slovaks" can be found, including a gradually expanding emphasis on the historical specificity of the Nitra region in contrast to Moravia.[43]

It seems to be symptomatic that Július Botto (1848–1926), the generally acknowledged author of the first modern historiographical synthesis of Slovak history, remained considerably distant from the notions of later Czech-Slovak authors in the first decade of the 20th century at a time of intensifying national-emancipatory cultural efforts. Botto not only did not consider Pribina as the first ruler of the principality which would be the presumed historical predecessor of Slovakia (politically not yet in existence in his time), but he also did not deduce anything from available historiography about the allegedly independent status of this protagonist. According to Botto's historical conception, "the first known Slovak ruler was Mojmir I,"[44] while Pribina remained a "partial duke around the Váh River" subordinate to a "great

40 NOVOTNÝ 1912, p. 292.

41 In his work, Pribina appears as Mojmir's "duke", following the example of "his prince" at the consecration of the church in Nitra.

42 NOVOTNÝ 1912, p. 291ff, quote on p. 294.

43 The search for Slovak historical "individuality" or territorial distinctiveness in the context of the pre-Great Moravian Pribina's activity was apparently not yet relevant, even for active Slovak or symphatetic nationalists such as Sasinek, Škultéty or Píč. See e.g., PÍČ, Josef L. Anonymus Belae notarius. In *Slovenské pohľady*, 1882, vol. 2, no. 5, pp. 401–404, here on p. 403 writes about the Principality of Nitra as a separate territory, especially in the Arpad period, but omits any activity of Pribina. On the triangle Píč – Sasinek – Škultéty and their research tendency cf. HOLLÝ, Karol. Josef Ladislav Píč ako slovakista: spolupráca so Slovenskými pohľadmi a historická ideológia slovenského národného hnutia. In DUCHÁČEK, Milan – BÍLKOVÁ, Jitka et al. (eds.) *Václav Chaloupecký* a *generace roku 1914. Otázniky české a slovenské historiografie v éře první republiky*. Praha; Liberec; Turnov : Technická univerzita v Liberci, 2018, pp. 83–116.

44 BOTTO, Július. *Slováci. Vývin ich národného povedomia*. 2nd ed. Bratislava : Veda, 1971, (1st edition 1906), p. 29.

duke" and "was demanding a kind of foolish independence."[45] Botto, like his academically educated contemporaries, was not only a scholar but above all, a cultural activist "working for the nation," which is evident in the overall intention and treatment of his historical synthesis. Like his predecessors and successors, he tried to use the socio-cultural mobilising legacy or heritage of the Moravian "Empire" to actively stimulate the national consciousness of Slovaks in Habsburg monarchy.[46] However, Pribina's "foolish claim to independence" did not yet possess sufficient potential that could be utilized to strengthen the awareness of a common and glorious past, unlike the ruling of Mojmirids. Though, this was about to change after WWI and the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic.

Princes of Two Brotherly Nations: Pribina as the First Slovak Ruler

The "tradition" of Great Moravia represented a key historical argument for the newly established Czechoslovak state used not only in the framework of cultural policies, but also in the search for political legitimacy. At post-war peace negotiations in Paris, there was even a proposal on Eduard Beneš's initiative to name the new state of Czechs and Slovaks "Grandmoravia" (Velkomoravia).[47] It is therefore probably not far from the truth to admit that the "Great Moravian tradition"—or historiographical myth[48]—played quite an important role legitimizing and mobilizing the practical conceptions of Czecho-Slovak political elites. The new republic, the establishment of which was ideologically justified also through the political myth of the restoration of the Great Moravian statehood—representing the "first state of the Czechs and Slovaks"—found important cultural workers and disseminators of the official "state-forming" historical narrative in the historians.[49]

In the gradual formation of contemporary discourse about Pribina as "Prince of Nitra" a Czech historian working in Bratislava after 1918, Václav Chaloupecký (1882–1951), clearly stood out the interwar period.[50] During his

45 BOTTO 1971, p. 32. The diction reflects the work of Sasinek.

46 On Botto's historical thinking in detail, see: HOLLÝ, Karol. Historik a „národná disciplína": ideologicko-politický aspekt historického myslenia Júliusa Bottu s dôrazom na interpretáciu genézy a charakteru textu Slováci. Vývin ich národného povedomia (1906). In IVANIČKOVÁ, Edita (ed.) *Kapitoly z histórie stredoeurópskeho priestoru v 19. a 20. storočí: pocta k 70-ročnému jubileu Dušana Kováča*. Bratislava : Veda, 2011, pp. 159–176.

47 HADLER, Frank. Das Großmährische Reich: tschechoslowakischer oder slowakischer Ur-Staat? Deutungskämpfe im 20. Jahrhundert. In WILLOWEIT, Dietmar – LEMBERG, Hans (eds.) *Reiche und Territorien in Ostmitteleuropa: Historiche Beziehungen und politische Herrschaftslegitimation*. München : R. Oldenburg, 2006, pp. 359–378, here p. 363. According to PODHRÁZKY, Zbyněk. *Hlavní skutečnosti ovlivňující tvorbu nové československé ústavy v letech 1946–1948*. Master thesis. Brno : Právnická fakulta MU, 2006, p. 22 the name "Republic of Moravia" or "Velkomoravia" was used by Beneš even in negotiations before the end of the Second World War.

48 HADLER, Frank. Historiografický mýtus Velké Moravy v 19. a 20. století. In *Časopis Matice moravské*, 2001, vol. 120, no. 1, pp. 155–171.

49 See the programmatic instruction of Slovak historical research by leading Czech historian and politician KROFTA, Kamil. *O úkolech slovenské historiografie*. Bratislava : Academia, 1925, pp. 5–18; cf. also KAPRAS, Jan – NEMĚC, Bohumil – SOUKUP, František (eds.) *Idea Československého státu*. Praha : Národní rada československá, 1936. On the role and content of political myths, cf. MANNOVÁ, Elena. *Minulosť ako supermarket? Spôsoby reprezentácie a aktualizácie dejín Slovenska*. Bratislava : Veda, 2019, pp. 54–69. For such activistic tendencies of a historians in general cf. BERGER – LORENZ 2010.

50 Chaloupecký's work, personality and career conditions are investigated in a broader and interest-

time at the newly founded state Comenius University, his professional goal became, among other things, the creation of a unique and representative professional synthesis of the older history of the territory of Slovakia. Chaloupecký completed his task quickly and at the same time, at a high professional level. His book *Staré Slovensko* (Old Slovakia) was published in 1923 and immediately became a real scientific event as a pioneering scholarly publication defining the topic "medieval Slovakia." However, due to its importance for the historical self-awareness of Slovaks, the book also became a target of nationally oriented criticism raised from Slovak patriotic positions. It is no coincidence that the need to oppose Chaloupecky's intrepretation is still observable today among some Slovak medievalists.[51] More interestingly, the author, in broadly conceived and in many ways pioneering research, set himself the goal of "showing and proving the existence of Slovakia as a special geographical and historical individuality."[52]

In such a defined research aim, it was Pribina, known from *Conversio* and a few other records, who became a notional bridge for Chaloupecký with which he could not only connect Slovak (Nitrian) with Czech (Moravian) history, but at the same time, Pribina was also referred to as the first power representative of the "historical individuality of Slovakia." With partial scholarly caution, Chaloupecký nevertheless employed the territorial term "Nitriansko," which was being used increasingly frequently in publications on the Slovak past,[53] as evidence of the foundation of a more advanced political organisation and thus as scientific proof of historical Slovakia in the Early Middle Ages. While the historically corroborated prince of the Moravians, Mojmir, unsurprisingly represented the historical Moravians and also partly the Czechs in contemporary discourse, on the other hand, "our Pribina" for domestic intellectuals such as Jozef Škultéty represented the Slovak part of the common historical state with the Moravians where "the unification of the nation in the Pribina's domain" occurred before 833.[54] Chaloupecký, who was eagerly (but not very carefully) read by Škultéty and other Slovak intellectuals, linked in his book "the Principality of Nitra ruled by Privina and after him Svatopluk"[55] exclusively with Slovakia, which was not

ing context by DUCHÁČEK, Milan. *Václav Chaloupcký. Hledání československých dějin*. Praha : Karolinum, 2014.

51 Critics blamed Chaloupecký's conception primarily for the theory that a large part of the more mountainous areas of today's Slovakia, especially central and eastern Slovakia, was not significantly populated before the 11th–13th century and the colonization processes of the High Middle Ages. He also claimed that "historical Slovakia" was originally "the Czech land." CHALOUPECKÝ, Václav. *Staré Slovensko*. Bratislava : FiF UK, 1923, p. 313ff.

52 CHALOUPECKÝ 1923, p. 287; Cf. BLÜML, Josef – JIROUŠEK, Bohumil. Historik Václav Chaloupecký a Slovensko. In POSPÍŠIL, Ivo – ZELENKA, Miloš (eds.) *Aktuální slovakistika*. Brno : Ústav slavistiky FiF MU, 2004, pp. 11–14. The intentional research goal constructed in this way was noticed in a similar context in the work of Píč by HOLLÝ 2018, p. 92 ff. Almost identical research questions are also stated by STEINHÜBEL, Ján. *Nitrianske kniežatstvo. Počiatky stredovekého Slovenska*. Bratislava : Rak, 2016, p. 12.

53 BOHÁČ, Jozef. *Dejiny staroslávnej Nitry*. Nitra : B. Fílder, 1928, p. 5 ff; ŠKULTÉTY, Jozef. Nitra. In *Národnie noviny*, 28 January 1921, p. 1 ff.

54 ŠKULTÉTY 1921, p. 1.

55 Regarding Svätopluk's alleged princely residence in Nitra, it should be noted that the contemporary Annals of Fulda (or other sources) do not record that Svätopluk's domain (*regnum Zuentibaldi*) in the 60s of the 9th century was directly in Nitra. This localization was deduced by scholars precisely on the assumption of Pribina's Nitra principality, which, however, is likewise not directly mentioned by any source. In the historiography, there were also different opinions about the

Fig. 2 Max Schurmann's painting of Pribina and Koceľ with the Slovak national symbol (upper right corner), 1933. Source: webumenia.sk

uncommon in his time. He assessed the status of Nitra precisely according to the ideas of Jireček and Bretholz, though without direct references, as "a separate Slavic principality" and Pribina was discussed with a certain restraint as a "Slovak prince."[56]

Chaloupecký's synthesis of the medieval history of Slovakia resonated strongly in both professional and lay discourse, especially in the eastern part of the republic. The Slovak ruler Pribina and the Nitra region as the beginning of historical Slovakia were presented in almost the same way in interwar historical syntheses and textbooks of Czechoslovak history,[57] as well as in the press of the time.[58] With a new statehood for Slovaks as a result of political independence from the Kingdom of Hungary, the narrative of a separate historical Slovak principality became more firmly anchored in historiography. Before the establishment of Czechoslovakia, the "lesser principality of Pribina" (*údělné knížectví*), which was still presented this way by the majority of scholarship, acquired the status of a tribal principality in national historiography after 1918.[59] This principality, to which historians have attributed a separate status independent from Moravia at this time, should have formed an important eastern component of Great Moravia. The Great Moravian Principality, in turn, represented a common historical symbol—or historical myth—of the united Bohemians, Moravians and Slovaks. However, apparently even in the 1920s, the theory of unification

localization of Svätopluk's initial domain (*regnum*). E.g., Z. Dittrich localized this "*regnum*" in eastern Bohemia and Třeštík possibly to Bratislava Castle.

56 CHALOUPECKÝ 1923, p. 25; see also CHALOUPECKÝ, Václav. Nitra a počátky křesťanství na Slovensku. In CHALOUPECKÝ, Václav – HOFFMAN, Ján (eds.) *Dva články o Pribinovi*. Bratislava : Ministerstvo školství a národní osvěty, 1930, pp. 3–18, esp. pp. 8–12.

57 PEKAŘ, Josef. *Dějiny Československé*. Praha : Klementinum, 1921, pp. 11–12; BIDLO, Jaroslav – ŠUSTA, Josef. *Všeobecný dějepis pro vyšší třídy škol středních. Díl druhý*. Praha : Historický klub, 1921, p. 31.

58 "Nitra was the main centre of the Slovaks, where their own and independent prince resided." Privina. In *Lidové Listy*, 5 March 1933, p. 1; "…der einzige slowakische Fürst." Ein Fürst der Slovaken. Die Pribina feier und die Stadt Neutra. In *Grenzbote*, 11 April 1933, p. 4.

59 CHALOUPECKÝ 1923, p. 27. However, he did not yet claim that Nitra was the main suprartribal centre of the whole "historical Slovakia" as Steinhübel, for example, and before him Ratkoš and others believe nowadays. According to Chaloupecký, Nitra was only one of the tribal principalities in the territory of today's Slovakia, similarly to "Bratislavsko" (Poznansko) or "Považsko" (province of Wag) or Hont, which were meant to be transformed into counties in the Kingdom of Hungary. Chaloupecký's main research goal was to reconstruct the historical picture of the whole interwar territory of Slovakia. The Nitra region was thus an important part and a certain centre, but not the whole territory.

of the Moravian and Nitra principalities as a result of Mojmir's military attack, which is nowadays considered by the majority to be a historical fact, had not yet been definitely established. According to Chaloupecký, Pribina "was to be expelled from his principality by the Moravian Rastic."[60]

It was the *Old Slovakia* as the first authoritative academic treatment of the medieval history of the eastern part of Czechoslovakia that, despite a wave of backlash from Slovak nationalist intellectuals,[61] brought further impetus to the broader scholarly discourse for consolidation of the concept of the first, and characteristically Slovak, early medieval power formation. Interwar scholars from Slovakia and Bohemia such as Juraj Hodál, Josef Cibulka and others automatically operated with the view, irrespective of nationality or scholarly inclination, that in the 30s of the 9th century, the Moravians led by Mojmir attacked the neighbouring Slovak principality, expelled the local ruler and annexed his domain to their own.[62] Particularly in the works of Hodál, a priest, teacher and historian with no academic training but with a strong national consciousness, Pribina and his supposed principality represented early medieval "Slovakia."[63]

The concept of a separate, Pribina Nitra region was further strengthened as a result of unprecedented social turmoil related to the presumed 1100th anniversary of the consecration of the church in Nitra mentioned in that dubious sentence from Chapter 11 of the *Conversio*. During 12–13 August 1933, the so-called Pribina celebrations took place, which considering the background of commemoration of the alleged construction of the first church in Nitra, served as an important political platform for Slovak intellectuals, cultural figures and incumbent politicians seeking to assert the greatest possible degree of autonomy for Slovakia within the common state.[64] In the 1930s, it was in the context of the Pribina celebrations and accompanying autonomist manifestations that the political and cultural actualisation of this historical actor, already understood in Slovakia as its own and historically first "national hero," grew in relevance. The insufficiently documented history of the north Danube region and an early medieval local leader with unclear origins and an uncertain relationship to Nitra became more prominent in this period as the

60 CHALOUPECKÝ 1923, pp. 25–26 with reference to Novotný's *České dejiny I*, where, however, there is no mention of Rastislav's intervention. Apparently the older interpretation from the times of Baroque and Enlightenment writings about Rastislav's conquest of Nitra region was still in use here. Chaloupecký did not elaborate on this claim further.

61 See DUCHÁČEK 2015, p. 203 ff.; BLÜML – JIROUŠEK 2004, p. 12 ff.

62 "In 828 the Moravians struck our land and, having driven away our last independent ruler, Privina, they took our territory and conquered the Slovaks." HODÁL, Juraj. *O praobyvateľoch dnešného Slovenska*. Trnava : Spolok sv. Vojtecha, 1925, p. 37; CIBULKA, Josef. Pribina a jeho kostel v Nitre, In *Život,* 1933, vol. 15, pp. 84–92; HRUŠOVSKÝ, František. Počiatky kresťanstva na Slovensku. In *Kultúra*, 1933, vol. 6, no. 7/8, pp. 502–513, esp. pp. 505–507.

63 HODÁL, Juraj. *Kostol kniežaťa Privinu* v *Nitre. 830–1930*. Nitra : Jednota, 1930, p. 8 claims, similar to older scholarship, that Pribina built a church in Nitra only after he was expelled from Mojmir and baptized in the Eastern March, from where he returned and "took possession of his principality, Slovakia." Hodál presented the concept of a distinct "Slovak principality" particularly in his article HODÁL, Juraj. Dejiny slovenského kniežatstva počas moravského nadpánstva. In *Kultúra*, 1926, vol. 1, no. 7/8, pp. 354–381.

64 ARPÁŠ, Róbert. Pribinove slávnosti ako pripomienka cirkevno-národnej veľkomoravskej tradície. In *Historický časopis*, 2017, vol. 65, no. 4, pp. 655–674.

subject of wider nationalist instrumentalisation. Thus, during several days of festivities and cultural events, loud appeals were made by the most influential interwar Slovak politicians calling for people to "follow in the footsteps of the Slovak prince Pribina."[65] Andrej Hlinka, leader of the Slovak People's Party (Slovenská ľudová strana), loudly proclaimed, "Today's magnificent, eleven hundredth anniversary is living proof that we were a self-sustaining, independent nation and we want to remain so!"[66] A desired political independence not yet sufficiently realised on the state level at that time was therefore inevitably projected onto the professional understanding of this historical individual.[67]

Pribina was increasingly loudly portrayed as the first ruler of the (ancestors of) Slovaks. It should not be forgotten that even before 1918, he was mentioned in the scholarship almost exclusively as an inferior Moravian administrator, a partial prince or an otherwise unknown Slavic leader, while only a minority of authors (Hurban, Jireček) associated his activities directly and solely with the Slovaks of Hungary. In the 1920s and 1930s, therefore, we can observe a paradigm shift in the understanding of Pribina's power status, strikingly correlated with political changes and the collective aspirations of Slovak intellectuals as well as a large portion of the general public.[68]

After the announcement of Slovak autonomy in the autumn of 1938 and a few months later, during the establishment of the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party as the dominant political force of the newly formed Slovak State under the protection of Hitler's Germany, Pribina's historiographical image gained even more distinctive features as an independent medieval ruler. This was the case especially in the markedly propagandistic work of the "ľudák regime's court historian" František Hrušovský (1903–1956), where Pribina appears as "the first Slovak ruler."[69] Given the political "divorce" of the Slovaks from the Czechoslovak state, it is not surprising that Slovak nationalists needed to demonstratively demarcate themselves from the Czechs also by the appearance of a typically Slovak, and non-Moravian, national ruler. However, it is characteristic of the "ľudák" interpretation of national history that, as in Hrušovský's writings (but also in the younger rightwing "neo-ľudáks" historicized literature),[70] the other

65 After ARPÁŠ 2017, p. 671.

66 Quote after ZAJONC, Jozef. Prečo je Nitra starodávne mesto? In KREKOVIČ, Eduard – MANNOVÁ, Elena – KREKOVIČOVÁ, Eva (eds.) *Mýty naše Slovenské*. Bratislava : Premedia, 2013, p. 139. Similarly, then minister of education and national edification Ivan Dérer also spoke, see ARPÁŠ 2017, pp. 669–670. Cf. also poem from KRASKO, Ivan. Pribino, knieža náš! In BAJANÍK, Stanislav (ed.) *Slovensko sa rodilo v Nitre. K 60. výročiu Pribinových slávností v Nitre roku 1933 a prvému výročiu prijatia ústavy*. Martin : Matica slovenská, 1993, pp. 37–38 (other speeches by politicians are also reprinted here).

67 On the occasion of the celebration, a scientific conference was held, the results of which were published: STANISLAV, Ján (ed.) *Ríša Veľkomoravská: sborník vedeckých prác*. Praha : J. Mazáč, 1933; see also BANÍK 1933, 541ff.

68 MANNOVÁ 2019, p. 61: "Myth forms the basis of the cult of personality; the revered figure is glorified, possibly reinterpreted, then monumentalized and finally mythicized—historical development is personalized and interpreted as inevitably linked to the glorified personality."

69 HRUŠOVSKÝ, František. *Slovenské dejiny*. 4th ed. Turčiansky sv. Martin : Matica slovenská, 1940, (1st edition 1939), p. 15.

70 For instance, in the writings of Milan S. Ďurica or Arvéd L. Grébert.

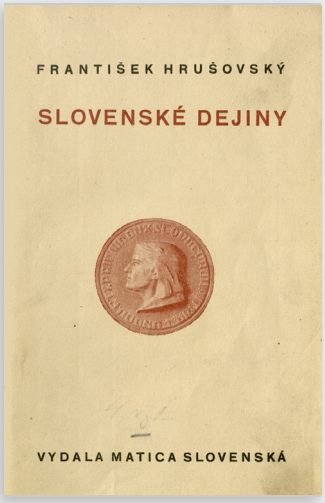

Fig. 3. Commemorative medal issued on the occasion of Pribina's celebrations in 1933. Legend: PRIBINA DUX SLOVACORUM NITRIAE FUNDAV.ET. Author: Ján Koniarek. On the right the Frontispiece of Hrušovský's synthesis of Slovak history with a reproduction of Koniarek's medal.

Moravian rulers of the Mojmirid family were also characterized as "Slovaks."[71] Slovak historiographical works from the period of the wartime Slovak State, in particular the prominent linguist Ján Stanislav (1904–1977), emphasized and evidently greatly overestimated the importance of Nitra, which was supposed to be, according to some Slovak authors, the seat of Archbishop Methodius.[72] In Stanislav's linguistic work, one can observe a schematic identification of the ethnic designation "Slovenes"[73] with an exclusively Slovak population. This can be seen, for example, in the author's understanding of Pribina's nobles from the time of his activity in Blatnohrad whose names are known from the *Conversio* and the *Codex Aquileiensis*.[74] Individuals with Slavic names who figured in Pribina's close circle during his governance of Pannonia were presented in the works of Stanislav and other researchers as (Old) Slovaks.[75]

In some respects, a shorter treatise by the historian Daniel Rapant (1897–1988) differs from the propagandistically nationalistic narratives of the time, in which for the first time we encounter a relatively convincing hypothesis about the Bavarian origins of Pribina's wife, something now often regarded as a historical fact.[76] Rapant's thoroughly reasoned arguments (not only about the construction of the church in "Nitrava" according to *Conversio*) were often contradic-

71 HRUŠOVSKÝ 1940, p. 16: "Mojmir rules from Devín the western part of the Slovak territory." On the ľudáks historiographical conception, see HUDEK 2010, pp. 45–48; FINDOR, Andrej. *Začiatky národných dejín*. Bratislava : Kalligram, 2011, pp. 114–149. To Hrušovský especially see HUDEK, Adam. Historik František Hrušovský: žiak Václava Chaloupeckého ako tvorca ľudáckej koncepcie slovenských dejín. In DUCHÁČEK – BÍLKOVÁ 2018, pp. 117–129.

72 STANISLAV, Ján. *Slovanskí apoštoli Cyril a Metod a ich činnosť vo Veľkomoravskej ríši*. Bratislava : SAVU, 1945. For contemporary critique of this assumptions, see RAPANT, Daniel. K otázke pôsobenia sv. Cyrila a Metoda na Slovensku. In *Historický sborník*, 1945, vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 270–276; POLÁCH, Ota S. J. Metropolitné sídlo sv. Metoda a Nitra. In *Historický sborník*, 1946, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 274–294.

73 It was an Old Church Slavonic term for Slavs in general, but Slovak scholars considered, and still sometimes consider, this ethnonym to be a separate ethnicity of the particular north Danubian "tribe", distinct from, for example, the Moravians and Czechs. Cf. LYSÝ, Miroslav. *Mojmírovci, Moravania* a *Franská ríša. Štúdie k etnogenéze, politickým inštitúciam a ústavnému zriadeniu na území Slovenska vo včasnom Stredoveku*. Bratislava : Atticum, 2014, p. 78 ff.

74 STANISLAV, Ján. *Pribinovi veľmoži*. Bratislava : Slovenská učená spoločnosť, 1940. Cf. also the strongly biased and highly dubious onomastic methods used for discovering the southern "Slovak" early medieval settlement in a book written after the Vienna Award of 1938 (completed in 1943) STANISLAV, Ján. *Slovenský juh v stredoveku I.* 2nd ed. Bratislava : NLC, 1999, (1st edition 1948), on p. 11: "Pannonia was Slovak", and "Through our study, we are gaining Pribina's and Koceľ's principality into Slovak history."

75 STANISLAV, Ján. Zo štúdia slovanských osobných mien v Evanjeliu cividalskom (Ev. Civ.). In *Slavia*, 1941, vol. 18, pp. 87–100.

76 RAPANT, Daniel. Pribynov kostolík v Nitre. In *Elán*, 1941, vol. 12, no. 3/4, pp. 18–21.

tory to the theories of his teacher Chaloupecký,[77] as well as to the nationalistic pretensions of Hrušovský,[78] but at the same time cemented in many respects the state of knowledge on Pribina available to this day. Even for Rapant, it was obvious in the 1940s that he did not understand Pribina other than as the first independent ruler of the direct ancestors of the Slovaks.

In this regard, the works of Slovak historian František Bokes (1906–1968) should also be mentioned. In 1943, he published the educational historical publication *Slovak Living Space in the Past and Today*, in which he outlined a similar dualistic understanding of the political map of the middle Danube region during the 9th century as is usually presented today. According to him, north of the middle Danube in the first decades of the 9th century there should have existed two centres of supratribal power: one of Mojmir and the other of Pribina. The Principality of Nitra headed by Pribina was to be integrated into a larger political unit; Great Moravia, by the Moravians.[79] However, Pribina's alleged principality was not quite explicitly "Slovakised", as Bokes emphasised rather the Slavic and overall Great Moravian character of the territory in question. A few years later, in his large-scale synthesis of Slovak history published after the war within the new political environment of the restored Czechoslovakia, he subsequently extended the "dualistic" thesis to include a more pronounced Slovak slant, writing rather symptomatically about "unifying Moravian-Slovak efforts."[80] Pribina and Mojmir appeared to be historical representatives of the same political and national communities (Czechs and Slovaks), which after the Second World War, were reunited within the borders of the reestablished Czechoslovakia.[81]

Communist Nationalism and beyond: Pribina at the Beginning of "Medieval Slovakia"

After the February 1948 communist coup d'état, a new Marxist frame and scheme for older history occurred. Despite a proclaimed international approach, post-war historiography adhering to the Marxist-Leninist methodology did not cease to manifest elements of national historiography, (re)constructing and "scientifically" documenting the historical narrative of the Czech and Slovak—as opposed to the Czechoslovak—nation.[82] In the first post-war

77 Cf. DUCHÁČEK 2015, pp. 140–159, 238–245.

78 Hrušovský's views regarding Pribina are disputed in RAPANT, Daniel. Ešte raz o Pribynovom nitrianskom kostolíku. In *Elán*, 1943, vol. 13, no. 7, p. 5.

79 BOKES, František. *Slovenský životný priestor v minulosti a dnes*. Bratislava : Čas, 1943, p. 29 ff.

80 BOKES, František. *Dejiny Slovenska a Slovákov. Od najstarších čias po oslobodenie*. Bratislava : SAVU, 1946, p. 31 ff. The "own Slovak history" begins with the year 822 and the first known appearance of the Moravians in written sources. Bokes mentioned "the first Slovak princes Kolotech, Svätopluk, Pribina, Koceľ, Rastislav and others." It is worth noting that Rapant, in a devastating review of this synthesis, accused the author of allegedly reproducing verbatim "mine Pribina" i.e., Rapant's writing: See RAPANT, Daniel. Dr. Fr. Bokes: Dejiny Slovenska a Slovákov. In *Historický sborník*, 1946, vol. 4, no. 4, pp. 474–509, quote on p. 476.

81 For example, Krofta spoke about the "Moravian-Slovak Empire" and perceived Pribina as "a Slovak prince, perhaps one of the tribal princes in Slovakia, who probably united the rule over several tribes in his hands and thus established a larger principality." KROFTA, Kamil. *Dějiny Československé*. Praha : B. Janda, 1946, pp. 7–15, quote on p. 10.

82 HUDEK 2010, p. 148–169; GÓRNY, Maciej. Past in the Future. National Tradition and Czecho-

general survey of Slovak history written by archaeologist and art historian Ján Dekan (1919–2007), which also defined the Early Middle Ages as a period of the "beginning of the nation," Pribina's supposed principality clearly constitutes a distinct power unit, markedly different from Mojmir's Moravian principality.[83] It was in post-war research that the dualistic conception of the origin of Great Moravia was definitively established and argumentatively supplemented. According to this theory, the Moravian Principality was to be the first "common state of the ancestors of the Czechs and Slovaks", established after the union of the Principalities of Nitra and Moravia. These two political units, only one of which is actually historically documented, were meant to represent distinct autonomous political and ethnic entities, which after the expulsion of Pribina from Nitra, were to be integrated into the "Great Moravian State."

While mainly Czech and Moravian as well as several foreign scholars have not always explained the original position of Pribina in terms of an independent tribal prince during the more than forty years of existence of the post-war socialist Czechoslovak Republic,[84] on the other hand, Slovak historians and archaeologists have unanimously and without any significant doubt professionally "canonized" the historiographical image of the Nitra principality with Pribina as its first and last ruler attested to in the sources. In the writings of leading Slovak medievalists Branislav Varsik,[85] Peter Ratkoš,[86] Matúš

slovak Marxist Historiography. In *European Review of History*, 2003, vol 10, no. 1, pp. 103–114. On post-war communist nationalism and the Slovak professional instrumentalisation of 9th century history, cf. KOPAL, Petr. Filmový projekt Velká Morava. Případ komunistického nacionalismu. In *Paměť a dějiny*, 2010, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 55–63.

83 DEKAN, Ján. *Začiatky slovenských dejín a ríša Veľkomoravská*. Bratislava : SAVÚ, 1951, p. 43 ff., where he writes about the "Moravian-Slovak tribal divide" and the "political-administrative dualism of united Moravia."

84 E.g., GRAUS, František – MACEK, Josef – TIBENSKÝ, Ján. *Přehled československých dějin. Do roku 1848, Díl I*. Praha : ČSAV, 1958, p. 46; VANĚČEK, Václav. Štát Moravanov – Veľkomoravská ríša. In BÖHM, Jaroslav (ed.) *Veľká Morava. Tisícročná tradícia štátu a kultúry*. Praha : ČSAV, 1963, p. 18; HAVLÍK, Lubomir E. *Slovanské státní útvary raného středověku*. Praha : Academia, 1987, p. 64; DIETTRICH, Zdenko R. *Christianity in Great-Moravia*. Gronigen : Instituut voor Middeleeuwsche Geschiedenis, 1962, pp. 67–72; VLASTO, Alexis P. *The Entry of the Slavs into Christendom*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1970, p. 24.

85 In 1946, at the first congress of the Slovak Historical Society, Varsik outlined the research areas for the search for and discovery of Slovak medieval history, VARSIK, Branislav. Výskum slovenského etnika (Stav, problémy a nové úlohy). In VARSIK, Branislav. *Zo slovenského stredoveku. Výber historických štúdií a článkov z rokov 1946–1968*. Bratislava : SAV, 1972, pp. 35–64. Neither Pribina nor the Principality of Nitra is mentioned in this text. It emphasizes, in particular, the distinctiveness of the so-called Slovenes (Slovieni) and their continuity with the Slovaks. VARSIK, Branislav. O vzniku a rozvoji slovenskej národnosti v stredoveku. In *Historický časopis*, 1984, vol. 32, no. 4, pp. 529–550, on p. 548 accentuating the claim of Bálint Hóman, he writes about "the Slovak autochthonous inhabitants of Nitra."

86 RATKOŠ, Peter. K otázke etnického charakteru Veľkej Moravy. In HOLOTÍK, Ľudovít (ed.) *O vzájomných vzťahoch Čechov a Slovákov.* Bratislava : SAV, 1956, pp. 24–37, esp. pp. 30–32; RATKOŠ, Peter. Územný vývoj Veľkej Moravy (fikcie a skutočnosť). In *Historický časopis*, 1985, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 202, 218; RATKOŠ, Peter. *Slovensko v dobe veľkomoravskej*. Košice : Východoslovenské vydavateľstvo, 1988, p. 33 ff.

Kučera[87] and Richard Marsina,[88] the "old Principality of Nitra" represented an unquestionable historical entity, which was quite often anachronistically and uncritically associated with almost the entire territory of modern Slovakia. According to the belief of Slovak historians, Pribina ruled an organized political unit whose population was to form a sort of ethnic basis of the emerging "feudal nationality" of the Slovaks.[89] The ethnic origin of the Slovaks in the person of Pribina and his alleged principality was perhaps most vocally pursued by the historian Kučera, later briefly also Minister of Education (1992–1993), who wrote:

> It is mainly a geographically closed area of the old Nitrian principality, occupying the greater part of today's Slovakia, where for the first time in the history of our Slavic ancestors the development was so advanced that already in the first third of the 9th century, an organized political unit was formed under the leadership of Prince Pribina. This phenomenon was of immeasurable significance for the further developmental fate of Slovakia, for its territorial and organizational and administrative constitution.[90]

From the 1970s onwards, Kučera promoted a strongly nationalised version of the early medieval history of the territory of Slovakia, in which, similar to other Slovak authors, he emphasised the political and economic sophistication of the Slavic settlement in forming the Kingdom of Hungary vis a vis the participation of the "less sophisticated" Magyar nomadic social strata. At the same time, in writing with an admittedly nationalistic angle, he repeatedly stressed that it was "Prince Pribina" and the supposed polity administered by him that was of fundamental importance for the Slovaks and Slovak history. In the 1980s, Kučera himself was substantially involved in efforts to create a Slovak series of historical films about the times of Great Moravia,[91] the one of which was intended to depict the idealised reign of Pribina. Petr Kopal, who has studied the unrealised, strongly nationalistic film project in detail, pointed out that Kučera also promoted a historical perspective identifying Pribina with the Slovaks in the very design of this never shot film.[92] The figure of the unknown exile and the latter Pannonian governor thus became a prototype of the desired historical independence and political individuality of Slovaks during the subsequent conjuncture of Slovak nationalism in the times of occupied

87 KUČERA, Matúš. *Slovensko po páde Veľkej Moravy*. Bratislava : VEDA, 1974, p. 25ff; KUČERA, Matúš. Veľká Morava a začiatky našich národných dejín. In *Historický časopis*, 1985, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 163–196; KUČERA, Matúš. Veľká Morava a slovenské dejiny. In POULÍK, Josef – CHROPOVSKÝ, Bohuslav (eds.) *Velká Morava a počátky československé státnosti*. Praha : Academia, 1985, pp. 245–271.

88 MARSINA, Richard. *Metodov boj*, 2nd ed. Bratislava : Spolok slovenských spisovateľov, 2005, (1st edition 1985), p. 26 ff; MARSINA, Richard. O začiatkoch slovenských dejín. In MARSINA, Richard. *Ku koncepcii* a *vývoju slovenskej historiografie*. Bratislava : PostScriptum, 2013 ((1st published in 1996)), p. 95 ff.; MARSINA, Richard. *Nové pohľady historickej vedy na slovenské dejiny. I. časť: Najstaršie obdobie slovenských dejín (do prelomu 9.–10. storočia)*. Bratislava : Metodické centrum mesta Bratislavy, 1995, p. 4 ff.: "The first Slavic ruler in the territory of Slovakia known by name is Pribina, who is therefore the first indisputably credible historical figure of Slovak history."

89 KUČERA 1985, p. 184; HALAGA, Ondrej R. K otázke vzniku slovenskej národnosti. In *Historický časopis*, 1962, vol. 10, no. 2, p. 243, 257; CHROPOVSKÝ, Bohuslav – MARSINA, Richard – RATKOŠ, Peter et al. *Dejiny Slovenska I (do roku 1526)*. Bratislava : Veda, 1986, p. 90 ff.

90 KUČERA 1974, p. 25.

91 KOPAL 2010, pp. 55–63.

92 KOPAL 2010, p. 58.

Fig. 4 The bronze statue of Pribina at the Nitra castle square, 1989, author Tibor Bártfay. Photo: Jakub Godiš

and "normalized" Czechoslovakia.[93] Such an image was replicated exactly by the domestic national historiography.

During the second half of the 20th century and basically until the seminal works of Ján Steinhübel,[94] the question of Pribina's Nitra region was not given any more systematic attention, which was undoubtedly influenced by the considerable lack of sources and the general absence of any further accurate contemporary data about such a speculated rather than source-documented principality. However, despite the ambiguity of available source material, the "Principality of Nitra" has almost unanimously established itself in research as a historical fact and the historical origin of Slovakia. Thus, the image of the "Nitrian tribal prince Pribina" embedded in Slovak historiography did not change during the late 20th century. Foreign research quite understandably focused on the securely documented, historiographically and archaeologically better researchable Lower Pannonian Carolingian province with its centre in Blatnohrad (Mosapurc).[95] In the last third of the 20th century, Slovakian archaeological research created allegedly exact theories about the so-called Blatnica-Mikulčice horizon material manifestation (Blatnicko mikulčický horizont, BMH) and the absolute dating of the violent demise of "Pribina's castles."[96] Mojmir's putative conquest of the neighboring Pribina principality was presented as a historically and archaeologically documented—

93 SLANINA, Adam. *Podoby slovenského nacionalizmu medzi rokmi 1990 – 1992*. Bachelor thesis. Praha : UK FF Ústav Politologie, 2021, pp. 17–22; MARUŠIAK, Juraj. Slovenská spoločnosť a normalizácia. In SZIGETI, László (ed.) *Slovenská otázka dnes*. Bratislava : Kalligram, 2007, p. 320 ff.

94 STEIHNÜBEL, Ján. Nitrianske kniežatstvo a zánik Veľkej Moravy. In *Historické štúdie*, 1996, vol. 37, pp. 7–26; STEIHNÜBEL, Ján. Pôvod a najstaršie dejiny Nitrianskeho kniežatstva. In *Historický časopis*, 1998, vol. 46, no. 3, pp. 369–416; STEINHÜBEL 2021.

95 For foreign notions about Pribina and Nitra, see e.g., DOPSCH, Heinz. Passau als Zentrum der Slawenmission. Ein Beitrag zur Frage des "Großmährischen Reiches". In *Südostdeutsches Archiv*, 1985/6, vol. 28/29, pp. 5–28, here p. 9 ff; WOLFRAM, Herwig. *Salzburg, Bayern, Österreich*. Wien; Müncehn : R. Oldenburg, 1995, p. 311 ff; MITTERAUER, Michael. *Karolingische Markgrafen im Südosten. Fränkische Reichsaristokratie und bayerischer Stammesadel im österreichischen Raum*. Wien : Böhlau, 1963, p. 87 called Pribina "ein slowakischer Teilfürst."

96 Mainly BIALEKOVÁ, Darina. Návrh chronológie praveku a včasnej doby dejinnej na Slovensku. Slovanské obdobie. In *Slovenská archeológia*, 1980, vol. 28, no. 1, pp. 213–221, here pp. 215, 219; BIALEKOVÁ, Darina. Zur Datierungsfrage archäologischer Quellen aus der ersten Hälfte des 9. Jh. Beiden Slawen nördlich der Donau. In CHROPOVSKÝ, Bohuslav (ed.) *Rapports du IIIe Congrès International d'Archéologie Slave. Tome 1/2.* Bratislava : VEDA, 1979, pp. 93–103.

therefore unquestionable—fact precisely on the basis of disputed and now revised archaeological data.[97]

After the dissolution of the Czechoslovak state in 1993, the historical instrumentalisation of Mojmirid Moravia, and older Slavic history in general, lost its significance, especially in Bohemia.[98] On the contrary, partly in Moravia[99] but largely in the newly founded Slovak Republic, the Great Moravian and Cyrilo-Methodian "state tradition" found a place not only in the preamble of the new constitution, but expressly in the historiographical and historical-publicist conceptions or constructions of medieval Slovak history. That is the case of a programmatically nationalist and primordialist book based on the ethnic interpretations of history collecting many texts of Slovak national(istic) historians.[100] Pribina stands here at the origin of the essentially understood Slovak ethnogenesis. Among other things, the authors reprinted a rather revealing statement on the controversy surrounding the statue of "king" Svätopluk erected in 2010 at the Bratislava castle which was originally inscribed with the words "King of the Old Slovaks."[101] In the statement, a group of historians and archaeologists signed the following words: "The existence of a sovereign Slovak Republic naturally requires that we perceive our own history in accordance with a positive evaluation [sic!] of the entire ethnogenesis of the nation, continuously documented since the time of Prince Pribina and its national-emancipatory development."[102] Therefore, Pribina is usually, but not exclusively, understood in public and professional discourse as the first source-documented, politically sovereign but later subjugated ruler of the ancestors of the Slovaks.[103]

97 The problematic nature of the automatic "excavation of history" by Slovak archaeologists, who in this case attempted to reconcile the deductions of historians about Nitra with the material sources, was pointed out by TŘEŠTÍK, Dušan. K poměru archeologie a historie. In *Archeologické rozhledy*, 2001, vol. 53, no. 2, pp. 357–361, here p. 360; Similarly PROFANTOVÁ, Naďa – PROFANT, Martin. Archeologie a historie aneb „jak vykopávat" dějiny? In KLÁPŠTĚ, Jan – PLEŠKOVÁ, Eva – ŽEMLIČKA, Josef (eds.) *Dějiny ve věku nejistot. Sborník k příležitosti 70. narozenin Dušana Třeštíka*. Praha : NLN, 2003, p. 244 ff. However, Třeštík, like most historians, still accepted both archaeological concepts, BMH and the theory of the extinction of Pribina's castles, which were also used to substantiate his own interpretations, cf. TŘEŠTÍK, Dušan. *Vznik Velké Moravy: Moravané, Čechové a střední Evropa v letech 791–871*. Praha : NLN, 2001, p. 110 ff. For the revision of BMH, see recently ROBAK, Zbigniew. The Origins and the Colapse of the Blatnica-Mikulčice Paradigm. In *Slovenská archeológia*, 2017, vol. 64, no. 1, pp. 99–153. For the new dating of hillforts based on modern natural-scientific methods HENNING, Joachim – HEUSSNER, Karl-Uwe – PIETA, Karol – RUTTKAY, Matej. Bojná and the dating of hillforts of the Nitra Principality. Contribution of natural sciences to the archaeological research. In PIETA, Karol – ROBAK, Zbigniew (eds.) *Bojná 2, Nové výsledky výskumov včasnostredovekých hradísk*. Nitra : Archeologický ústav, SAV, 2015, pp. 335–345.

98 TŘEŠTÍK 1999, p. 158 ff.

99 HAVLÍK, Lubomír E. *Svatopluk Veliký, král Moravanů* a *Slovanů*. Brno : Jota, 1994.

100 MARSINA, Richard – MULÍK, Peter (eds.) *Etnogenéza Slovákov*. *Kto sme a aké je naše meno.* Martin : Matica slovenská, 2011 (1st edition 2009).

101 *Stanovisko slovenských historikov, archeológov* a *jazykovedcov*. In MARSINA – MULÍK 2009, pp. 168–169. Cf. also HADLER, Frank. Alter Slowake! „Vernünftiger Staatshistorismus" statt „Slawenbeschwörung". In *Osteuropa*, 2009, vol. 59, no. 12, pp. 273–279.

102 MARSINA – MULÍK 2013, *Stanovisko slovenských*, p. 168.

103 E.g., a popular but specialist-written collective work SEGEŠ, Vladimír (ed.) *Kniha kráľov: Panovníci v dejinách Slovenska a Slovákov*. Bratislava : Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľsvo, 2003, p. 19: "By name, Pribina was the oldest known Slavic ruler in the territory of Slovakia. The accounts about him should be considered as a reliable, documented source of Slovak history."; p. 20: "Since then, we can speak of the beginnings of the Slovak nation, whose members were then

The most thorough historiographical treatment of the topic so far was offered by Ján Steinhübel, whose detailed explanations elaborated and basically concluded the issues that had been under discussion since the time of Chaloupecký's search for the "historical individuality" of Old Slovakia. In his seminal work, *The Nitrian Principality: The Beginnings of Medieval Slovakia*, Steinhübel seeks scholarly answers to questions that have long intrigued (especially) Slovak historians and public; "Are the Slovaks also an old historical nation? Who and when laid the national, territorial and historical foundations of Slovakia? Can we find our historical beginning? Can we find a historical Slovakia?"[104]

The answer for the author and a large portion of researchers and recipients of historiography seems to be, as it has been since the 1920s, the Nitrian principality with its alleged only known independent ruler which is supposed to constitute indisputable evidence of the medieval origins of today's Slovakia. Steinhübel's consistent—and very influential in Slovakia—conception of early medieval history[105] is clearly not based on nationalistic aspirations, but rather on the implicit need to search for and to find the national history and the "solid historical origins" of Slovakia and Slovaks. Nevertheless, researchers outside the Slovak environment usually do not see convincing evidence in the available medieval sources about "historical Slovakia" or Slovaks as a separate ethnic or national group, which would have been already internally and externally differentiated from the generally understood Slavs in the (Early) Middle Ages.[106]

called Sloveni or Slovienes." Pribina and his presumed principality in Nitra were consistently postulated as a fact, proving the national origins of Slovaks and Slovakia with patriotic fervour by M. Kučera and his pupil M. Homza. KUČERA, Matúš. Slovensko v zápase o svoju historickú a národnú identitu. In *Studia academica Slovaca*, 2002, vol. 31, (unpaginated); HOMZA, Martin. Niekoľko téz k počiatkom slovenského etnika. In *Studia academica Slovaca*, 2002, vol. 31, (unpaginated). Available online: https://zborniky.e-slovak.sk/SAS_31_2002.pdf

104 STEINHÜBEL 2016, p. 12.

105 The author conceived several synthetic essays about the early medieval period where the Principality of Nitra organically fits into the master national narrative about the origins of Slovakia in the 9th century. Cf. e.g., STEINHÜBEL, Ján. The Duchy of Nitra. In TEICH, Mikuláš – KOVÁČ, Dušan – BROWN, Martin D. (eds.) *Slovakia in History*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 15–29.

106 E. g. GRAUS, František. *Die Nationenebildung der Westslawen im Mittelalter*. Sigmaringen : J. Thorbecke, 1980, p. 7 who outlined the possibility of the formation of Slovak national consciousness only in the context of the Kingdom of Hungary but did not specify the period and left the question open; ŠMAHEL, František. *Nalézaní, setkávání a míjení v životě jednoho medievisty.* Praha : Argo, 2009, p. 35 noticed that Graus remained rather reserved on the question of possible Slovak medieval national consciousness; TŘEŠTÍK 1999, p. 140 according to whom the "Slavs-Slovaks" ethnically differentiated themselves only gradually after the later medieval period; Cf. skepticism of KALHOUS, David. Svatopluk I.: kníže nebo král? K otázce legitimizace velkomoravských knížat ve středověké i moderní historiografi. In *Historia Slavorum Occidentis*, 2016, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 63–64 and footnote no. 1. The theorist of nationalism, Anthony Smith, noted that the Slovaks as an ethnic community did not have the distinctive attributes of a nation even in the 18th century (e.g., a common historical myth or a wider supra-regional cohesion) SMITH, Anthony D. *The Nation in History. Historiographic Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism*. Hanover : UP of New England, 2000, p. 86 and footnote no. 14. Among the Slovak social scientists who argue in favour of a much later, modern formation of Slovak nation e.g., ĎUROVIČ, Ľubomír. Tá naša (slovenská) identita…? Ako sa formovala politicky a teritoriálne? In SZIGETI László (ed.) *Slovenská otázka dnes*. Bratislava : Kalligram, 2007, pp. 32–40; SÝKORA, Peter. Úvod do mytológie slovenského národa. In SÝKORA, Peter. *Boj s drakom*. Bratislava : Fragment, 1992, pp. 76–104. Of course, it does not pose a problem for primordialist researchers, and the general public, to call the pre-modern Slavic-speaking population the (Old) Slovaks without being aware of the methodological and factual problems of such claims.

Conclusion

In conclusion, one peculiarity of Slovak medievalist discoursive tendencies can be ascertained, that is to say, a rather persistent preoocupation with the explanatory framework of national history.[107] Modern nationality and the "national question" in its many facets tends to insitantly influence not only research questions regarding the pre-modern—some would say even pre-national—past, but sometimes even the analysis of historical sources. At least as far as the Early Middle Ages are concerned, scholars and other intellectuals, not to mention the general public or politicians, are quite often—intentionally or unintentionally—unable or unwilling to separate their perspective from the notion of "nation" when explaining the early medieval past. Therefore, the Early Middle Ages in particular are all the more valuable the more "we", as contemporaries, while often circumventing a set of discontinuities and methodological problems, can positively identify ourselves with the people who lived in that era. It was the intellectuals, and from their ranks especially historians, who during the twentieth century, but also today through academic research, to a large extent saturated the need for national self-identification amongst a portion of society. However, such a research endeavour is often not solely based on a critical knowledge of history, but also on the creation of historical myths that live in the collective memory.[108] Looking at the older scholarship and tendencies in intellectual discourse, one can see quite clearly that the modern understanding of an early medieval Slavic leader was, and still is, determined not primarily or exclusively by available historical data, but rather by individual and/or collective "national" considerations which are quite modern and situational.

107 This feature has been also noted by MÚCSKA, Vincent. Niekoľko poznámok k súčasnosti slovenskej medievistiky. In DOLEŽALOVÁ, Eva – NOVOTNÝ, Robert – SOUKUP, Pavel (eds.) *Evropa a Čechy na konci středověku. Sborník příspěvků věnovaných Františku Šmahelovi*. Praha : Filosofica, 2004, p. 452; cf. also survey on the national preoccupation of Slovak medievalist research by ŠEDIVÝ, Juraj. Die slowakische Geschichtsforschung des 20. Jahrhunderts auf der Suche nach „ihrem" Frühmittelalter. In REIMITZ, Helmut – ZELLER, Bernhard (eds.) *Vergangenheit und Vergegenwärtigung. Frühes Mittelalter und europäisches Erinnerungskultur*. Wien : ÖAW, 2009, pp. 253–262. Šedivý, however, concluded—rather optimistically—that recent historians who deal with the Early Middle Ages (Steinhübel, Homza) do not essentialise this period in order to create a national history.

108 See MANNOVÁ 2020; IFVERSEN, Jan. Myth in the Writing of European History. In BERGER, Stefan – LORENZ, Chris (eds.) *Nationalizing the Past: Historians as Nation Builders in Modern Europe*. Hampshire; New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 452–457; HEIN-KIRCHNER, Heidi. Politische Mythen. In *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 2007, vol. 11, pp. 26–31. Available online: https://www.bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/apuz/30604/politische-mythen/; FINDOR, Andrej. (De)Constructing Slovak National Mythology. In *Sociológia*, 2002, vol. 34, no. 3, pp. 195–208.

FORUM HISTORIAE Journal and Portal for History and Related Disciplines
ISSN 1337-6861

Forum Historiae, 2022, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 32–51

www.forumhistoriae.sk

The Fight for the "Modern Peculiar Character." The Nationalist Narrative Within the Concept of Applied Art Modernization Reform in 1920's Slovakia

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Keywords
modernization reform, national applied art, Czechoslovakia 1918–1938, Josef Vydra, Antonín Hořejš

DOI
10.31577/forhist.2022.16.1.3

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Cite
SENEŠI LUTHEROVÁ, Silvia. The Fight for the "Modern Peculiar Character." The Nationalist Narrative Within the Concept of Applied Art Modernization Reform in 1920's Slovakia. In *Forum Historiae*, 2022, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 32–51, doi: 10.31577/forhist.2022.16.1.3

Abstract

SENEŠI LUTHEROVÁ, Silvia. The Fight for the "Modern Peculiar Character." The Nationalist Narrative Within the Concept of Applied Art Modernization Reform in 1920's Slovakia.

A significant portion of the theoretical discourse on modernization reform of applied art and design in Slovakia led by the cultural and political elite in the 1920s was based on the ideological framework of "national culture." In journal articles, leading proponents of the reform, Josef Vydra and Antonín Hořejš, constructed the concept of "modern national applied art," which they defined based on an objective, perceived quality: "national specificity" or a "character of national culture," which they eventually came to label "modern peculiar character" (Vydra). This article explores the ideological framework behind the modernization reform of applied art in Slovakia as a manifestation of the formation of the nationalist discourse within culture, first in terms of the cultural confirmation of the Slovak nation and later, the Czechoslovak nation. The "national character" of modern applied art is analysed as a period-specific ideological construct, which the authors created by re-interpreting the "national culture" using modernist discourse and therefore, in opposition to the school of folk's understanding of peculiar character. "Modern national applied art" was construed as a representation of the modern urban culture of the Slovak nation (Hořejš), and also as a synthesis of the "spirit of the nation" and the "spirit of modern times" in terms of artistic innovation (Vydra). In the last third of the 1920's, the concept was re-defined based on the ideological framework of the Czechoslovakist discourse to become a "modern Czechoslovak peculiar character" (Vydra), which rendered the contributions to reform of applied art in Slovakia now universal for the entire nation. Nationalistic arguments on the concept of modernization reform of applied art impacted the development of culture, which was applied as a way to assert the socio-political acceptance of aesthetic reform implying the principles of avant-garde art schools.

> After the coup [creation of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918], the situation is ambiguous: One group accepts folk art as the Slovak style, they protect it and pass it on unchanged into the circles of Slovak intelligentsia, into towns, promote it as the Slovak Peculiar Character, declare it untouchable and protect it from all change and growth. It is the hypersensitive national aspect that froze folk applied art and turned it into objects only present in local museums, vitrines and Slovak rooms. The second group of progressive and present-oriented individuals, who are well aware of the status quo and have a good knowledge of the people's manufacturing technologies and taste are attempting to elevate and train [folk art] to become a fine craft serving the current times. To retain its Slovak character grounded in the colours, soft lines and richness of rhythm, to attempt to upgrade it by training manufacturers to achieve the quality and tastes of the ruling Slovak nation, to lend it a worldly character and form that is now called for. However, by doing so, art and craft stops being folk art but it can and will remain Slovak.[1]
>
> Josef Vydra

1 VYDRA, Josef. Umelecko-priemyselná výchova na Slovensku. In *Slovenská Grafia*, 1929, vol. 1, no. 5, p. 2.

Vydra's critique of Slovak applied art was delivered at a time when an intense, years-long endeavour to advance material culture of housing and applied art in Slovakia was beginning to bear tangible results.[2] However as the quote implies, during the first decade of Czechoslovakia, opinions on the character of Slovak applied art varied and choosing a preference was to predetermine the overall cultural direction of the new state and nation. It is obvious that Vydra leaned towards the so-called progressive direction that was characteristic of opinions within the circles of culture, economy and education in the second half of the 1920s. The aim was to assert an idea of applied art modernization reform to further the position of Slovakia as a developed country and strengthen its economic and cultural standing, within Czechoslovakia as well as internationally. When Vydra's text was published, the aforementioned concept had already been embedded within a clear programme with protagonists proclaiming it the modernization "movement for quality" and testing it in practice through newly founded organizations, institutions and manufacturers.[3] However, that was preceded by years of effort by Vydra and other public figures who strove to frame the demands placed on the applied arts of the "new era" and to assert a similar approach within all related spheres of culture.[4] Such a school of thought was based on the premise that there was a need to modernise the environment and build a "national culture" within the new state through modern national applied art production. As Vydra's words imply, the newly defined approach could be realized only if other dimensions of thinking, which stressed the importance of folk tradition, were settled.

The idea of modernizing applied arts had resonated in Czechoslovakia since the state was established and was especially well received by state organizations and institutions located in Prague, the country's political and cultural centre. The Union of Czechoslovak Art (Svaz Československého díla, SČSD) organization was responsible for the principal support to advance applied

2 From the beginning of the 1920s, Josef Vydra (1884 – 1959) was one of the personalities who actively strove to advance modern applied art and applied art production in Slovakia. Among other things, he was a board member of the Svaz československého díla (Union of Czechoslovak Art, SČSD), responsible for the Bratislava branch, founder of *Náš směr*, a magazine on art education (1910) and editor for several progressive Czechoslovak periodicals (*Výtvarná práce, Výtvarné snahy, Drobné umění, Slovenská Grafia*). He also initiated the *Memorandum on the Protection of Folk Art in Slovakia* (Memorandum o ochrane ľudového umenia na Slovensku,1920), founded the Society for Applied Art (Spoločnosť umeleckého priemyslu, 1920) and was the founder and director of the School of Applied Arts in Bratislava (Škola umeleckých remesiel, 1928) and later the School of Applied Arts in Brno (Škola uměleckých řemesel). For more, see: BÉREŠOVÁ, Simona – PREŠNAJDEROVÁ, Klára – DE PUINEUF, Sonia (eds.) ŠUR. Škola *umeleckých remesiel v Bratislave 1928–1939*; Bratislava: Slovenské centrum dizajnu, 2021;

3 HOŘEJŠ, Antonín. Nové snahy v úžitkovej tvorbe. In HOFMAN, Ješek – HOŘEJŠ, Antonín (eds.) *Sborník modernej tvorby úžitkovej*. Bratislava : Sväz československého diela, 1931, pp. 7–19.

4 In practice, modernization was understood to comprise innovation of the production programme and technology, formulation of new creative principles in regards to the emerging discipline of design, and adoption of current style tendencies from foreign art centres; the reform of art education, implementation of modern educational and production methods.

art.[5] Between 1921 and 1926, the association regularly organized exhibitions of modern applied art and even though portrayed officially as a "Czechoslovak" organization, its activities only marginally reflected and supported Slovak production, which began to be perceived as an obstacle in the advancement of applied art and a political issue as well. Therefore in 1924, based on pressure from Vydra, a branch of the SČSD opened in Bratislava, which was meant to cope with the situation in Slovakia.[6] To fulfil its mission, the local office organized exhibitions of applied art in Slovakia, the first in Bratislava in 1927 and in the following years, Košice, Spišská Nová Ves and Banská Bystrica. The branch in Bratislava and its events were frequented by representatives—predominantly of Czech origin—from a variety of institutions and companies who supported the claims to modernize applied art in Slovakia and also actively asserted it in practice.[7] Vydra and others, mainly Antonín Hořejš, penned contributions published in exhibition catalogues and anthologies, in which they criticized the state of art culture and production in Slovakia, called for change and presented reform concepts.[8]

I consider these writings and articles published during the 1920s in Czechoslovak journals on architecture and applied art an important platform which was used to develop the ideological framework of "modern national applied art"

5 The organization originally known as Union of Czech Art (Svaz českého díla) was founded in 1914 by Jan Kotěra as the first Czech institution focused on advancing and promoting Czech applied art and design. After the First World War, the Union of Czechoslovak Art was the official organization to anchor applied art as a new discipline in Czechoslovakia. For more, see also: PEČINKOVÁ, Pavla. Věci a slova. Ve stínu utopií. In HUBATOVÁ-VACKOVÁ, Lada – PACHMANOVÁ, Martina – PEČINKOVÁ, Pavla (eds.) *Věci a slova: Umělecký průmysl, užité umění a design v české teorii a kritice 1870–1970.* Praha : VŠUP, 2014, pp. 202, 207.

6 For more details on the foundation of the Bratislava branch under the name Union of Czechoslovak Art (Sväz Československého diela) see: SENEŠI LUTHEROVÁ, Silvia. Hlas novej doby. Od umeleckého priemyslu ku kvalitnej výrobe na Slovensku v období prvej Československej republiky. In BÉREŠOVÁ, Simona – PREŠNAJDEROVÁ, Klára – DE PUINEUF, Sonia (eds.) *ŠUR. Škola umeleckých remesiel v Bratislave 1928–1939.* Bratislava : Slovenské centrum dizajnu, 2021, pp. 238–239; and PREŠNAJDEROVÁ, Klára. Nové umeleckopriemyselné hnutie na Slovensku v kontexte aktivít Antonína Hořejša. In BÉREŠOVÁ – PREŠNAJDEROVÁ – DE PUINEUF 2021, pp. 286–289.

7 The following people participated as members of exhibition committees, juries, and organizers: Jan Liška, general secretary of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Bratislava, chairman of SČSD and MP for the Trade Party (Živnostenská strana); Karel Herain, high commissioner of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague; František X. Jiřík, director of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague; K. Knopp, director of association Detva; Pavel Janák, headmaster of the School of Decorative Arts in Prague; J. Horn, director of Slovenská Grafia printing house; Egon Bondy, chairman of the Country Group of the Union of Industrialists and founder of the Gummon plant; Zdeněk Wirth, section director at the Ministry of Education; Alois Pižl, section head at the Ministry of Education and National Edification; architects Václav Ložek, Dušan Jurkovič, Alois Balán, Jiří Grossmann, Jindřich Halabala, artists Ladislav Sutnar, František Malý, Ľudovít Fulla, Josef Rybák etc.

8 Antonín Hořejš (1901–1967), born in Prague, was very active in supporting the reform and modernization of applied art production in Slovakia as an executive for applied art in the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, officer at the SČSD in Bratislava, co-organizer of exhibitions on housing culture and applied art in Slovakia and editor in journals *Slovenská Grafia* and *nová bratislava*, co-founder of the School of Applied Arts in Bratislava and a member of the board of directors of several manufacturing companies. For more see: BÉREŠOVÁ – PREŠNAJDEROVÁ – DE PUINEUF 2021.

and to communicate the goals of the reform to a wider audience.[9] The aim of this paper is to explore the ideological context of the reform project and also the arguments used in its favour as expressed by the works of leading reform initiators Antonín Hořejš and particularly, Josef Vydra. I believe that the national perspective that resonated in the texts of both critics became significant for the concept of modern applied art. In particular, this article explores the reasons why both of these authors applied the nationalist argumentation to the reform concept and the methods they used to do so.

An essay entitled *Applied Art and Slovakia* published by Antonín Hořejš for the first SČSD exhibition in Bratislava, 1927, is an example of explicitly expressed claim for the reform within the context of national ideology. He wrote:

> So far, one can talk about applied art in Slovakia only to a limited extent [...] there is no centre and no individual, who would define a specific purely Slovak type of character for the applied art in Slovakia [...] and what we find are mostly the residuals from applied art cultures of other nations [...]. Nowadays, every nation is primarily evaluated by its urban culture [...] Slovaks have barely had any urban culture in Slovakia. [...] they developed rural culture—folk art.[10]

Hořejš's bitter statement exposes the central problem of the discourse: the definition of the "national character" of applied art production of the time and the creation of an environment conducive to its development. In this context, he very openly described the issue of the culture of Slovaks within the multicultural Slovak territory (former northern region of the Kingdom of Hungary, commonly called Upper Hungary) in the past only to circle back and emphasize the importance of the current efforts of the SČSD—supporting "artistic circles of the nation" to advance modern production in Slovakia. The nation should culturally identify in such a manner he said, referring to the Slovak nation. [11]

This opens a number of questions. What did the term "national attribute" and/or "character" of applied art mean to the protagonists of the reform efforts and what motivated them to define it? How did they project such a definition of "specificity" into the reform concepts of applied art and how was it implemented in the context of the "modernization" doctrine? What was the ideological connection between the concept of "modern applied art" and the process of building a "national cultural tradition?" And finally, what social function was "modern national applied art" supposed to fulfil?

The methodology I use to answer these questions is based on some of the newer approaches used in social sciences which anchor the concept of "modern national applied art" in the cultural environment. I apply the social constructivist

9 Within the terminology of criticism and theory of the interwar period, the term "applied art" precedes "design," which did not yet appear in texts of the time. However, the term "applied art" also did not have a fixed meaning, as evidenced by the fact that individual authors explain and refine the expression repeatedly.

10 HOŘEJŠ, Antonín. Umelecký priemysel a Slovensko. In HOŘEJŠ, Antonín (ed.) *Výstava moderného umeleckého priemyslu*. Exhibition catalogue. Bratislava : SČSD – Umelecká beseda slovenská Bratislava, 1927, pp. 31–32.

11 HOŘEJŠ 1927, p. 34.

analytical method, which enables to explore the "modern national character" as an ideological construct related to a certain time and as an interpretational framework formed and maintained by the cultural and political elites within the discourse on the modernization reform of applied art in Slovakia in the 1920s.[12] I explore the ideological framework of the modernization reform of applied art production developed by Vydra and Hořejš as related to the development of national ideology in the cultural sphere, while also assuming that the authors approached "national specificity" from an essentialist and materialistic perspective.[13] László Vörös considers the theory of social representation an effective tool to study "socially shared meaning, which establishes the idea of an objective reality of social categories."[14] In this case, the theory enables to study the representation of national culture within the discourse on "modern national applied art."

Discourse on "National Applied Art"

As mentioned previously, Hořejš's essay from 1927 and Vydra's article from 1929 exposed discrepancies in the definition of the "Slovak character" of applied art. Current research confirms that at least since the end of the 19th century, nationalist concerns in the discourse and practice of applied art intensified and were concentrated into attempts to comprehend the concept of "national culture." There was a "clash" of two schools of thought, which became symptomatic of the modernization processes of the first third of the 20th century, not only within what is nowadays known as Slovakia, but also in other European countries.[15]

One perspective focused on defining a new style of applied art by referring to the "national cultural tradition" and the "national character" of art. During the turbulent period spanning from the last third of the 19th century until the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic, the Slovak national cultural tradition was constructed primarily on the basis of folk art and craft. The synthesis of folk craft and home production with the new means of industrial production became the foundation of folk applied art with a decorative "national style"—also known as the "Peculiar Character" (Svojráz). The beginnings of applied art as a distinctive type of visual art focused on the production of everyday practical objects in Slovakia were based on a reinterpretation of the traditions of folk production. This "peculiar" artistic method was still considered decisive in the first decade of the republic, even though opinions critical to such an understanding of the values of applied art began to surface.

12 VÖRÖS, László. *Analytická historiografia versus národné dejiny. „Národ" ako sociálna interpretácia*. Pisa : Pisa University Press, 2010.

13 Based on Vörös' claim that nationalist political, cultural and other elites of the 19th and 20th centuries formed national ideologies, which they asserted as "emancipation programmes of assumed 'nations' to later become realities that condition the politics, culture and social life of society." For more, see: VÖRÖS 2010, p. 2.

14 VÖRÖS 2010, p. 5.

15 For more, see: VYBÍRAL, Jindřich. Národ, identita, styl. Konstruování národní identity na příkladu české architektury 19. století. In HNÍDKOVÁ, Vendula. *Národní styl. Kultura a politika*. Praha : VŠUP, 2013, pp. 17–49; HUBATOVÁ-VACKOVÁ, Lada – PACHMANNOVÁ, Martina – PEČINKOVÁ, Pavla (eds.) *Věci a slova*. Praha : VŠUP, 2014.

Towards the end of the 1920s, the impact of anti-historicism and anti-decorativism tendencies grew and eventually led to a re-evaluation of the principles of applied art. This relates to the second school of thought that developed in the circles of modernization reform proponents who rejected this notion of "national" character of culture and art based on an artificially constructed folk tradition. These critics and artists contemplated the national specificity of applied art production in the context of "modern life" as it related to innovation and progress. They called for a national art that would not emulate history or folk art.[16] They constructed the essence of applied art production of the "new era" by reinterpreting the "peculiar character" around modernist principles of European avant-garde movements, which spread to Slovakia as a result of more intense cultural relationships between modern European cultural centres in Germany, France, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Changing economic conditions enabled more extensive developments in industrial production, urban growth and the advancement of urban culture as well as technological progress. However, the fundamental redefinition of the "national character" was determined primarily through the prism of Czechoslovak nationalist discourse.

Both schools of thought embodied broad concepts with complex socio-political contexts. The roots of the notion of national culture can possibly be traced to Romanticism and the national resurgence movements of the first half of the 19th century. It impacted the cultural and political situation of the whole Central Europe, became a key foundation for constituting modern society and played a role in the creation of modern art while significantly impacting how the style of the "new era" was defined in relation to architecture and applied art. Czech art historian Jindřich Vybíral explored how the process of construing the notion of a collective national identity of the Czech nation related to modern nationalism as a worldview and a political movement, referring to the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau a Johann G. Herder for philosophical foundations.[17] Art historian Lada Hubatová-Vacková also mentioned the impact of John Ruskin and William Morris and their socialist thinking on the resurgence of folk art at the end of the 19th century.[18]

At the turn of the 20th century, it was characteristic for central European countries, especially those in the multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian monarchy, to put emphasis on the specific character of life and culture of the local people. Hubatová-Vacková found several different approaches in the work of prominent

16 This aforementioned approach can be seen in the work of artists, architects and teachers close to the School of Applied Arts in Bratislava (ŠUR) during the 1930's. See also: FILIPOVÁ, Marta. Hledání lidovosti: lidové umění a umění lidu v meziválečném Československu. In BARTLOVÁ, Milena et al. (eds.) *Co bylo Československo? Kulturní konstrukce státní identity.* Praha : UMPRUM, 2017, pp. 20–21.

17 VYBÍRAL, 2013, p. 21; according to Herder, each nation has its own character—a distinctive spirit of the people (*das Volk*), which is based on climate, country, language, cultural tradition and education. For more, see HUBATOVÁ-VACKOVÁ, Lada. Krása věcí, průmysl a moderní společnost 1870–1918. In HUBATOVÁ-VACKOVÁ, Lada – PACHMANNOVÁ, Martina – PEČINKOVÁ, Pavla (eds.) *Věci a slova*. Praha : VŠUP, 2014, p. 54.

18 Hubatová-Vacková mentions Morris' *Die Kunst des Volkes* from 1893, which was available in translation in Czech libraries at that time. HUBATOVÁ-VACKOVÁ 2014, p. 54.

Czech theorists to the "national character of art" or the "natural style" of national culture, which lead to defining the "Czech Peculiar Character" in decorative art.[19] Czech and Slovak nationalist discourse often deliberately emphasized the idea of a "Slavic identity," which was also adopted by architects and artists.[20]

According to Slovak art historian Iva Mojžišová, the folk art and material culture from the territory of modern-day Slovakia represented the only continuous tradition that the Slovak intelligentsia of the end of the 19th century could draw upon to build a national art consciousness.[21] Within the theoretical framework of social representation, it can be said that until the First World War, this was the only production tradition from the region that nationalist elites interpreted as Slovak, which therefore provided an acceptable foundation for the difficult beginnings of a local applied art movement. Patriotic creators and theoreticians selected specific artistic and production elements from traditional folk art, particularly folk architecture and craft, and reinterpreted them as a manifestation of the centuries-old culture of the Slovak nation—the "essence of the nation's soul."[22] It can then be said that they also approached "Slovak Peculiar Character" as a "natural style" of the national culture, or as suggested by Vybíral in the Czech context, legitimized the "national style" by projecting a national artistic tradition in the sense of some "invented past."[23] Therefore, "peculiar character" can be understood as an ideological and aesthetic construct of the time, which carried political content and played a role in the fight for national demands. Such a definition of a national cultural tradition supported the national resurgence and the national movement during the Magyarization period and was considered the foundation of art and the culture of the Slovak nation, even after the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918.

The school of national "peculiar character" as a domestic culture was personified by a variety of organizations with the aim to organize, extend and commercially manage folk art production. For instance, the following associations were established in 1910: Skalica—a cooperative for the monetization of folk applied art, and Lipa—a folk applied art joint-stock company with a seat in Martin for the promotion of Slovak folk art values. The aesthetic opinion applied to the nationalist programme of the societies led to an emphasis on the "national spirit" in the production of folk art, i.e. stressing the "domestic character of the products" and preventing "foreign" influence, or in other words,

19 The "national character" of art was described by Otakar Hostinský (1869), the term "natural style" was defined by Jan Koula (1893). For more, see also: HUBATOVÁ-VACKOVÁ 2014, pp. 54–55.

20 HUBATOVÁ-VACKOVÁ 2014, pp. 54–55.

21 MOJŽIŠOVÁ, Iva. *Škola moderného myslenia. Bratislavská ŠUR 1928–1939*. Bratislava : SCD; Artforum, 2013, p. 20.

22 Significant proponents of the idea of the "national style" in Slovakia included the architect Blažej Bulla and folk art collector Pavel Socháň.

23 In his study, Vybíral interpreted Eric Hobsbawm's notion of the "invented tradition." VYBÍRAL 2013, p. 49; See also HOBSBAWM, Eric – RANGER, Terence (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2012.

forming an opposition to the culture of "oppressor nations."[24] However, at the beginning of the new century, impulses to change the style of living and of art grew stronger due to, among other things, more active contact with economic and cultural centres like Vienna, Budapest and Prague, which resonated in this environment as well. There were increasing attempts by individuals, societies and institutes to gain support for applied art to "modernize" the environment, to search for a "modern" style applicable to objects of daily use and "modern" means of production reflected in the application of folk elements to a "modern" spirit, i.e. by applying elements of traditional folk visual culture (traditional techniques, forms and patterns) to new types of products with new uses, though, in a typical decorative style.

Architect Dušan S. Jurkovič was a significant figure active in the Skalica association. He strongly supported the notion of seeking a "national style" by interweaving "folk" with "national" characteristics as a direction for modern architecture and applied art of the "Slavic tribe," whereby he expressed an inclination towards the emancipation efforts of the representatives of the Slovak and Czech national movement at the end of the 19th century.[25] At the beginning of the 20th century, and even after the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918, Jurkovič began to divert from the ethnographic approach and developed a specific authorial style, which synthesized the elements of folk architecture and craft with current style tendencies, primarily the Secession style. According to art historian Dana Bořutová, this approach allowed him to update traditional forms, which led foreign publications to refer to him at the beginning of the 20th century as a representative of "regionally oriented Modernism."[26]

After the establishment of Czechoslovakia, cultural developments and advances in applied art production as well as art education in Slovakia opened fully to the influence of the Czech scene. It can be said that the second school of thought mentioned above was directly related to these activities of Czech figures in Slovakia and developed systematically in the late 1920s when the SČSD expanded its operations to Bratislava.[27] Vydra and Hořejš, the faces of the theoretical movement, introduced Slovakia to opinions that were critical to the "national peculiar character" and inspired by the international avant-garde (the art tendencies of Purism, Constructivism and Functionalism) based the creation of new goals for applied arts on the needs of modern—urban

24 In the Hungarian part of the Astro-Hungarian Empire, it was mainly a confrontation with the nationalistic concept of culture and art of the Hungarian people. For more on the context of the creation of the national architecture program in the Czech lands at the turn of the 20th century, see VYBÍRAL 2013.

25 For more on D. Jurkovič, see: BOŘUTOVÁ, Dana. *Dušan Samo Jurkovič. Osobnosť a dielo*. Bratislava : Slovart, 2010.

26 Dana Bořutová mentioned the reflections on Jurkovič's work, e.g., in MUTHESIUS, Hermann. *Das moderne Landhaus*. München : F. Bruckmann, 1905; and in LEVETUS, A. S. Austrian Architecture and Decoration. In *The Studio year-book of decortive art*. London; Paris; New York : "The Studio" Ltd., 1911, pp. 211–262; and also in journals *Volné směry*, vol. 6. (1902) and *Der Architekt* (1902). For more details, see: BOŘUTOVÁ 2010, pp. 41, 58, note no. 18 on p. 351.

27 Lada Hubatová-Vacková explores the re-evaluation of the opinions on the definition of national applied art production in texts by Czech critics even before the war. See also: HUBATOVÁ-VACKOVÁ 2014, p. 53.

and industrial—society.[28] A growing number of Czechoslovak journals called for "Less traditionalism, more rationalism!"[29] These were publications that provided space for passionate discussions on the direction of architecture, production of daily use products or on the general lifestyle of the "new era."[30]

The circumstances within which such a critical approach was applied to were far-reaching—on the one hand, the contexts related to the ground-breaking socio-political processes connected to the creation of Czechoslovakia, and on the other hand, the contexts reflected the current climate that embraced innovation and progress. The monarchy and spirit of the past cultural era disappeared from critic's statements who were already projecting a concept of the "new era" dictated by the modern way of life. Intellectuals and the artistic avant-garde attributed the status of "achievement and privilege" to modernization introduced progress.[31] Modernization was also part of the state political demands officially declared by the later president of Czechoslovakia Tomáš G. Masaryk in the *Washington Declaration* in 1918.[32] Czechoslovakia was to become a progressive state and a space for social and economic reforms.

Historian Ľubomír Lipták believes that modernization, besides the First World War, was the strongest influence that driven the politics and social values after 1918 in Slovakia.[33] The creation of the republic was supposed to be an opportunity to solve issues that the country carried with it from the previous era; primarily, to complete the industrialization process, develop the economy and improve social conditions, the standard of living and cultural standards of the citizens, but also to establish educational and cultural institutions that were necessary for the development of numerous vocational sectors.[34] Modernization was also considered a solution for common daily issues, among others, the unequal standard of living and urban and rural housing quality, which opened the question of the changing life demands of the "modern individual." Expert discussions began to emphasize the impact of architecture and objects of daily use on the citizens' standard of living and their cultural values. Such thinking resulted in a concept of modernization reform of architecture

28 Authors publishing critical reflections on the "national style" in the Czech lands include Josef Čapek, Karel Teige, and Bohumil Markalous. See also: PEČINKOVÁ 2014, pp. 205–210.

29 VANĚK, Jan. Tradicionalizmus a priemyselný vývoj. In *Bytová kultura. Sborník průmyslového umění. 1924–1925*, vol. 1. Brno : Jan Vaněk, pp. 26–28.

30 In 1920s, e. g., the following journals: *Výtvarné snahy, Výtvarná práce, Stavitel, Horizont, Bytová kultura, Život*.

31 For more, see also: TEIGE, Karel. Foto, kino, film. In *Život*, 1922, vol. 2., no. 2. Praha : Výtvarný odbor Umělecké Besedy, pp. 153–154.

32 For more, see also: MAŇASOVÁ HRADSKÁ, Helena. Moc snů První republiky: vztah reklamy a modernity. In BARTLOVÁ Milena et al. (eds.) *Co bylo Československo? Kulturní konstrukce státní identity.* Praha : UMPRUM, 2017, pp. 118–120; see also: PEROUTKA Ferdinand: *Budování státu I.* Praha : Lidové noviny, 1991; BARTLOVÁ Milena – VYBÍRAL, Jindřich et al. *Budování státu. Reprezentace Československa* v *umění, architektuře* a *designu*. Praha : UMPRUM, 2015.

33 LIPTÁK, Ľubomír. Život na Slovensku v medzivojnovom období. In ZEMKO, Milan – BYSTRICKÝ, Valerián (eds.) *Slovensko v Československu 1918–1939.* Bratislava : VEDA, 2004.

34 For more on the economy and the industrial development of the country after the creation of Czechoslovakia, see: HALLON, Ľudovít. Príčiny, priebeh a dôsledky štrukturálnych zmien v hospodárstve medzivojnového Slovenska. In ZEMKO, Milan – BYSTRICKÝ, Valerián (eds.) *Slovensko v Československu 1918–1939.* Bratislava : VEDA, 2004, pp. 293–297.

and applied art which aimed to produce more democratic housing, improve the general standard of living, improve the functionality of housing, refine the environment, stimulate production and revive the market.[35]

Published articles show that after the creation of Czechoslovakia, the nationalist position remained important, though influenced by the new socio-political context. The rhetoric used by art critics contextualized the construction of national culture with the social and economic benefits of the reform of applied art. The communicated "national"—at that point "Czechoslovak"—character of applied art carried new meanings. It was embedded within the ideological framework of constituting the "Czechoslovak nation" and it was based on a different interpretation of the "national tradition," contrary to the definition devised by the proponents of the folk "peculiar character." The intensifying pressure of the modernizing tendencies of anti-traditionalism, anti-historicism and anti-decorativism generated a rejection of folklorism and an artificial application of the principles of folk art to industry. The "national specificity" of applied art was then construed within the context of the narrative on modern culture.

This notion of "modern national applied art" will be clarified in more detail through an analysis of the writings of Vydra and Hořejš published from the first half of the 1920s to the end of the decade.

"Hopeless State of Applied Art in Slovakia"

Vydra published a particularly noteworthy article addressing the direction of national applied art production with the telling title *Hopeless State of Applied Art in Slovakia*.[36] It stands as an open critique to the "peculiar character" in the folk art industry, which, among other things, is interesting for being published in 1924, i.e. at a time before the modernization reform programme was established in Slovakia. Vydra's opening statement was sharp:

> I am not sure whether to submit a report on the state of applied art or folk applied art in Slovakia here. It is a pun distinctive to our country. Elsewhere, folk and applied art are not distinguished as separate; they transform the folk applied art solely into applied art. [However,] in Slovakia we can only talk about folk applied art so far.[37]

He described the wide range of folk applied art as a typical indicator of Slovak culture and simultaneously as a critical point in the modernization process, emphasizing that the standard of living was changing due to the spread of western cultures and because of increasing demands placed on products by

35 For more on the interior architecture and applied art discourse, see: SENEŠI LUTHEROVÁ, Silvia. Hnutie za kvalitu. Umelecký priemysel ako stredobod modernizačnej reformy v období prvej ČSR. In PAŠTEKOVÁ, Michaela – BREZŇAN, Peter (eds.) *Estetika centra a periférie – centrum a periféria estetiky.* Bratislava : Slovenská asociácia pre estetiku, 2020, pp. 43–54; SENEŠI LUTHEROVÁ 2021, pp. 235–253; SENEŠI LUTHEROVÁ, Silvia. Byt novej doby. In PEKÁROVÁ, Adriena – KOLESÁR, Zdeno (eds.) *K dejinám dizajnu na Slovensku*. Bratislava : Slovenské centrum dizajnu, 2013, pp. 94–110.

36 VYDRA, Josef. Bezútešný stav Slovenského umeleckého priemyslu. In *Výtvarná práce*, 1924, vol. 3, no. 2–3. Praha : Jan Štenc, pp. 78–80.

37 VYDRA 1924, p. 78.

urban society and the common people who were mimicking nobility. He believed that individuals and cooperatives attempted to satisfy urban consumption by transforming and making use of Slovak folk applied art products, however, he took issue with how they approached this process.

Vydra judged the first method as an "utter decline to the most extensive and abhorrent extent." He referred to the folk production commissioned—in his own words—by private entrepreneurs, individuals and exploiters, who are abusing the technical skills of the people for "anything imaginable without any order, whether stylish or tacky, in other words, for anything that is in demand."[38] He believed that the decline of folk applied art absorbs the worst manifestations of urban tastes. Vydra was convinced that such businesses will destroy Slovak production and flood the Czechoslovak and foreign markets with "Slovak kitsch," which people will avoid in the same way as they avoid similar cheap and tacky products from Japan, China or Turkey.

He connected the second, so-called ethnographic method with cooperatives and societies and praised it for such economically noble aims and efforts to maintain the production of folk applied art whole and intact. It can be assumed from context that he was referring to Skalica, Živena or Lipa. However, Vydra did not consider this way correct either: "They make people keep producing what they had been producing without respect to changed needs. They preserve old patterns and forms and force people to continue copying such old things."[39]

Vydra accused both groups of manufacturers of degrading Slovak products in the eyes of consumers. He labelled the national character of the products—a "national brand" of sorts—with the term "peculiar character," though not with the proud patriotic connotations that it used to carry within the nationally oriented discourse, but pejoratively: "The terms 'peculiar character' and Slovak character have almost become a deterrent, whether in business or for the audience, and it is synonymous with something common and cheap instead of denoting something truly good and representatively our own."[40]

However, Vydra did not only scold the mainstream production but offered a solution that began to construe reform of applied art production:

> If we consider that the second and better group of entrepreneurs, cooperatives and societies work without artists, who are the only ones who could understand the process of recreation, i.e. understand the spirit of Slovak art and also the spirit of the times and the modern, it leaves us only with a third possibility which could truly save Slovak folk art, and that is to take the technical skills and taste of the Slovak people and transform their work into applied art production and first class art and craft.[41]

Vydra created a production model that considered true applied art production, i.e. applied art that corresponds to the current times while also fully

38 VYDRA 1924, p. 78.
39 VYDRA 1924, p. 78.
40 VYDRA 1924, p. 80.
41 VYDRA 1924, p. 79.

employing folk production traditions. He proposed that only modern creations of "new patterns" by trained artists can reflect and transform the folk tradition properly for the times. In this respect, he particularly emphasized the role of professional artists—basically designers—as the only people ready and able to detach from deep-rooted cultural and artistic stereotypes and adapt to new production means authentically. Using the notion of modern applied art that reflects the intellectual, material and social circumstances of its times, he understood the modernity in relation to the theory of the "spirit of the time," which was also used by the pioneers of Modernism to legitimize the innovation of forms and to reject historicism and decorativism.[42]

It is not a coincidence that Vydra published the article in *Výtvarná práce*, a periodical connected to the Czech applied art cooperative Artěl.[43] At the beginning of the 1920s, he considered Artěl to be a model for the initiative of a new organized applied art that would be made up of trained artists. He believed that such a vision could be realized by establishing an organization based on the understanding of "Slovak national art" or applied art. With this aim, he established the Society of Applied Art (Spoločnosť umeleckého priemyslu, SUP) back in 1920, with a programme to organize and unify applied art production in Slovakia.[44] Production facilities and companies established within the SUP were meant to provide a space for developing quality art based on new designs, and folk creators were meant to be included in the production as well.[45]

In 1922, the SUP and Artěl cooperated on a prestigious contract to furnish 30 rooms of the state spa Hotel Hviezdoslav at Štrbské Pleso in the Tatra Mountains. As reported in *Drobné umění,* the contract awarded by the ministry in Bratislava was a subject of long negotiations before it became the "first case of the public administration supporting the new Czechoslovak art," so it could be said that the programme of both companies received political acceptance.[46] In an article dedicated to the interior of the hotel, art historian Maroš Semančík pointed out that the style the hotel was furnished in at that time represented the official Czechoslovak national visual expression.[47] Even

42 Hermann Muthesius applied the "spirit of the time" (*Der Zeitgeist*) theory to the concept of applied art production. His texts were published in Czech journals before the First World War: MUTHESIUS, Hermann: Die Bedeutung des Kunstgewerbe. In *Dekorative Kunst*, 1907, no. 10, pp. 177–192.

43 At the beginning of the 1920s, Vydra published articles in the journals *Náš směr* and *Drobné umění* and later in *Výtvarné snahy* (1926); for more on the Artěl, see FROŇEK, Jiří: *Artěl. Umění pro všední den 1908–1935*. Praha : UPM; Arbor Vitae, 2009.

44 For more on the first public activities of the SUP, see: MARKALOUS, Bohumil. Umelecký priemysel na výstave bratislavskej. In *Drobné umění*, 1920, vol. 1, p. 88.

45 Vydra describes the goals of the SUP in detail: VYDRA, Jozef: Vznik a snahy Spoločnosti umeleckého priemyslu v Bratislave. In *Styl*, 1921–1922, vol. 2 (7), p. 49.

46 *Drobné umění*, 1922, vol. 3, no. 8, p. 127; Michalides mentions that the SUP also participated in the contract for furnishing the residence of President T. G. Masaryk, Chateau Topoľčianky, from 1922 to 1924. For more, see: MICHALIDES 1978, p. 64.

47 SEMANČÍK, Maroš. Rondokubistický dizajn Hotela Hviezdoslav na Štrbskom plese. In *Designum*, 2009, vol. 15, no. 3, p. 46–51; Jindřich Vybíral described the style construed by Pavel Janák and Josef Gočár, and other artists, applied in the first half of the 1920's as the "architectural representation of the young state nation." However, Vybíral described the term "Rondocubism" used by Czech art theory to designate this "national style" as misleading. For more see VYBÍRAL 2013, pp. 47–48.

though the magazine reported that it was the sole example of state support for modern applied art studios at the time, research by Pavla Pečinková showed that artwork created at Artěl and other institutions with a seat in Prague (School of Decorative Arts, SČSD) was systematically advertised as the "national style," and in public tenders and state contracts presented as a means of state representation.[48] Even though it was a short-term movement or project, it garnered a wide-reaching reaction, peaking with an official presentation at the Czechoslovak pavilion at the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris in 1925. Karel Herain, the deputy chairman of SČSD who partook in the planning of the exhibition commented: "It was supposed to represent the image of Czechoslovak national life" and "speak the language of the Slavic tribe."[49]

It seems, however, that Vydra's SUP project failed to reach an influential position on the Czechoslovak scene. Despite presenting at several exhibitions and fairs between 1920 and 1923, the SUP's economic and business struggles grew steadily and by 1924 (the year Vydra's article was published), it terminated all activities and merged with Detva.[50] Finally, Vydra himself admitted some complications that hindered the company from achieving its goals:

> It encountered a serious lack of understanding and hard economic times and it cannot be reproached for the fact that all attempts to uplift production did not go as desired and as may had been expected. There is not enough capital and attempts at sophistication are always the most passive business of each company.[51]

He considered economic sustainability to be one of the major pitfalls the reform initiatives were faced with, not only in the case of the SUP, but also in relation to societies and cooperatives which he described as suffering from insufficient demand. In his eyes they cannot face the competition of "exploiters" who misuse Slovak folk art. Therefore, he considered state support for companies and particularly state protection via monopolies, privileges and state subsidies, to be one of the most important points of the reform programme proposed in the article.[52] However, the question remains to what extent the support extended to applied art production in Slovakia and Vydra's independent activities in state institutions and organizations with seats in Prague, which despite the Czechoslovak orientation manifested directly in their names, focused the vast majority of their activities on the Czech lands.

Vydra proposed to solve the economic efficiency problem of applied art production by integrating individuals with art education in the production process, which would increase the artistic and production quality of products and also competitiveness. He even demanded ensuring this by law.[53] Here,

48 PEČINKOVÁ 2014, pp. 205–206.
49 HERAIN, Karel. Medzinárodná výstava dekoratívnych umení v Paríži 1925. In *Drobné umění – Výtvarné snahy*, 1924, vol. 5, p. 88.
50 The Detva Production Cooperative, a Czechoslovak folk applied art, a participating company, was established in 1919 and was based in Bratislava.
51 VYDRA 1924, p. 79.
52 VYDRA 1924, p. 79.
53 VYDRA 1924, pp. 79–80.

Vydra's ambition to develop applied art education in Slovakia and create tools for integrating graduates in the production practice was fully manifested, which later led to the establishment of the School of Applied Arts in Bratislava (ŠUR). The Government Commissariat for the Protection of Monuments in Slovakia where Vydra was active from its foundation in 1919, was another institution that sought to increase the interest of trained artists in applied art by financially subsidising education in national schools in 1926.[54] Vydra most likely pursued such measures to strengthen the position of Slovak manufacturers against competition from the Czech market.

Vydra used his platform to communicate the key requirements needed for implementation of the modernization reform of applied art in Slovakia in practice. The article implies that he denounced conservatism and folklorism, considering them the fatal consequences of basing the "national character" on a national tradition which was intentionally constructed. Instead, he proposed a concept of autonomous qualified applied art that would represent a synthesis of the "spirit of the nation" and the "spirit of the times," which he used to define the outlooks of social development in Slovakia. However, he failed to explain the specific meanings of his concept in more detail. We must seek explanation in other articles, particularly in one that gained the most traction within the Slovak environment. It was published in the catalogue of the aforementioned Exhibition of Applied Art in Bratislava in 1927 and in this essay, Vydra offered an even stronger critique on the "peculiar character." He reopened the question of what determines the "national specificity"—declaring "war" on the folk "peculiar character," while simultaneously marking the advent of a "modern peculiar character."

"Modern Czechoslovak Peculiar Character"

"The term peculiar character is not trite! It has been deeply meaningful for our national life and culture," are the opening words of Vydra's essay entitled *End of the Peculiar Character! Fight for the Peculiar Character in the New Environment*.[55] Vydra changed his rhetoric; he did not reject the "peculiar character" per se but proposed a new interpretation, and therefore, a new concept for applied art production.

He definitively rejected folk and home production and paraphrased the term itself as "anti-peculiar character:"

> Because of the dilettantes of patriotic taste, because of businessmen with feelings for national peculiar character, the term is now a huge and sensitive word, but refers to trifle! [...] To search for those who have them made is often an indication of the end of patriotism![56]

54 The subsidy is mentioned by Michalides: MICHALIDES 1978, p. 66; see also: *Styl*, 1924–1925, vol. 5 (10), pp. 158 and 203.

55 VYDRA, Jozef. Koniec Svojrázu! Boj o svojráz nového prostredia. In HOŘEJŠ, Antonín (ed.) *Výstava moderného umeleckého priemyslu.* Exhibition catalogue. Bratislava : SČSD; Umelecká beseda slovenská Bratislava, 1927, p. 21.

56 VYDRA 1927, p. 22.

Building on arguments from his previous article, Vydra primarily criticized the production aspect, i.e. decentralized factory production, which utilises modern industrial advantages (meaning machinery, division of labour and workers) but at the same time, limits its production range to imitations of folk products. He considered such manufacturing needless and artificial, despite being labelled as the "art of the people," he did not consider it folk art as the production principles are contrary. Vydra said that true folk art is created as a result of natural production conditions and need, and in that form, represents the "peculiar character of the rural people" not the "character of the town's people."[57] These arguments were used to express a new definition of the term "national peculiar character," this time as the representation of the life of urban society of the modern era. He wrote:

> Today we have different sensitivities, different housing needs, different approach to our requirements on taste, hygiene, functionality. The national peculiar form created over time is being continuously refined in the hands of its creators of the same generation, with the same sensitivities and from the same nation.[58]

In this way, he arrived at the idea of the "modern peculiar character," which he believed would fulfil its mission if based on natural local conditions and real needs of society, not "past" but modern.[59] Vydra urged:

> The Czechoslovak peculiar character must become the high quality and value behind each product! Become the standard of national need and habits of our lives! High value and refined form of every product must become the best Czechoslovak peculiar character for foreign countries as well!"[60]

Vydra's understanding of "modern peculiar character" reinterpreted the national cultural tradition in favour of and simultaneously through modernization. He purposefully elaborated "national specificity" in relation to the ideals of modern production. Of particular interest, he described this new understanding of the national character as "Czechoslovak," contrary to his text from 1924 in which he worked with the "Slovak spirit and culture." Czechoslovakism as an ideology of Czechs and Slovaks was manifested as one of the nationalist variants in the rhetoric of the cultural and artistic elite during the 1920s.[61] As mentioned, references to the Slavic tribe were already used to communicate "national style" in Artěl and within the circle of artists from the School of Decorative Arts in Prague in the first half of the 1920s, demanding

57 VYDRA 1927, pp. 22–23, 25; Vydra supported and explored authentic folk art in the long-term and systematically as the initiator of the Memorandum on the Protection of Folk Art in Slovakia (1920). During the 1920s and 1930s, Vydra published a plethora of articles on Slovak folk art. For example: VYDRA, Josef. Ako zachrániť a povzniesť ľudové umenie. In *Náš směr*, 1920, vol. 6, no. 7–8. p. 169.

58 VYDRA 1927, p. 23.

59 Antonín Hořejš defines the prerequisites of modern applied art production in a similar manner. See also: HOŘEJŠ 1927.

60 VYDRA 1927, p. 27.

61 HOLLÝ, Karol. Čechoslovakistická argumentácia na prelome 19. a 20. storočia. In HUDEK, Adam – KOPEČEK, Michal – MERVART, Jan (eds.) *Čecho/slovakismus*. Praha : NLN; Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 2019, pp. 71–95; DUCHÁČEK, Milan. Čechoslovakismus v prvním poločase ČSR: státotvorný koncept nebo floskule? In HUDEK – KOPEČEK – MERVART 2019, pp. 149–181.

the position of the "Czechoslovak national expression." However, Vydra was not interested in this variant of nationalist thinking in his 1924 article, despite frequenting these circles. Instead, he pointed to the specific historical context of Slovakia and repeatedly emphasized the "spirit of the Slovak nation."

Setting applied art production within the circumstances of constructing the culture of the "Czechoslovak nation," the 1927 article sets a new ideological context for Vydra's reform intent, even though he did not use the terminology consistently—at points he reverted to language related to Slovak nationalistic ideology. To verify such context would require more detailed research, however, at this time the question can be asked whether Vydra's changed rhetoric signified a targeted attempt to address the SČSD headquarters in Prague and other state institutions (the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Bratislava), which he expected to fundamentally support his reform activities. Publication of the essay was closely related to the foundation of the Bratislava branch of the SČSD, used by Vydra to intensify the pressure to deal with the situation of applied art in Slovakia which was clearly indicated by the manifest character of the text. At the same time, the upcoming 10th anniversary of the declaration of the republic was also a convenient opportunity to establish educational and awareness building institutions in Slovakia.[62] Despite Vydra's exclusive focus on the Slovak production environment, by using the idea of cultural and economic unity of the Czechoslovakist nationalist discourse, he applied the overall relevance of the reform to the whole state and nation. On that basis, I assume that by using the nationalist arguments in the reform project, Vydra attempted to establish modernized applied art from Slovakia within a socio-political context.

Vydra presented his reinterpreted "modern peculiar character" as the "objective" quality and identified it on the basis of "objective" factors, like geographical conditions, climate, resources or colours, which he approached as the determinants of the specific character of applied art of each individual nation:[63]

> Every object that is well manufactured using quality materials that might even be common and cheap but local will express our peculiar character [...]. The diversity of colour and the joy colours bring can remain part of our peculiar character just like other nations base their peculiar character on grey and colourlessness. Those who would take colour away from us, take a part of the joy of life and take a part of our peculiar character. We do not consider colour a fashion of the times but rather the peculiar character of our predispositions. The peculiar character will be in the functionality of the whole furnishing of our households that suit our life habits, our climate, and our needs will become manifested in the construction material, layout of the dwelling, the furniture, the entrance of air and light, in hygiene.[64]

62 For more on the context of establishing cultural and educational institutions in Slovakia around 1928 see PREŠNAJDEROVÁ 2021, p. 290; and ŠIDLÍKOVÁ, Zuzana. Umelecko priemyselné múzeum na Slovensku v roku 1928? In *Designum*, 2010, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 14–17.

63 This thinking approximates Vydra to the attitude of Czech theoretician Otakat Hostinský, cf. VYBÍRAL 2013, pp. 71–73.

64 VYDRA 1927, pp. 25–26.

At the same time, he assumed the existence of a specific "national taste" that is manifested in the aesthetic qualities of the products. He described the "peculiar character" as a production standard that is based on the values, tastes, daily habits and the needs of the nation.[65]

Therefore, Vydra construed the "modern Czechoslovak peculiar character" not only as a cultural but also aesthetic project. At the same time, he was re-evaluating his aesthetic opinion when adapting the theoretical concepts of early Modernism under the influence of the purist principles of rational and applied production which resonated among the Czechoslovak art scene. More radical avant-garde opinions on the creation of style, not reflecting the "spirit of the times and the nation" but a spontaneous expression of the machine era that followed international style, were not expressed in this essay by Vydra—at this point, even the SČSD was officially leaning towards this idea.[66] This can also confirm the theory that application of the national ideology to the concept of reform in this article was intentional, with the aim to gain state support for implementing the changes into practice.

Primarily, Vydra needed political support to establish and ensure the sustainable activity of institutions which were meant to realize the reform. His SUP project did not succeed in the harsh years of the economic crisis, but he wrote *End of the Peculiar Character!* as a member of the SČSD board and head of the Bratislava branch of the SČSD and the introductory exhibition in Bratislava. The SČSD maintained a firm social and cultural position and was a functional model of institutional support for artists in the Czech lands with a link to the School of Decorative Arts in Prague and manufacturers that could provide the support for Vydra's endeavours. It was an environment that also became a platform for his efforts to cooperate with other proponents of reform in Slovakia, primarily Antonín Hořejš. According to Vydra and Hořejš, institutional backing was a basic requirement for the development of modern applied art production. Vydra was convinced then that modern applied art production would become an authentic and truthful expression of the national culture only when created by Czech and Slovak and/or Czechoslovak educated artists, whom he considered the only people "able to explore and feel the forms bequeathed by their ancestors." He understood that to create "something new, functional for a newer lifestyle" artists need companies to employ them and together they would build "our new Slovak environment."[67] There were not many such collaborations by the end of the 1920s in Slovakia, something Vydra also noted. Fittingly, both critics viewed the role of the SČSD in Slovakia as paramount and compared its importance to the activities of the "Werkbunds" in European economic centres.[68] They believed that

65 VYDRA 1927, p. 21.

66 The concepts of universalism, cosmopolitanism and internationalism were manifested by Antonín Hořejš in 1931. For more, see: HOŘEJŠ, Antonín. Nové snahy v úžitkovej tvorbe. In HOŘEJŠ Antonín – HOFMAN Ješek (eds.) *Sborník modernej tvorby úžitkovej*. Bratislava : Sväz Československého diela v Bratislave; Slovenská Grafia, 1931.

67 VYDRA 1927, p. 23.

68 VYDRA 1927, p. 27.

the SČSD could facilitate contact between theoreticians and practising artists, modern producers and artists, scientists and consumers, ensuring that new products will circulate widely and spark the interest in "newly created needs" that would eventually lead to a "increase of the overall standard of living" and finally, benefit the national interest.[69]

SČSD exhibitions at the end of the 1920s and beginning of the 1930s in Slovakia did open an expected reflection on the state and on the issues plaguing applied art and also successfully promoted creators and manufacturers who represented the movement of modern applied art locally and abroad (e.g., Sandrik production facility producing silver and metal products; glassworks Schreiber a synovia in Lednické Rovne and Katarínska Huta near Lučenec; Slovenská keramika, a joint-stock ceramics manufacturer in Modra; the Institute for refining folk production in Detva; Slovenská Grafia printing house and Slovenská Kníhtlačiareň in Bratislava). The Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Bratislava, where Hořejš was active, played a significant part in launching many initiatives while managing the establishment of the Bratislava branch of the SČSD. The efforts of Vydra and Hořejš supported by many other cultural, economic and political figures led to the establishment of two key institutions for the development of applied art production in Slovakia: The School of Applied Arts (1929–1939) and The Museum of Applied Arts (1929/1930–1933) in Bratislava.[70] Their vision to open a school that would "spread knowledge about modern progress and production" and "impact education and the source of taste" by utilizing progressive educational methods in line with current artistic trends represented the basic foundation of the reform programme.[71] As Vydra stated in a 1929 article: "Only a school can prepare talented craftsmen who will seek and create new forms and elevate arts and crafts and modern applied art with their technically meticulous production and who will seek and create the 'Slovak national taste.'"[72]

The activity of these institutions was, however, impacted and eventually prematurely terminated due to unfavourable conditions related to the economic crisis at the beginning of the 1930s and the turbulent political situation at the end of the decade.[73] The applied art modernization movement came to an abrupt halt due to the expulsion of Vydra and Hořejš—and other teachers, architects and artists of Czech origin—from the territory of the newly founded Slovak Republic (1939–1945). Nevertheless, it can be concluded that the ideas and intentions of these leaders of reform in Slovakia during the intense period at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s were carried on by subsequent creators

69 See also: HOŘEJŠ, Antonín. Člověk a moderná výroba. In HOŘEJŠ, Antonín (ed.) *Výstava moderného umeleckého priemyslu československého Košice 1930*. Exhibition catalogue. Košice : SČSD, 1930; and HOŘEJŠ 1927, p. 35.

70 Prešnajderová mentions the contributions of Ján Liška, general secretary of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Bratislava and MP for the Živnostenská strana, political party in Bratislava, in the foundation and activities of the Bratislava branch of the SČSD. For more on the Museum of Applied Art in Bratislava, see: PREŠNAJDEROVÁ 2021, pp. 290–293.

71 VYDRA 1929, pp. 2–3; HOŘEJŠ 1927, p. 35.

72 VYDRA 1929, p. 2.

73 In 1933, the establishment process of the museum was terminated and the Slovak branch of the SČSD was closed. PREŠNAJDEROVÁ 2021, pp. 293–294.

and producers, and both truly contributed to ground-breaking innovations in urbanism and architecture, interior architecture and applied art. The movement they began initiated the development of art education, brought awareness, exhibitions and promotion, inspired art related journalism and criticism and last but not least, created the conditions for developing the applied art production—which we now refer to as design—as a discipline and vocation.[74]

Conclusion

The purpose of the present article was to explore the ideological framework of the modernization reform of applied art in Slovakia in the 1920s in respect to the nationalist argumentation of the time. It drew on the observation that the initiators and creators of the reform—Josef Vydra and Antonín Hořejš—based a significant portion of their reasoning on the ideological context of the national culture. I approached the concept of the modernization reform of applied art defined in the writings of both authors by applying the theory of social representation, and interpreted it as a manifestation of the formation process of ideological discourse within culture, first in terms of a cultural confirmation of the Slovak—and subsequently of the Czechoslovak—nation. The task of defining the vision of "modern national applied art" was taken on by individuals—representatives of the cultural and political elites, that included visual artists and architects—as initially there were no institutions that would advocate the advancement of applied art. Even later, when necessary institutions had been established, programmes were still being formed. The ideal of the "national specificity," "national character" or "peculiar character" was construed and used as a foundation for the modernization reform of applied art. The ideological construct of the "modern Czechoslovak Peculiar Character" formulated by Vydra in the second half of the 1920s played a prominent role in this discourse. Therefore, the reform of applied art with its patriotic connotations—particularly the concept of the "Czechoslovak Peculiar Character"—was a symbolic representation of the "national culture" project in the Czechoslovak Republic.

A special focus was placed on the purpose the nationalist ideology had in the concept of reform and also the method the actors used when developing the construct. Vydra continuously asked about the nature of the specificity of the "Slovak"—later the "Czechoslovak national applied art," while Hořejš investigated possible approaches to the "character of the national culture" of Slovaks in applied art. Both authors based their definitions of "peculiar character" on interpretations of the "national culture," which differed from concepts that emerged from the parallel school of thought, i.e. from the proponents of the folk "peculiar character." Influenced by the modernist tendencies of anti-traditionalism, anti-historicism and anti-decorativism, they rejected folklorism as an artificial application of the principles of folk art

74 Between 1929 and 1933, Vydra and Hořejš significantly contributed to the journals *Slovenská Grafia* and *nová bratislava*. In 1930, the opening of the so-called house of applied art in Bratislava by the Spojené U. P. Závody z Brna resonated in commercial circles.

in production and construed the values of national applied art within the context of the modernist discourse. While in Hořejš's understanding, applied art was a representation of the modern "urban" culture of the Slovak nation, Vydra reinterpreted "national specificity" in favour of and simultaneously on the basis of modernization efforts.

Both authors emphasized the participation of professional Slovak/Czechoslovak artists—designers—in production, whom they considered to be the only persons authorized and able to break away from routine cultural and artistic stereotypes and respond to the new means of production authentically. For them, the concept of the "modern Czechoslovak peculiar character" had a significant part in forming culture and was simultaneously a manifestation of the aesthetic reform, which referenced principles of the avant-garde art styles, primarily Purism.

The authors themselves approached "national character" from an essentialist perspective, based on "objective" factors (geographical conditions, climate, resources, colours, purpose) considered unique to the environment of an individual nation. At the same time, the connection between the aesthetic qualities of products and the unique "national taste" (Vydra) or the "national spirit and character" (Hořejš) was emphasized.

Such an approach reveals that the social function of "modern national applied art" was to represent national culture and progress with clear social and economic benefits. Despite the fact that both representatives directed the reform towards Slovak industry by applying the concept of cultural and economic unity from Czechoslovak nationalist discourse, the overall importance was made universal for the whole state and nation. Based on research, it can be concluded that Vydra and Hořejš employed nationalist rhetoric in order to socio-politically assert their concept of modernization reform. Simultaneously, they identified a side benefit, i.e. successful implementation of the reform would assure a promising future for the "national industry" and the "national culture," which, thanks to the Czechoslovakist discourse, did not apply solely to Slovak but also to the "Czechoslovak nation."

FORUM HISTORIAE Journal and Portal for History and Related Disciplines
ISSN 1337-6861

Forum Historiae, 2022, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 52–68

www.forumhistoriae.sk

Slovakness in the Making: The Concept of "Nation" and "National Literature" in the Works of 1930s Literary Critics

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Keywords
literary criticism, nationalism, national literature, intellectuals, interwar period

DOI
10.31577/forhist.2022.16.1.4

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Cite
NÁDASKAY, Viliam. Slovakness in the Making: The Concept of "Nation" and "National Literature" in the Works of 1930s Literary Critics. In *Forum Historiae*, 2022, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 52–68, doi: 10.31577/forhist.2022.16.1.4

Abstract

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The study outlines the opinions on and sources of the so-called Slovak question in the interwar Czechoslovak republic amongst the writings of three Slovak literary critics: Stanislav Mečiar, Andrej Kostolný and Michal Chorváth. Each author stood for a different contemporary ideology; nationalist/autonomist, Czechoslovakist and communist, respectively. The current article details the ways and reasons these critics legitimised national self-determination, whether by invoking the legacy of the national awakening and those stereotypical historical narratives of Slovak oppression, equality and fulfilment within a common Czechoslovak state, or through the idea of social revolution and stark opposition to tradition deriving from modernist distrust and a general fragmentation of the world and society. Opinions on the problem with the Slovakness of national literature are also illustrated, as well as its place within the context of world literature, including an analysis of how these ideological rivals shared certain attitudes towards the national self-determination of Slovaks, yet differed greatly in their ideas on its manifestation. On the one hand, cooperation among literary intelligentsia may be seen as an effort to remain internally united while facing an impending world war; on the other hand, it could be interpreted as another part of the ideological struggle, as the case of the famous Congress of Slovak Writers seems to demonstrate.

Slovak literature of the interwar period is often considered incomplete, seen as lacking certain artistic forms that undoubtedly existed elsewhere, perhaps even missing a specific narrative or defining superstructure.[1] Slovak culture—and thus literature—after 1918 can be defined mostly by such absences and by a life granted sudden freedom to pursue artistic visions. Although literature and art were finally decoupled from overarching national interests, the situation also furthered the national emancipation movement that permeated the Slovak political scene from 1918, intensifying until the eventual dissolution of the Czechoslovak republic and founding of the so-called war-time Slovak republic (1939–1945). This question of national self-determination became an integral part of Slovak politics, ranging in form from seeking the practical acknowledgment of Slovaks as equal partners in the common state,

1 ČEPAN, Oskár. Literárny vývin v rokoch 1918–1945. In *Slovenská literatúra*, 1973, vol. 20, no. 3, p. 268.

to demanding full, political autonomy. Concerning the ideological spectrum of Slovak culture, every group's agenda had a certain degree of nationalism, whether represented by traditionally leaning nationalist authors, their socially conscious internationalist communist counterparts who were opposed to tradition, or advocates of Czechoslovak unity. These are surely rough definitions; closer descriptions will be provided using the cases of three people one might consider contemporary intellectuals, literary intelligentsia and certainly, people active in shaping the Slovak literary culture of the time. All of them belong to approximately the same generation; born in the early 20th century in Austria-Hungary and entering their formative years and adulthood after World War I in Czechoslovakia. The goal of this paper is to illustrate, via three case studies, how national and nationalist agenda manifested itself in Slovak literary culture.

Slovak Literary Intelligentsia

Much has been written on the shape of Slovak culture after Slovakia came into existence as part of the Czechoslovak republic. The main themes seem to be: a developmental delay in comparison to Czech part of the republic or Europe, particularism, incompleteness, unpreparedness and uncertain progress towards a newfound democracy and cultural openness.[2] The situation in the 1920s, often metaphorically described as "opening windows to Europe," is characterised by processes of renewed self-recognition, social and national differentiation, economic and industrial transformation, internationalisation, "cosmopolitisation" and pluralisation. These processes continued into the 1930s as artistic and political programmes in Slovakia began to become more pragmatic and radical. The tumultuous events of the 1930s included economic instability following the Great Depression, Hitler's rise to power in Germany and related expansive politics, the Spanish civil war, as well as inadequate social policies of the Czechoslovak state, the issue of the Czechoslovak nation, a crisis of industry, a lack of workforce due to immigration, economic inequality and the differing economic structure of the Czech and Slovak regions of the new republic.[3] These concerns were mirrored in Slovakia by rising dissatisfaction, nationalism and calls for regionalism, federalism or the autonomy of Slovakia, a trend that continued until the founding of the Slovak Republic in 1939.[4] Regarding literature, the 1920s were abundant with individualistic, subjective works of the post-1918 generation that struggled to articulate a new, modernist mode of writing, while in the 1930s, it became gradually radicalised and more avant-garde. It is important to note that despite the given differences, there were attempts by the literary community to symbolically unite from the mid-1930s, exemplified by the Congress of Slovak Writers in 1936.

2 See, for example ČEPAN 1973; ŠMATLÁK, Stanislav. *Dejiny slovenskej literatúry II*. Bratislava : Literárne informačné centrum, 2001, pp. 283–314; JAKSICSOVÁ, Vlasta. *Kultúra* v *dejinách. Dejiny* v *kultúre. Moderna* a *slovenský intelektuál* v *siločiarach prvej polovice 20. storočia.* Bratislava : VEDA, 2012, pp. 31–61.

3 OLIVOVÁ, Věra. *Dějiny první republiky*. Praha : Karolinum, 2000, p. 172.

4 KOVÁČ, Dušan. *Dejiny Slovenska*. Praha : Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2007, pp. 200–204.

A good amount of young literary professionals born after 1900 entered the scene at the beginning of the 1930s armed with an entirely different perspective than the previous generation; with no apparent need for a united front of national interests, opinions were more differentiated in regard to national, social and artistic questions. Moreover, Slovakia only knew a handful of personalities that might be considered intellectuals. Intellectualisation and urbanity were indivisible after the First World War. When Slovaks started traveling and relocating to cities, a new generation of intelligentsia coming from villages and towns found itself actually having to adapt to being intelligentsia, often with limited results.[5] In the 1930s, the next generation of intellectuals operated either in Prague, continuing the line of the first generation, or in Bratislava, which had already foregone transformation towards a Slovak metropole—it was nationalised, giving the impression of a purely Slovak city. As Peter Zajac asserts, Slovak literary intelligentsia in the interwar period set itself certain criteria; truthfulness and critical thinking, coupled with an energy of intellectual morality and a willingness to go against the majority.[6] Although Zajac speaks about secular and urban intellectuals, it is applicable to young Slovak intelligentsia as a whole. In the Central and Eastern European geopolitical space, writers and literary critics were an integral part of intelligentsia, often fulfilling programmes of national awakening and education.[7]

Now let us introduce the personalities who in some ways reflected the Slovak position in the Czechoslovak republic and in the specifics of Slovak literature.[8] Stanislav Mečiar (1910–1971) was a literary critic and historian who became prominent in the early 1930s, publishing reviews mostly in journals *Elán*, *Slovenské pohľady* (editor-in-chief 1939–1944) and *Slovensko* (editor-in-chief 1934–1938), and later in the autonomist *Slovák* or *Nástup*. In 1934, he began working in Matica slovenská, continuing on as a secretary from 1940. Mečiar, like many other literary professionals who supported the idea of autonomous Slovakia during the interwar period, has been forgotten for the most part due to the fact that he immigrated to Argentina in 1945 and subsequently became a banned author. Some attempts were made to rehabilitate his memory after 1989 largely coming from new nationalist circles, though often uncritically, problematically or in a downright unscholarly manner.[9]

5 ZAJAC, Peter. Slovenskí intelektuáli dvadsiateho storočia. In ZAJAC, Peter. *Krajina bez sna*. Bratislava : Kalligram, 2004, pp. 36–37.

6 ZAJAC 2004, p. 44.

7 WACHTEL, Andrew Baruch. *Po komunismu stále důležití? Role spisovatelů ve východní Evropě.* Praha : Academia, 2017, pp. 30–31.

8 These three critics were chosen for several reasons: 1. They belong to roughly the same generation and were most productive in the crucial 1930s; 2. Each represents a different point on the contemporary ideological spectrum; 3. Although they were vocal about their worldview and had certain connections to political institutions, they themselves were not politicians; 4. After 1918, a number of literary critics rose in struggle to become a legitimate part of the cultural intelligentsia. For a brief overview of some other literary professionals' (mostly writers) opinions on the national question in Czechoslovakia see VAŠŠ, Martin. *Slovenská otázka v 1. ČSR (1918–1938).* Martin : Vydavateľstvo Matice slovenskej, 2011, pp. 221–234, 243–267. For a more thorough analysis of the political opinions of four influential interwar Slovak writers, see CSIBA, Karol. *Privátne – verejné – autobiografické.* Bratislava : Ústav slovenskej literatúry SAV, 2014.

9 For an example, see PARENIČKA, Pavol (ed.) *Stanislav Mečiar: zborník štúdií o Stanislavovi Mečiarovi.* Martin : Matica slovenská, 1996. The book has since been reprinted (2010) with only

Michal Chorváth (1910–1982) was a literary critic, essayist and occasional poet, who, like Mečiar, became a prominent critical voice in the 1930s. Prior to the Second World War, Chorváth was best known for writing two long essays, *Otrávená generácia* (The Upset Generation) (1932), articulating the pessimism, angst and discontent of his generation, which had lived in the new Czechoslovak state for most of their lives, and *Romantická tvár Slovenska* (The Romantic Face of Slovakia) (1939), outlining a variety of alleged "Romantic images" of Slovaks, which Slovak political and cultural personalities identified with and took advantage of to legitimise their efforts. Although Chorváth was closely affiliated with the communist journal *DAV*, he was never considered a member of the eponymous group. However, he is often tied together with several other congenial authors and artists into a loose group dubbed R-10.

Last of the critics for study is Andrej Kostolný (1903–1984), a representative of political Czechoslovakism. He was a prolific literary and theatre critic, French translator, cultural commentator and editor of the cultural section of *Politika*, a self-proclaimed politically neutral newspaper, but with an editorial staff that aligned with predominantly agrarian views built upon the pre-1914 liberal conservative and Czechoslovakist ideas of the "Hlas generation" and their eponymous journal, as well as the successor journal *Prúdy*. A devoted former student of Czech professor Albert Pražák, Kostolný was vocal about his opinions on the cultural space in Czechoslovakia, yet he often commented on national issues related to the position of Slovaks and the culture and language within the common state.

Reflections on the National Issue in the 1930s

The "Slovak question" was discussed fiercely among politicians and intellectuals in the 1930s, including writers and literary critics. Traditionally belonging to intelligentsia that shaped national consciousness, they continued discussions under different, democratic circumstances in the new republic. The term "nationalism" is not used with inherently negative connotations,[10] but with respect to the contemporary Slovak idea of "nation" and the cultural atmosphere of the 1930s when most writers viewed national self-determination through art as a necessity, mostly consisting of attempts to define sources, goals and forms of Slovak literature and its criticism, and drawing on the role of Slovak Romantic generation and cementing its legacy as a formative tradition. It is also worth noting that issues of modernity and tradition, or nationalism and cosmopolitism, often went hand in hand with the struggles to outline the Slovakness of art.

slight alterations, still full of highly problematic passages that relativize Mečiar's opinions and actions and counter how he was perceived, or ignored, by Marxist-Leninist literary historiography with a different extreme.

10 This term has often shifted in meaning towards patriotism or chauvinism depending on the social and political situation. For a historical and situational distinction between the three terms in Slovak context, see VÖRÖS, László. Vlastenectvo aj šovinizmus, alebo len nacionalizmus? Terminologické a definičné problémy skúmania nacionalizmov a historická komparácia. In KOVÁČ, Dušan et al. *Slovenské dejiny v dejinách Európy. Vybrané kapitoly*. Bratislava : VEDA, 2015, pp. 336–371.

Stanislav Mečiar provides a fitting example of an engaged nationalist and autonomist literary intellectual, one of the more exposed and prolific after Tido Jozef Gašpar, Martin Rázus and Milo Urban, and surely one of the best known literary critics on this side of the ideological spectrum. He began publishing reviews and essays in 1930 as 20-year-old student of Slovak and German studies with penchant for literature, but also interested in Polish and Croatian works. Although he began as a literary critic of both poetry and prose, by the mid-1930s, Mečiar's scope broadened, turning him into a figure one might consider a cultural critic. Later in the decade as the pressure for Slovak autonomy intensified, his articles carried a more distinguishable political overtone and rhetorical pathos.

Mečiar asserted that Slovaks are a small nation, constrained before it could fulfil its historical role, but all the more destined for a greatness that could only be achieved by working hard in the everyday cultivation of national culture.[11] He would often invoke the legacy of the national awakening and Ľudovít Štúr, connecting it to the Slovak position in the Czechoslovak Republic. He called for an increase in organised education towards a greater national consciousness, criticised the general indifference of Slovaks to their history and culture, and expressed hope for unity in regard to the Slovak interest in national self-determination.[12] A constant reiteration of the "historical role" of Slovaks was especially significant, a narrative that had pervaded Slovak culture and society since the early 19th century and would become integral to Slovak autonomist rhetoric, and later also to the Slovak part of Czechoslovak communism. From 1936, Mečiar's writing radicalised and openly explored the notion of what is usually called "historical injustices against the Slovak nation." He drew parallels between the Slovak situation before the First World War and the struggle for self-determination within the Czechoslovak Republic, going so far as anticipating a need for the "revolution and liberation of the Slovak word, to transform it with the fire of enthusiasm into a word of steel, of hard work and victory, where the existence of the Slovak nation, with all of its spiritual dispositions, strengths and attributes, would unite productively to create, ensure and build confidence for our life, our national growth, our freedom."[13]

As Mečiar became editor-in-chief of *Slovenské pohľady*, ceding the same position in *Slovensko* to writer Jozef Cíger Hronský, the increasing nationalist overtones would eventually culminate in a series of programmatic articles that affirmed his positive relationship with the newly founded Slovak state. In one of them, augmented by photographs of several Slovak politicians who were also members of the Matica slovenská committee, including Jozef Tiso and Ferdinand Ďurčanský, he anticipated a change of great proportions and a transformation of Slovak society that would draw on the efforts for national self-determination by Ľudovít Štúr or Andrej Hlinka. In the end, Mečiar urged "reckless and intransigent elimination of every obstacle to our development,"

11 MEČIAR, Stanislav. Národná povinnosť nestačí... In *Slovensko*, 1936, vol. 2, March, pp. 106–107.
12 MEČIAR, Stanislav. Štúrovo jubileum. In *Slovensko*, 1935, vol. 2, September–October, pp. 4–6.
13 MEČIAR, Stanislav. Slovo kovové – slovo víťazné! In *Slovensko*, 1936, vol. 3, September, pp. 2–4.

refusal of foreign influences from "unfavourable people," and specifically pointed out the role of Slovak intellectuals in these events. According to him, the new intelligentsia must be dedicated to "the awakening work, and this is why it should transform first" to "create presupposition for new life" and to participate "in the struggle for a better destiny and fortune for those to whom intellectuals must show the way."[14] This was not an opinion that Mečiar would impose on himself under influence or outside pressure—he wrote about Slovak writers and intellectuals in 1934 with similar conclusions, seeing them as redundant if they did not actively cultivate national culture in the time of global chaos and spiritual crises.[15]

The central theme in Mečiar's cultural writing touching upon the issue of nationalism was that Slovak literature, culture and society should conform to certain values that he universally connected to nation-ness, or idiosyncratic Slovakness, which, in a roundabout way, translates to national identity. These values and attributes were, however, either very vague or stereotypical and basically correlated with a set of auto-stereotypes about Slovaks that Rudolf Chmel poignantly described as the Slovak emotional, rebellious, religious and plebeian nature; a strenuousness, rurality, sense of justice and inclination towards great leaders, as well as myths of Slovaks no longer being dominated or slaving on their own soil.[16] This is paradoxical, as Mečiar himself was a vocal critic of superficiality and shallowness, the uncritical evaluation of history, mechanical acceptance of phrases and foreign influences and vagueness, for example, connected to the term "tradition." He criticised those who used "tradition" as a mere figure of speech, instead calling it "power that propels spiritual development", "faith in something powerful" and "a tool of will." He also argued that it is the intellectuals who should be in close contact with tradition and the future tasks that derive from it,[17] echoing an opinion he had expressed previously encouraging Slovak intellectuals and artists to participate in all branches of culture and to express their artistic visions and goals with regards to the national future and its spiritual past.[18] If the Czechoslovak image of Slovak history included the notion of Slovaks as "people without history" and the myth of a thousand-year-long oppression,[19] Mečiar opposed such an ahistorical view, yet at the same time, legitimised the myth as foundational for Slovak nation-ness.

14 In the same issue, Mečiar published a short article, *Slovensko nadovšetko* (Slovakia Above All), praising Slovak unity and integrity and stating that the Slovak nation has finally been liberated after many years of systematic efforts. MEČIAR, Stanislav. V novom živote nové ideály a noví ľudia. In *Slovensko*, 1939, vol. 5, no. 1–2, pp. 7–11.

15 MEČIAR, Stanislav. Charakter a kultúra. In *Elán*, 1934, vol. 4, no. 8, pp. 1–2.

16 Chmel alleges a longevity and viability of this position by adding that such a cocktail of stereotypes and myths has been utilised by different ideologies in different historical situations. See CHMEL, Rudolf. Slováci v zajatí stereotypov. In CHMEL, Rudolf. *Moje slovenské pochybnosti*. Bratislava : Kalligram, 2004, p. 13.

17 MEČIAR, Stanislav. Slovenské tradície. In *Slovensko*, 1937, vol. 3, July–August, pp. 198–201.

18 MEČIAR, Stanislav. Sochár Štefunko. In *Slovensko*, 1936, vol. 2, January–February, pp. 79–81.

19 ŠKVARNA, Dušan. Koncepty slovenských dejín a deformácie historickej pamäti. In BYSTRZAK, Magdalena – PASSIA, Radoslav – TARANENKOVÁ, Ivana (eds.) *Kontakty literatúry. Modely, identity, reprezentácie*. Bratislava : VEDA, pp. 212–213.

Andrej Kostolný openly admired personalities that in one way or another, spearheaded the idea of a single Czechoslovak nation, most notably Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Ivan Dérer, Albert Pražák or Pavel Bujnák. Among literary intelligentsia, Kostolný was one of the best-known proponents of single Czechoslovak culture. As Ján Smrek described him, he was one of "three musketeers somehow oriented towards the new Hlas-ism" along with literary critic Milan Pišút and poet Emil Boleslav Lukáč.[20] Kostolný wrote extensively on contemporary cultural life, with a special interest in the specifics of Slovak culture and language amongst the broader Czechoslovak context. Kostolný saw the so-called Czechoslovak reciprocity and closeness as a moral ideal, fundamental to the common democratic republic.[21] He considered Slovak nationalism compatible with Czechoslovak nationalism, as long as it was subordinate to the idea of common culture and language of the Czechs and Slovaks.[22]

The concept of the Slovak language as one of many dialects of the Czechoslovak language constantly shaped Kostolný's political views. He promoted the distinct Czech and Slovak cultures and languages as equal within the idea of the Czechoslovak nation, yet he strove to distinguish Slovak language from Czech, for example, calling for an easier legal process in obtaining Slovak translation rights from world literature.[23] He rejected any suggestion to eliminate the codification of Slovak, stating that the language has proven itself as vital and functional without shattering Czechoslovak spiritual unity.[24] He also engaged in a controversy that surrounded Matica slovenská and codification of the new rules of Slovak orthography[25] in 1931–1932, after which fourteen Czechoslovakist officials allegedly resigned due to an "unhealthy nationalist agenda in the institution." Kostolný argued that Slovak codification should not be guided by the political principles—a visible delimitation against Czechs or downright autonomy—of the Ľudáks, either members or, loosely speaking, sympathisers of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, and an anti-Czech purism that would sacrifice any chance of Czechoslovak unity.[26]

Kostolný provided his most in-depth opinion on the relationship between Czechoslovakism and the specifics of Slovak cultural life in two texts. The first was based on a speech that he gave at the Congress of the Young Slovak Generation (25–26 June 1932 in Trenčianske Teplice) in the panel *Status of Slovakia in the Czechoslovak Republic from the Cultural Side*[27] jointly with Ladislav Novomeský and later, autonomist politician Matúš Černák. He spoke

20 SMREK, Ján. Kosa na kameň. Druhá etapa polemie so Slovenskými smermi. In *Elán*, 1935, vol. 5, no. 7, p. 1.
21 KOSTOLNÝ, Andrej. Ďalšia práca v agrárnom seminári. Nacionálny problém v Československu: slovenským nacionalizmom k nacionalizmu československému. In *Slovenský deník*, 7 February 1933, p. 4.
22 KOSTOLNÝ, Andrej. Generačne nadväzujeme. In *Politika*, 1932, vol. 2, no. 13–14, pp. 179–180.
23 KOSTOLNÝ, Andrej. Autorské právo prekladu pre ČSR. In *Politika*, 1932, vol. 2, no. 11, p. 176.
24 KOSTOLNÝ, Andrej. Povedzme si to jasne a úprimne! In *Politika*, 1932, vol. 2, no. 21, p. 274.
25 *Pravidlá slovenského pravopisu s abecedným pravopisným slovníkom*. Praha : Štátne nakladateľstvo, 1931.
26 KOSTOLNÝ, Andrej. Matica slovenská a čo ďalej. In *Politika*, 1932, vol. 2, no. 10, pp. 113–115.
27 KOSTOLNÝ, Andrej. Postavenie Slovenska v ČSR po stránke kultúrnej. In *Politika*, 1932, vol. 2, no. 11, pp. 147–151.

of Czechoslovak unity despite seemingly unsurmountable differences, invoking the importance of pre-1914 Czechoslovak cooperation that paved the way to national freedom found in the common state. He favoured professionalism and a rational approach, proposed solutions—though overly optimistic and vague—to language teaching in high schools, problems in the Slovak National Theatre and diversification in literature, and reflected on Slovak scientific efforts in comparison to Czech university research. As for the question that had eventually led to the Congress—the codification issue in Matica slovenská—Kostolný did not see the need to further dissect it as, according to him, Slovak language was well-established by national literature, and professional and scientific terminology—with both Slovak and Czech etymology—had already crystallised. The results of the Congress are often seen as expression of general dissatisfaction with the political system, a crisis of Czechoslovak unity and a rejection of Prague centralism.[28] As a representative of the journal *Politika*, which organised the event, Kostolný remained one of the few participants to defend the official Czechoslovakist state policy, or at least attempt to reach a compromise with the Slovak voices rejecting it.[29]

The second work was a booklet entitled *Polemika s dr. Ľ. Novákom, autorom "Jazykovedných glos k* československej *otázke"* (A Polemic with Dr. Ľ. Novák, the Author of "Linguistic Commentary on the Czechoslovak Question") published separately in 1937. It was a polemical answer to a work by Slovak linguist Ľudovít Novák that advocated for the practical equality of Czech and Slovak languages, employing a linguistic analysis of Slovak to prove it as an independent language. Kostolný declared that he will not try to refute these claims on linguistic grounds, but rather focused on the moments in which he provided "dangerous and confusing excursions into non-linguistics." Aside from deeming the book unscholarly, Kostolný accused Novák of delving into indirect advocacy of Slovak autonomism and outdated "Hungarism", or as he explains through Ivan Dérer, perceiving the issue of Slovak self-determination as akin to traditionally described relationships between Slovak and Magyars in the old Hungarian Kingdom.[30] Kostolný concluded his work with a chapter titled *Czechoslovak National Problem*, in which he repeatedly assured readers that the Slovak language was sufficiently independent, and that Czechoslovak culture alone would not lead to uniformity.[31] In the end, the booklet demonstrated how Kostolný, by adhering to official state policies—albeit under the guise of political unity—ignored the core of the Czechoslovak language problem: most Slovaks who opposed the idea of two "dialects" saw it as a patronising way of denying the chance for national self-determination.[32] As Rudolf

28 ARPÁŠ, Róbert. Zjazd mladej slovenskej generácie. In HANULA, Matej – KŠIŇAN, Michal (eds.) *Slovensko a Európa medzi demokraciou a totalitou: kapitoly z dejín 20. storočia k jubileu Bohumily Ferenčuhovej*. Bratislava : Historický ústav SAV; Veda, 2017, p. 128.

29 According to an article in *Slovák*, his speech, which followed that of Černák, was met with loud laughter from spectators. See Sjazd mladej slovenskej generácie jednohlasne: Proti centralizmu a za autonomiu Slovenska. In *Slovák*, 28 June 1932, p. 2.

30 KOSTOLNÝ, Andrej. *Polemika s dr. Ľ. Novákom, autorom „Jazykovedných glos k československej otázke."* Bratislava : Universum, 1937, pp. 6–9.

31 KOSTOLNÝ 1937, Polemika, pp. 26–27.

32 RYCHLÍK, Jan. Češi a *Slováci ve 20. století. Spolupráce* a *konflikty 1914–1992.* Praha : Ústav pro

Chmel describes this paradox, Czechoslovakist intellectuals who argued for Slovak and Czech unity asserted that in essence there were no major differences to consider Czechs and Slovaks unique nationalities, yet at the same time they admitted that both nations had different customs, laws, history and levels of civilizational, spiritual and material progress.[33]

Kostolný's politically charged writing and activities intensified by the late-1930s, at a time when "Czechoslovak unity" had largely become an artificial phrase used in the public space and media, holding only the superficial function of official, festive, state-loyal rhetoric.[34] Even in a 1938 article lauding Milan Hodža, Kostolný maintained that Czechoslovak unity was against centralism and spiritual uniformity, and that it allowed for healthy national life.[35] He was also very active in the restored Luhačovice meetings, whose original iteration (1908–1913) organised by the Československá Jednota (Czechoslavic Unity) association played a key role in bringing the pre-1914 Czech and Slovak political and ideological avant-garde together.[36] At one meeting in July 1938, Kostolný and Milan Pišút debated what hinders the convergence of Czech and Slovak cultures as well as plans on how to cultivate Czechoslovak ideology in schools.[37] Kostolný also co-authored *Dvacať rokov slobody. Príručka k jubilejným oslavám 20. výročia našej samostatnosti* (Twenty Years of Freedom. A Handbook for Celebrations of the 20th Anniversary of Our Independence),[38] a booklet intended for the celebrations of the founding of the First Czechoslovak Republic, including articles, speeches, quotes, poems and excerpts from theatre plays by famous politicians and writers, as well as statistics connected to the social situation in Slovakia and references for further reading.

Michal Chorváth rarely wrote solely on nationalism and politics before 1939. However, his literature reviews and essays often discussed the national and religious aspects of art and the social impact of literature. His seminal essay, *The Upset Generation*,[39] outlined the position of Slovaks from the young generation's perspective, articulating the conflict between the anti-modernist revivalism and modernism of the 20th century.[40] Chorváth detailed a previous generation of inactivity and servility towards the Czechoslovak state and the

studium totalitních režimů, 2012, pp. 89–96.

33 CHMEL, Rudolf. Slovenská otázka v 20. storočí. In CHMEL, Rudolf. *Romantizmus* v *globalizme. Malé národy – veľké mýty.* Bratislava : Kalligram, 2009, p. 236.

34 DUCHÁČEK, Milan. Čechoslovakismus v prvním poločase ČSR: státotvorný koncept nebo floskule? In HUDEK, Adam – KOPEČEK, Michal – MERVART, Jan (eds.) *Čecho/slovakismus*. Praha : Nakladatelství Lidové noviny; Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, v. v. i., 2019, pp. 180.

35 KOSTOLNÝ, Andrej. Jeden z receptov dr. Milana Hodžu. In *Politika*, 1938, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 22–23.

36 JURČIŠINOVÁ, Nadežda. *Česko-slovenské porady v Luhačoviciach (1908–1913)*. Bratislava : Ústav politických vied SAV, 2015.

37 Kultúrne problémy na luhačovských poradách. In *Slovenský deník*, 5 July 1938, p. 3.

38 DAFČÍK, Ján – KOSTOLNÝ, Andrej – ZÚBEK, Ľudo (eds.) *Dvacať rokov slobody. Príručka k jubilejným oslavám 20. výročia našej samostatnosti*. Bratislava : Slovenský jubilárny výbor v Bratislave, 1938.

39 CHORVÁTH, Michal. Otrávená generácia. In CHORVÁTH, Michal. *Cestami literatúry. Články, kritiky, recenzie 1932–1944*. Edited by Branislav Choma. Bratislava : Slovenský spisovateľ, 1960, pp. 19–29.

40 ZAJAC, Peter. Slovenské kargo. In ZAJAC, Peter. *Slovenské kargo*. Bratislava : Kalligram, 2015, p. 90.

idea of unity, blaming them for the hardships of his generation and encouraging the destruction of the system operated by Czechs and any ideas of Czechoslovak unity, which to him was most vividly represented by the situation in public schools. He also pointed out crucial differences between Czechs and Slovaks that substantiated coexistence within one state—the unity of Czechs exceeded the fragmentation of Slovaks, who had only recently experienced what becoming a nation really yields. In this respect, Chorváth asked, "What was the nation? Could those villages, scattered across our mountains be called a nation?" However, he criticised the idea of Czechoslovak unity as a mere phrase covering cold official relations. Chorváth's tone was sharply confrontational, accusing contemporary society of aimlessness and doubtfulness as he provocatively invoked the narrative of a thousand-year oppression of Slovaks by the Hungarians, hinting that the Czech colonisation of Slovaks was just a different form of national oppression.

Chorváth later shifted his aggressive tone to a more constructive one, yet still sharply critical and vehemently opposing political nationalism. In a scathing review of Martin Rázus's historical novel *Odkaz mŕtvych* (Legacy of the Dead) (1936), set in the protestant central Slovak town of Brezno in the years of the counter-reformation, Chorváth derided the work and its author for spreading dangerous nationalism and fascism, attributing it to the author's lack of knowledge and his ignorance, with the book promoting brutality, stupidity, intolerance and spiritual vileness.[41] Using the term fascism was not random as at the time, the majority of writers and literary professionals were aware of the Nazi threat to Europe and Czechoslovakia. Following the First Vienna Award, Chorváth returned to the idea of Slavic unity as a possible defence against German expansion. He argued that this type of harmony had been impossible in the previous decade due to rising nationalism and the need for national self-determination. Although—in accordance with much of leftist intelligentsia—he criticised the Czechoslovak republic, it was seen as a useful model for the future but with a much broader Slavic presence, a "consensus omnium" that would stand above ideological differences.[42]

In 1939, Chorváth voiced similar views in the essay *The Romantic Face of Slovakia*.[43] Of all his pre-war texts, this best mirrored his interest in the theory and praxis of Czechoslovakism, a topic central to the Slovak leftist intelligentsia in 1930s.[44] He viewed Romanticism not as an event, but as a way of thinking that pervaded the Slovak mind set as some relic of national revivalism, and which prevented Slovakia from advancing into modernity. He saw the notion

41 CHORVÁTH, Michal. Odkaz pre mŕtvych (Nad Rázusovým Odkazom mŕtvych). In CHORVÁTH, Michal. *Cestami literatúry.* Edited by Branislav Choma. Bratislava : Slovenský spisovateľ, 1979, p. 211. Originally published in *DAV*, 1937, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 12–14.

42 m. ch. [Michal Chorváth]. „...nech sa ti ozve človek". In *Slovenský hlas*, 30 December 1938, p. 6.

43 CHORVÁTH, Michal. Romantická tvár Slovenska. In CHORVÁTH, Michal. *Cestami literatúry. Články, kritiky, recenzie 1932–1944.* Edited by Branislav Choma. Bratislava : Slovenský spisovateľ, 1960, pp. 30–54.

44 BENKO, Juraj. Miesto a funkcia inteligencie v slovenskom komunistickom hnutí v medzivojnovom období. In MICHÁLEK, Slavomír – LONDÁK, Miroslav et al. *Gustáv Husák. Moc politiky – politik moci*. Bratislava : VEDA, 2013, p. 80.

of a "romantic soul" as a foundational myth for the Slovak nation that was used to legitimise its history and could only be overcome with modern critical rationalism. Within the context of the Czechoslovak republic, Chorváth deemed it important to explain that Czechs had passed through the phase of national self-determination earlier and yet showed no understanding for Slovaks during the same process much later, ignoring their efforts to become an independent, productive and creative force within the common republic. Will to participate in Czechoslovak unity was, to him, a symptom of Czechoslovak romanticism that would be overcome once the Slovak political and national romanticism was overcome. Nevertheless, Chorváth criticised clinging to national myths—especially the legend of the hot-headed, sanguine nature of Slovaks—and narratives that justified political and historical passiveness.

Slovakness vs Worldliness in Literature

Attempts to define what makes a literature Slovak were not strictly products of rising nationalist tendencies in the 1930s. Well before 1918, literary intellectuals of differing ideologies were interested in defining the character of Slovak literature as a part of the natural process of self-determination. In the context of art history, the identification of specific national art was categorized by the Slovak myth; bluntly put, a programmatic focus on the Slovak countryside, its inhabitants and the use of folklore influences with a modernist approach to art. These features are generally associated with the depiction of Slovakness, of one's face and one's own form.[45] Literature fought its own similar struggle to define national works in between the wars.

There are several ways of defining "a literature", one more complicated than the other. From today's point of view, to speak of "national literatures" is walking on thin ice. It is a notion complicated by a plethora of issues, starting with "simple" things such as the nationality of an author or the language of a work, and culminating with historical circumstances and inter-literary processes. For the sake of simplicity, literatures can be defined as "techniques or practices of reading texts, and specifically of linking texts together, through a series of relationships that usually begins with language and/or the polity, but which also include questions of genre and influence, among other criteria."[46] It is reasonable to assume that literature is "one and unequal" since the times of Johann Wolfgang Goethe, as Franco Moretti asserts.[47] Regarding the case of Slovak literature in the interwar period, the issue is underlined by a visible struggle to define what constitutes the specifics of Slovak literature and the number of influences acting on it. Despite attempts to identify the idiosyncrasy of Slovak art, there were many influences on Slovak literature, most

45 KVOČÁKOVÁ, Lucia. *Cesta ke slovenskému mýtu. Konstrukce identity slovenské moderny* v *kontextu ideje čechoslovakismu.* Translated by Martin Lukáč. Praha : Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, 2020, p. 10.

46 BEECROFT, Alexander. *An Ecology of Literature from Antiquity to the Present Day*. London; New York : Verso, 2015, p. 16.

47 MORETTI, Franco. Conjectures on World Literature. In *New Left Review*, 2000, vol. 1, no. 238, p. 56.

transparently Czech, French, Hungarian, German, Russian, or Polish, but also English, Italian, or south Slavic, as is evidenced even in the case of the three critics of this study. These men had first-hand, cosmopolitan experience with world literature; Mečiar was well-versed in German and Polish, translating numerous works, Kostolný was fluent in Hungarian and French and Chorváth belonged to a group of Slovak Prague students who were in touch with the latest artistic movements. To elaborate on Moretti's claim, Slovak writers mainly struggled to rightfully become "one" with world literature, while simultaneously feeling "unequal" to it. Authors differed in the way Slovak literature should be legitimised, which inherently related to the issue of its function, form and content. The oft-repeated term "worldliness" was frequently applied to the evaluation of Slovak literature in these discussions.

The relationship between tradition and modernity became a focal point for defining Slovak literature. Mečiar favoured a form of Slovak writing that would share both; he called the best post-1918 literary works a conscious syntheses of *l'art pour l'art* tendencies and a humanistic approach to national issues.[48] A reconstruction of Mečiar's publishing history indicates what he considered a canon, a guiding line for modern Slovak literature; on the one hand, he considered Janko Jesenský, Pavol Országh Hviezdoslav or Ivan Krasko canonical authors, but on the other, he was positively aware of contemporary modern artistic movements. Seeing literature as a "reservoir of values that outlast individuals and generations,"[49] he reconstructed the narrative of Slovak literature as truly beginning with Štúr's Romantic generation, even explicitly stating that "producers of spiritual values" should consciously utilise their legacy and complement it with modern world influences in a way that would ultimately be distinctly Slovak and only then, modern.[50] From 1934 to 1938, Mečiar published a series of articles in *Elán* that commented on the state of Slovak literature and culture. He championed the view of universality and equality with other European and world literatures,[51] but also repeatedly criticised Slovak authors for their lack of values,[52] overt focus on fashionable slogans[53] and the reluctance or inability to find a common ground in cultural work for the sake of national progress.[54] There are some key points to be found in Mečiar's thinking. Although receptive to modern trends in literature, he cautioned against their mechanical use, and though he insisted on worldly qualities for Slovak literature, he was critical of most authors for not creating works with such character. To sum up, Mečiar did not reject modernity, but considered it in relation to national art as a return to a purely Slovak literary form, to its folk roots and legacy of previous generations,[55] evoking the long-time attitude

48 MEČIAR, Stanislav. Slovenská literatúra a tradícia. In *Slovenské smery*, 1936, vol. 3, no. 8–9, p. 302.
49 MEČIAR, Stanislav. Nesmrteľný hlas. In *Elán*, 1938, vol. 8, no. 10, pp. 1–3.
50 MEČIAR, Stanislav. Nad duchovným dedictvom Štúrovým. In *Slovenské pohľady*, 1936, vol. 52, no. 1, p. 31.
51 MEČIAR, Stanislav. My a takzvaná európska úroveň. In *Elán*, 1934, vol. 4, no. 6, p. 1.
52 MEČIAR, Stanislav. Sine nobilitate. In *Elán*, 1936, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 1–3.
53 MEČIAR, Stanislav. Bezideovosť v literatúre. In *Elán*, 1937, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 5–6.
54 MEČIAR, Stanislav. Niet ľudí. In *Elán*, 1937, vol. 7, no. 10, pp. 1–2.
55 MEČIAR 1936, Sine nobilitate.

towards "national revivalist" and educational art[56] that can be traced back to Ľ. Štúr. To Mečiar, historical national values that largely corresponded to the aforementioned stereotypical set of "Slovak" attributes described by Chmel and traditional literary forms of both sophisticated and folk art were evidence of the legitimacy of Slovak literature and assured its future progress.

As explained above, Kostolný maintained that the Slovak language was not under threat from Czechoslovakist policies. To him, as in Mečiar's case, the biggest merit Slovak literature should have headed towards was worldliness. In addition, he mentioned professionalism and a scholarly approach that would thoroughly analyse and uncover the specifics of Slovak culture, thus anticipating its future needs.[57] Generally, Kostolný opposed nationalist tendencies in literature as remnants of the pre-1918 national and political situation. In fact, he was more interested in outlining its relationship to Czech literature as a certain sign of worldliness. Like with language, which he saw politically as united but distinct in practice, Kostolný spoke of one Czechoslovak culture[58] that should only be evaluated in context of world literature.[59] Yet he felt it necessary to discuss the cultural transfer and distinctions between Czech and Slovak culture. He repeatedly criticised the Czech side for not particularly caring for Slovak literature, despite the best Slovak efforts to export their national literature.[60] He also criticised Slovak writers for their close-mindedness, regionalism and overrating of national values.[61] To put it simply, worldliness was Kostolný's way of justifying Slovak literature as a specific national literature, though still subordinate to the political unity of Czechoslovak culture. At the core, one might consider him a light version of a Czechoslovak nationalist.

Chorváth approached the issue of national literature in terms of both its history and function. Like Mečiar, he deemed the legacy of Slovak Romanticism important to modern Slovak literature, but he saw greater value in contemporary poetry developing on Romanticism in conjunction with new literary forms and expressions.[62] The notion of a romantic Slovak nature pervaded Czechoslovak art reception; Czech art being high and sophisticated, and Slovak low and "rustic"[63]—which Chorváth sharply opposed. However, he did see the Slovakness of literature in its connection to the people. Not only was Romantic art inspirational to contemporary artists due to its folk sources, but among international art as well, offering jazz as an example of a modern art form with folk roots. Chorváth's solution was to resume the tradition of Slovak art for the masses, with its distinctively sad, painful and defiant tone,

56 KVOČÁKOVÁ 2020, p. 58.
57 KOSTOLNÝ 1932, Postavenie Slovenska, p. 151.
58 KOSTOLNÝ, Andrej. Mladá generácia slovenská (Pokračovanie.). In *Luk*, 1930, vol. 1, no. 7, pp. 100–102.
59 KOSTOLNÝ, Andrej. Tiene diletantizmu. In *Slovenský deník*, 28 October 1933, p. 13.
60 KOSTOLNÝ, Andrej. Cesty slovenskej kultúry namierené do českých zemí. In *Politika*, 1937, vol. 7, no. 6, p. 68.
61 KOSTOLNÝ, Andrej. Poznámky k Rázusovej prednáške v Bratislave. In *Politika*, 1931, vol. 1, no. 9, pp. 102–103.
62 CHORVÁTH 1960, Romantická tvár, p. 48.
63 KVOČÁKOVÁ 2020, p. 90.

but eschewing superficial folklore traits.[64] Chorváth attributed the issues with Slovak art—obsoleteness, isolation, marginality—to the tradition of testing the formal side of literary production that led to misunderstandings by the general readership, and expressed hope that writers will realise their new mission to speak to the masses.[65] Although Chorváth was critical of the Czech relationship to Slovak art, he nevertheless admitted that Slovak poetry was closely connected to the Czech tradition, providing international influence. Besides this, he insisted that Slovak poetry is independent and only explicable through a characteristically Slovak experience and environment.[66] Chorváth thus found the legitimacy of national literature in its historical function; to critically mirror the world of the masses, speak to them and to establish enduring truths and values by overcoming the distance between nationalism and universalism, intelligentsia and the people.[67] Chorváth understood interwar modernity more socially than nationally and was more receptive to avant-garde—revolutionary—aesthetics.

When trying to define Slovakness, one would have to admit sooner or later that it is impossible, as literature exists in complicated relationships with and under important influence from other literatures, which is especially true of a smaller nation's one. Elaborating on Beecroft's definition, one might say that the three critics of this study were concerned with techniques on reading literary works, which is clear. However, oftentimes they delved into thoughts on creating texts from the perspective of national literature—which is an uncertain territory—and inter-literary connections—which they did inconsistently and vaguely. As Beecroft suggests, national literatures emerge from vernacular ones.[68] This is also what the three considered, indirectly and linguistically, in their evaluation of Slovak national literature. It is clear, however, that despite general political programmes, the critics expressed a certain will to compromise between the national characteristic of literary production and a degree of international influence, one way or another.[69]

The Congress of Slovak Writers

In the 1930s, ideological differences among Slovak intellectuals became gradually more palpable. Still, there were moments of cooperation on cer-

64 L. H [Michal Chorváth]. Cesty slovenskej literatúry. In *Ľudový denník*, 3 May 1935, vol. 2, no. 5, p. 3.

65 –m. ch. – [Michal Chorváth]. Slovenské umenie v boji o tvar. In *Slovenský hlas*, 1938, vol. 1, no. 150, p. 9.

66 CHORVÁTH, Michal. Dvadsať rokov slovenskej poézie. In *Kritický měsíčník*, 1938, vol. 1, no. 5, p. 204.

67 CHORVÁTH 1960, Romantická tvár, p. 54.

68 BEECROFT 2015, p. 198.

69 Of course, there were instances of writers who unambiguously rejected any notion of internationalism or cosmopolitism in favour of purely national literature, such as Martin Rázus or Ján E. Bor, as well as radical leftist writers who, in turn, rejected national literary tradition in the name of new revolutionary art, such as authors connected with the journal *DAV* in their early years. For Rázus, see: HUČKOVÁ, Dana. Slovenskosť kontra internacionalizmus: Rázusove reflexie modernej slovenskej literatúry. In *Slovenská literatúra*, 2017, vol. 64, no. 4, pp. 318–328; for *DAV* see HABAJ, Michal. Ľavá vpred. Prvý ročník revue DAV (1924–1925). In *Slovenská literatúra*, 2017, vol. 64, no. 4, pp. 269–283.

tain levels despite the ideological differences among literary intelligentsia. One such occasion has already been mentioned; the Congress of the Young Slovak Generation, where the majority of attendees agreed to reject the idea of Czechoslovak national and linguistic unity. Another such occasion, albeit with seemingly different results, was the only pre-war Congress of Slovak Writers that took place from 30 May until 1 June 1936. It was a seminal event attended by more than 200 literary professionals of all worldviews, faiths and generations.[70] Many authors and critics gave speeches, including Mečiar on tradition in Slovak culture and Kostolný on fresh goals of literary criticism, which were later published in a special issue of the journal *Slovenské smery*. Chorváth was active as an initiator and critic of the Congress, but had only limited participation in actual discussions. The result, a brief *Joint Statement of Slovak Writers* addressing several key issues, declared: 1. "a faithfulness to struggle for freedom and the great ideals of humanity that helped the workers of our culture secure our national present;" 2. unity against any enemy and cooperation with Czech authors; 3. co-responsibility for the Czechoslovak state and Slovak nation; 4. an adherence to values of social freedom and justice as a base for literary and cultural progress; 5. the Slovak nation belongs to the world cultural and social space.[71]

The role of leftist writers here was placed at the forefront of the Congress, not only because subsequent historiography granted them special emphasis, but also because they initiated the event's organisation and were particularly active in the surrounding discussions. Michal Chorváth was one of the first to contemplate the idea thoroughly in reaction to the articles of Mečiar, Laco Novomeský and Ján Poničan, who all had generally wondered whether an event such as International Congress of Writers for the Defence of Culture in Paris or the Congress of Soviet Writers could be organised in Slovakia. Chorváth was mostly curious if an alliance of particular Slovak ideological movements would be possible, outlining four specifically: 1. nationalist, that he dubbed "new Štúrism;" 2. Czechoslovakist; 3. internationalist/communist, which, according to him, saw nationalism as a revolutionary idea; 4. Catholic modernist, in terms of nationalism connected to the first movement.[72] Chorváth asserted that the tying idea was that Slovaks are a cultured nation and that art is supposed to educate the people. He later wrote several more articles after the Congress concluded, criticising it for theorising instead of focusing on practical measures. In this respect, he saw three positive results of the event: solving the issue of tradition and worldliness, rejecting Czechoslovakism—instead aiming to maintain a fruitful and healthy relationship with Czech culture—and emphasising contact with ordinary people.[73] Chorváth reflected on the presence of Czechoslovakism on the Congress, eventually

70 For a more detailed account of the event, see CHMEL, Rudolf. Záväzná tradícia. In CHMEL, Rudolf. *Kongres slovenských spisovateľov 1936*. Bratislava : Tatran, 1986, pp. 182–203.

71 The statement was signed by 51 attendees, including Mečiar, Kostolný and Chorváth. Cf. Spoločný prejav slovenských spisovateľov. In *Elán*, 1936, vol. 6, no. 10, p. 2.

72 CHORVÁTH, Michal. Je potrebný – je možný? Kongres slovenských spisovateľov. In *DAV*, 1935, vol. 8, no. 6, pp. 10–13.

73 CHORVÁTH, Michal. Pasíva a aktíva prvého kongresu. In *Elán*, 1936, vol. 6, no. 10, pp. 3–4.

noting that Slovak writers and critics no longer consider it a vital issue, and even known Czechoslovakists accepted Slovak culture as legitimate, singling out Kostolný.[74] Although Chorváth capitulated a general acceptance of the aforementioned third way, supported by the Joint Statement, in reality, all major ideological movements (autonomist, Czechoslovakist, communist) interpreted the result as a win for their specific side.[75]

It might seem paradoxical that the writers and critics called for cooperation and unity despite their disputes and apparent irreconcilable differences. They were motivated by what was seen as a rising fascist threat, a strong desire for delimiting and improving the Slovak position within the Czechoslovak state and the perceived need to describe the specifics of Slovak art along with creative and social conditions. The Congress had been seen in the past as an event initiated by leftist writers that, in the end, united Slovak literary professionals in the so-called "third way" approach to the "Slovak question"; neither demanding Slovak autonomy nor accepting the idea of Czechoslovakism, an idea represented at the Congress by Laco Novomeský and later strengthened by Marxist-Leninist literary historiography.[76] Debates were sparked in the aftermath of the Congress and, considering the reactions in journals and newspapers, revealed that the statement was more of a noble gesture which did not fully correlate with the real situation in Slovak culture.[77]

Conclusion

This article explored how national and nationalist agenda manifested itself in the writings of three well-known literary critics of the 1930s, Stanislav Mečiar, Andrej Kostolný, and Michal Chorváth, as representatives of their respective ideological movements: nationalist/autonomist, Czechoslovakist, and communist. Although each had different opinions on the Slovak position within Czechoslovakia, they all regarded Slovakia as equal to the Czechs. The same can be said about culture; not only the three critics, but the majority of literary professionals of the 1930s would agree that Slovak literature belonged to the world—or at least strongly aspired to do so—either for its idiosyncratic Slovakness with roots in national history, tradition and character, or for absorbing modern(ist) literary trends and adapting them to Slovak literary context. These were the ways used to legitimise the Slovak nation and its culture alike, which was the main goal of contemporary literary critics, theoreticians, historians, and writers too.

74 CHORVÁTH, Michal. Čechoslovakizmus na spisovateľskom zjazde. In *Slovenské zvesti*, 4 June 1936, p. 1.

75 CHMEL 1986, p. 196.

76 As Filip Pavčík asserts, this opinion is still relatively alive in some ways in today's historiography and social consciousness. See PAVČÍK, Filip. Spory a konflikty medzi slovenskými spisovateľmi v rokoch 1945–1948. In *Studia Historica Nitriensia*, 2018, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 398–399.

77 Similarly, two years later Ľudová *politika* published a manifesto of several well-known authors of various incompatible ideological movements calling for unity in defence against "an expansive enemy," declaring legitimacy of the Czechoslovak state and Czech-Slovak brotherhood, and assuring victory against propaganda and small-mindedness. See "Voľme radšie nebyť, ako byť otrokmi!" Prejav slovenských spisovateľov vo vážnych chvíľach. In *Ľudová politika*, 30 September 1938, p. 2.

Stanislav Mečiar represented the nationalist/autonomist movement, connecting modern Slovak literature to its historical roots and utilising the narrative of a thousand-year oppression and historical role of Slovaks on their way to independence and self-determination. In literature, Mečiar advocated for a return to Slovak folk roots, its rich artistic tradition and depicted the Slovak historical and social struggle, yet he was simultaneously aware of world modernist and avant-garde movements, which he did not outright reject, but cautioned against a mechanical adaptation. Just like he considered the national issue in teleological dimensions, he saw Slovak art as destined to become purely national, thus finally modern. On the other end of the spectrum, Michal Chorváth opposed political nationalism and its manifestations in literary works and contested traditional Slovak autostereotypes regarding history, tradition and character. Chorváth legitimised Slovak literature by its ability to mirror social issues of the common folk and bridge gaps between classes. Whether deliberately or not, his efforts were in certain union with official Communist Party policies following its Bolshevisation, according to which the national question was inseparable from communist revolution.

Among the three, Andrej Kostolný gives the oddest impression; an advocate of Czechoslovak unity that, though official state policy, was no longer viable in practice and was rejected by a significant part of Slovak intelligentsia. He was a commentator, whose agenda was to amicably equate and bring together Czech and Slovak cultures arguing that Czechoslovak unity is not a threat to Slovak self-determination. He was also a literary critic, who wished to call Slovak literature a part of European and world culture, yet subordinate to common Czechoslovak culture. As to the legitimacy of the Slovak nation and its literature, it was not an important issue to Kostolný. To him, the widespread use of the Slovak language and writing perfectly legitimised the existence of the nation and its literature. All three saw literature as a space for delimiting a certain national idiosyncrasy that might comprise Slovak nation-ness—or national identity—acting as a vehicle for, according to them, universal values. Despite declaring a certain degree of cooperation and agreement on national and cultural issues, concrete solutions diverged dramatically, as is evidenced by the Congress of Slovak Writers and proceeding developments. It was an event which, on the one hand, united the attending literati (as a social group) in the moral imperative of being engaged and conscious writers, cultural workers with duties to society. On the other hand, in practical terms, it only accentuated the ruptures and differences that became more transparent after the First Vienna Award and the founding of the Slovak state.

FORUM HISTORIAE Journal and Portal for History and Related Disciplines
ISSN 1337-6861

Forum Historiae, 2022, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 69–87

www.forumhistoriae.sk

The Concept of "Nation" and "National Community" in the Thinking of Štefan Polakovič: A Case of the Nazi Idea of *Volksgemeinschaft* Spread within Slovak Catholic Nationalism

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Keywords
Catholicism, fascism, Slovak State, Štefan Polakovič, nation, Volksgemeinschaft

DOI
10.31577/forhist.2022.16.1.5

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Cite
LENČÉŠOVÁ, Michaela. The Concept of "Nation" and "National Community" in the Thinking of Štefan Polakovič: A Case of the Nazi Idea of Volksgemeinschaft Spread within Slovak Catholic Nationalism. In *Forum Historiae*, 2022, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 69–87, doi: 10.31577/forhist.2022.16.1.5

Abstract

LENČÉŠOVÁ, Michaela. The Concept of "Nation" and "National Community" in the Thinking of Štefan Polakovič: A Case of the Nazi Idea of Volksgemeinschaft Spread within Slovak Catholic Nationalism.

This study explores a range of shifts in the understanding of "nation" by Štefan Polakovič, a Catholic intellectual, in the period of the wartime Slovak Republic, focusing on the root causes of Polakovič's adoption of Volksgemeinschaft—the racial concept of "nation" that drew upon the ideology of German National Socialism. The current paper examines the genesis of the Slovak adaptation in Polakovič's interpretation and his coming to terms with the Catholic critique of racism. Polakovič's conceptualisation of the idea of "nation" is explored within a wider context of its understanding in Slovak political Catholicism.

In September 1942, the ideological seminar Political School was held in a small Slovak town on the Hron river called Sliač. The five-day event brought together delegates from Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (HSĽS),[1] cultural professionals and other specialists and featured Catholic priest and philosopher Štefan Polakovič (1912–1999), who presented two papers. A public intellectual, thinker and fascist-leaning Catholic corporatist,[2] Polakovič played a role in shaping the leadership cult of Jozef Tiso (1887–1947). He also served as Head of the National and Political Formation Department of Hlinka Youth (HY)[3] and was influential in developing Tiso's version of Slovak National Socialism, called *People's Slovakia*. At the seminar, he discussed the leadership principle and the concepts of "nation" and "state," asserting that the Slovak nation "evolved from an original, single biological root not merged with the blood of other nations, and even used its invigorating blood to nurture some nations."[4] This emphasis on a biological foundation of the nation

1 Slovak orig. Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana.
2 On the fascination of Catholic clerics in the period of the Slovak State and the theory of the fascist effect, see SZABÓ, Miloslav. „Klérofašizmus"? Katolicizmus a radikálna pravica v stredoeurópskom kontexte (1918–1945). In *Historický časopis*, 2017, vol. 65, no. 4, pp. 675–687.
3 Hlinka Youth emerged after 1938 as a youth organisation under the HSĽS. MILLA, Michal. *Hlinkova mládež 1938–1945*. Bratislava : ÚPN, 2008, p. 73, 90, 205.
4 Zakončenie Politickej školy HSĽS na Sliači. In *Slovák*, 30 September 1942, p. 3.

and the purity of blood is a direct reference to the racially instigated concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* (national community) from the ideology of German National Socialists. The term "national community" was employed in Slovak Catholic nationalist discourse with the same connotations.[5] In an encyclical, *Mit brennender Sorge* (1937), Pope Pius XI condemned the anti-ecclesiastical policies of the German National Socialists, along with racism, chauvinism and statism, though he did not question the existence of races, nations or modern secular states. He argued that the supreme place ought to belong to God and order should not be based on race, nation or state, but on natural law bestowed by God.[6] Notwithstanding the Pope's criticism of racism, some European Catholic intellectuals, including Slovaks, adopted the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft*.[7] This study examines the rationale behind such incorporation of the German National Socialist concept of "nation" in the thinking of Štefan Polakovič.

Research Scope

During the Second World War, *Volksgemeinschaft* was a construct of society promoted by the Third Reich. Politicians and intellectuals across Europe incorporated the language as a way to bolster their national projects, while also defining themselves vis-à-vis other national schemes. In addition to racial exclusivism, *Volksgemeinschaft* was epitomised by social inclusion, thus racial identity determined entitlement to state social welfare.[8] Earlier research shows that adoption of the German concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* by Slovak Catholic philosophers was quite marginal. In addition to Štefan Polakovič, Ladislav Hanus (1907–1994) also engaged theoretically in the concept of a people's community and natural law,[9] and Ľudovít Zachar (1888–1967) described the racial principle as one of the main pillars of Slovak National Socialism.[10] Priest and president of the wartime Slovak State[11] Jozef Tiso, who constantly accentuated a social agenda throughout his political career, revered some of the social enterprises of the Third Reich. Nevertheless, it was

5 The term "national community" is used in this study with a meaning close to that of "commonwealth" or "togetherness," as applied in the nationalist language of populists during the 1930s and 1940s.

6 WEIGEL, George. *The Irony of Modern Catholic History.* New York : Basic Books, 2019; CHAPPEL, James. *Catholic Modern*. Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 2018, p. 156; CONNELLY, John. Catholic Racism and Its Opponents. In *The Journal of Modern History*, 2007, vol. 79, no. 4, pp. 813–847.

7 See also cases in Hungary and Croatia. HANEBRINK, Paul A. *In Defense of Christian Hungary*. Ithaca-London : Cornell University Press, 2006, pp. 137–221; YEOMANS, Rory. *Visions of annihilation*. Pittsburgh : University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013.

8 ŠUSTROVÁ, Radka. *Zastřené počátky sociálního státu*. Prague : Argo, 2020, pp. 69–157.

9 SZABÓ, Miloslav. *Klérofašisti*. Bratislava : Slovart, 2019, pp. 84–97.

10 MÜNZ, Teodor. Novotomizmus na Slovensku v prvej polovici 20. storočia. In KOLLÁR, Karol – KOPČOK, Andrej. *Dejiny filozofie na Slovensku* v *XX. storočí*. Bratislava : Infopress, 1998, pp. 26–27; WARD, James. *Jozef Tiso*. Prague : Slovart, 2018.

11 Slovak Republic, 1939–1945, is the official name of the country that emerged as a result of the Munich Treaty which led to the split of Czechoslovakia. Generally it is referred to as the Slovak State, by historians as well. In respect of this practice, in this study, any reference to the name of the country will be made as the "Slovak State." Elsewhere, to distinguish from the state- and nation-building notions drawn by Slovak intellectuals, the phrase "Slovak state" will be employed.

not merely a matter of Winter Aid as part of the moral reform of capitalism;[12] Tiso also personally admired the social inclusion associated with the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft*. After declaring autonomy for Slovakia in October 1938, he spoke of the dawn of a New Slovakia and "giving Slovak bread back to Slovaks." He referred directly to the term "national community," though distanced himself from a racially constructed concept of "nation."[13] It was only later, after adopting racial arguments that he came to think of Slovaks in the context of "cleansing the Slovak race from the Jewish one."[14]

The situation was somewhat different among Slovak political Catholicism circles.[15] The prevailing discourse, as epitomised by Catholic corporatists, defined "nation" as a spiritual community, though from the second half of the 1930s, it grew radical; first by emphasising the homogenisation and unity of the Slovak nation and later by shifting towards racial positions. The roots of the nationalist discourse among the Slovak National Socialists, who defined a "nation" as a racial community, can be traced through Slovak political Catholicism to the second half of the 1920s. With the exception of the period of 1940–1942, the discourse did not prove to be predominant.[16] Further research shall explore how the representatives of the two factions of Slovak political Catholicism imagined the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* throughout the existence of the Slovak State. However, it was particularly during the period of Slovak National Socialism that the concept was used increasingly frequently. Research up to today suggests that Slovak National Socialists were particularly keen on using the term "national community," though corporativists adopted the notion as well.[17]

While biologism was quite negligible among Slovak Catholic philosophers in conceptualising the idea of "nation", the theory deserves further inquiry to expose the various roots of the Catholic adoption of fascist elements along with different approaches to reading Papal encyclicals and their interpretation by Catholics internationally. Though they considered some elements of racial theory to be apostasy, they also realised that race was to be the foun-

12 WARD 2018, p. 238–239; Slovenská obetavosť prehovorila. In *Slovák*, 7 November 1939, p. 2.

13 FABRICIUS, Miroslav – HRADSKÁ, Katarína. *Jozef Tiso, Prejavy* a články. 2. diel. Bratislava : HÚ SAV, 2007, p. 41. For antisemitic measures from this period, see e.g., dedicated issue Autonómia Slovenska 1938–1939 : Počiatočná fáza holokaustu a perzekúcii. In *Forum Historiae*, 2019, vol. 13, no. 1. http://www.forumhistoriae.sk/sk/tema/autonomia-slovenska-1938-1939-pociatocna-faza-holokaustu-perzekucii

14 On Catholic racism and the penetration of racism into Catholic antisemitic discourse, see SZABÓ, Miloslav. Catholic racism and anti-Jewish discourse in interwar Austria and Slovakia: the cases of Anton Orel and Karol Körper. In *Patterns of Prejudice*, 2020, vol. 54, no. 3, pp. 258–286, DOI: 10.1080/0031322X.2020.1759862; CONNELLY, John. *From Enemy to Brother*. Cambridge : HUP, 2012.

15 As a synonym for HSĽS, the term "Slovak political Catholicism," is used in this study. To distinguish between the two main ideological lines within the Party, the terms "corporatists" (conservatives) and "national socialists" (radicals) are used. HRUBOŇ, Anton. *Fašizmus náš slovenský.* Bratislava : Premedia, 2021, pp. 17–174. The term "Slovak Catholic thinkers" in the study refers to the philosophical environment. The term "Slovak Catholic national discourse" refers to a specific type of Slovak Catholic nationalism, shaped by representatives of HSĽS with other intellectuals.

16 HRUBOŇ 2021, pp. 40–83; FELAK, James Ramon. *At the Price of the Republic.* Pittsburgh : University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994, pp. 142–208; LORMAN, Thomas. *The Making of the Slovak People's Party*. London; New York : Bloomsbury Academic, 2019, pp. 187–217.

17 HRUBOŇ 2021, pp.100–123.

dation of New Europe; the arrangement of Europe dominated by German National Socialists.[18] The attempt among Catholic intellectuals to conceptualise *Volksgemeinschaft* was therefore an ideological manoeuvre between the Papal critiques of racism and geopolitics. Moreover, Tiso was not the only Slovak Catholic thinker to enter practical politics and bring his ideas into political reality; Štefan Polakovič, Ladislav Hanus and Ľudo Zachar were all involved politically, though not to the same effect nor did they last as long. Polakovič and Zachar became ideologically involved in the power struggle between Tiso and Vojtech Tuka. Polakovič held a post in Hlinka Youth which allowed him to ideologically shape the young generation of people's populists. His theories were incorporated into Tiso's concept of *People's Slovakia* and in the notion of folksiness promoted by the Hlinka Youth.[19] Zachar chaired the Slovak–German Association and Hanus spoke at a seminar for culture staff of the Hlinka Guard.[20]

Polakovič is a quite familiar figure in Slovak historiography, primarily seen as the main ideologist of the Slovak State regime. His ideological texts tend to be identified with the official opinion of the HSĽS, even though many of his proposals did not manifestly affect the language of political Catholicism. His works are often analysed through the ideological roots of the thoughts of Jozef Tiso or in the context of ideological rivalry between corporatists and National Socialists.[21] This study examines the evolution of the concept of "nation" in the thinking of Polakovič during the Slovak State, and use of the idea of *Volksgemeinschaft* in his works. In addition to the ideological roots of Polakovič's worldview, the study explores the environments within which he articulated his concept of "nation," examining closely his intentions in adopting and adapting the racial construct of "nation" and the extent to which he was able to go—in light of the Pope's criticism of racism—in pursuing such goals as a Catholic priest and thinker.

The present study is based on two propositions. The first is that Polakovič's shift towards the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* was driven by a desire to revise the Vienna Award with assistance from the German National Socialists combined with a desire to refuse the territorial claims of the Hungarian government, which, in turn, expected some help with the revision of borders set by the Treaty of Trianon.[22] A Slovak–Hungarian battle for the status of top Third-Reich collaborator and revision of the Vienna Award featured marked-

18 HANEBRINK 2006, p. 89.
19 Nesieme oheň a meč. In *Nová mládež*, 1942, vol. 5, no. 2, p. 1.
20 For conflicts within the people's populists' camp, see e.g. biographies of J. Tiso and A. Mach: WARD 2018, pp. 245–277; HRUBOŇ, Anton. *Alexander Mach*. Bratislava : Premedia, 2018; SZABÓ 2019, *Klérofašisti*, pp. 84–97.
21 PEKÁR, Martin. Štátna ideológia a jej vplyv na charakter režimu. In FIAMOVÁ, Martina et al. *Slovenský* štát *1939–1945: predstavy* a *realita*. Bratislava : Historický ústav SAV, 2014, pp. 137–152; HRUBOŇ, Anton. Slovenský národný socializmus v koncepciách Štefana Polakoviča a Stanislava Mečiara. In HRUBOŇ, Anton. *Slovensko v rokoch neslobody 1938–1989, II. Osobnosti známe – neznáme*. Bratislava : Ústav pamäti národa, 2014, pp. 20–34; HRUBOŇ 2021, pp. 103, 115–116.
22 SZABÓ 2019, *Klérofašisti*; KALLIS, Aristotle. The 'Fascist Effect': On the Dynamics of Political Hybridization in Inter-War Europe. In PINTO COSTA, António – KALLIS, Aristotle. *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe*. London : Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 13–41.

ly in the foreign policy of the Slovak State.[23] Polakovič also was a chaplain in the city of Nitra, where the Vienna Award issue resonated strongly during the entire existence of the Slovak State.[24]

The second proposition suggests that adopting *Volksgemeinschaft* without slipping into heresy enabled Polakovič to operate within the "marginal concepts" of Catholic ideology without touching its "doctrinal core" or the "outer limits of orthodoxy." Catholicism as an ideology is made up of interrelated concepts; the "doctrinal core" is characterised by static and ever-present concepts (e.g., a belief in God-given natural law) and the space beyond the "outer limits of orthodoxy" is formed by notions outside of Catholic dogmatics (e.g., the presentation of race as the foundation of law). "Marginal concepts," which also provide space for defining the racial concept of "nation," lay between the "core" and the "frontier of orthodoxy."[25]

The present study is divided into three parts. The first examines the foundations of Polakovič's idea of "nation" from the second half of the 1930s. This is followed by a contextual study of the roots of Polakovič's adoption of the first concepts from the German National Socialist ideology. A final section explores the gradual acquisition, design and subsequent abandonment of the *Volksgemeinschaft* concept. Two different concepts of "nation" as coined by Polakovič are discussed. The first section describes his understanding of "nation" within the discourse of Christian totalitarianism (1938–1939), which, however, left no marked influence on the language of political Catholicism, and the second part examines his ideas of "nation" and "national community" within Slovak National Socialism (1941–1943), which were to become integral parts of Tiso's concept of *People's Slovakia*.

Polakovič's Concept of the Slovak Nation within Christian Totalitarianism

In his view of "nation," Polakovič essentially followed the Slovak Catholic national discourse as illustrated by the corporatists. From there, he drew on its spiritual nature and an emphasis on spiritual attributes, including language, culture and history, a positive perception of nationalism and its connection to the Catholic version of Christianity. He also developed a narrative

23 SCHVARC, Michal. Nacionálno-socialistická "nová Európa" a Slovensko. In FIAMOVÁ et al. 2014, pp. 69–80; LIPTÁK, Ľubomír. Maďarsko v slovenskej politike za druhej svetovej vojny. In KAMENEC, Ivan. *2217 dní.* Bratislava : Kalligram, 2011, pp. 222–292.

24 Diocesan Archive in Nitra, Slovakia, fond (f.) Personal file of Štefan Polakovič, Appointment of Štefan Polakovič, a new priest for the First Chaplain in Nitra, lower parish dated 24 September 1937; PALÁRIK, Miroslav. *The City and Region Against the Backdrop of Totalitarianism*. Berlin : Peter Lang, 2018; ARPÁŠ, Róbert. *Od demokracie* k *autoritárstvu: Ponitrie* v *období autonómie*. Nitra : UKF, 2021; HETÉNYI, Martin. *Slovensko-maďarské pomedzie* v *rokoch 1938–1945*. Nitra : FF UKF, 2008; HASAROVÁ, Zuzana – PALÁRIK, Miroslav. Hospodárska a socioekonomická situácia v Nitre a v Nitrianskom okrese v období autonómie Slovenska. In *Studia Historica Nitriensia*, 2020, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 456–504; PALÁRIK, Miroslav – MIKULÁŠOVÁ, Alena – HETÉNYI, Martin. *Nitra a okolie* v *rokoch 1939–1945*. Nitra : UKF, 2020.

25 FREEDEN, Michael. *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1996; PORTER-SZŰCS, Brian. *Faith and Fatherland*. New York : OUP, 2011, pp. 13–15; ŠÚSTOVÁ DRELOVÁ, Agáta. Čo znamená národ pre katolíkov na Slovensku? In *Historický časopis*, 2019, vol. 67, no. 3, pp. 385–411, DOI: https://doi.org/10.31577/histcaso.2019.67.3.1.

of the external threat to Christian morality and the nation, which resulted in the subsequent need for national unity.[26] He also built upon the concept of natural law, which was included in the arguments of proponents of the Slovak political Catholicism. He used this concept when extoling the language rights of the Slovak national community in Hungary, and later in their advocacy of autonomy—the existence of a Slovak state—or calls for revision of the Vienna Award.[27]

Natural law is an essential piece within Catholic thinking. Aquinas defined it as the eternal law which arises from an unalterable human nature that every person has inscribed in their conscience.[28] This theory is the foundation of Catholic universalism, of the social teachings of the Church, as well as Catholic nationalism and the nascent concept of human rights.[29] In the 1930s, Catholic discourse on the defence of Catholic values in modern society began to change. Instead of a hitherto defence of ecclesiastical privileges, European Catholic thinkers came to offer a defence of the rights and liberties of man as a member of kin to be respected by secular states, arguing that everyone had the right to life, dignity or religion. The Catholic concept of human rights differed from the liberal form by emphasising man as part of community. In the 1930s and 1940s, it was associated with a criticism of fascism, yet also with anti-Semitism and the curtailment of civil and reproductive rights, both well within the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft*.[30] This applied to Polakovič too.

Although the term "Christian and national community" was enshrined in the constitution of the Slovak State in July 1939, Polakovič did not refer to it prior to the declaration of the era of Slovak National Socialism.[31] Amidst the pioneering atmosphere of "New Slovakia," Polakovič saw nations as spiritual communities of individuals, bearers of irrevocable natural rights of divine origin independent of secular power. Natural law was to become the foundation of the legal system of the Slovak State. Polakovič further argued that nationalism was imperative to achieving salvation and culture was a way to elevate educational attainment, morality, national consciousness and the unity of members of the nation. They were to be re-educated, learned and ascetic Christian nationalists, with the corporate Slovak State headed by an Italian-style leader and a single political party until the remnants of liberalism and democracy were removed. The Polakovič project of Slovak nation building within the

26 BALÁŽOVÁ, Jana. Primordialistická koncepcia Štefana Polakoviča. In KOLLÁR, Karol – KOPČOK, Andrej. *Dejiny filozofie na Slovensku v XX. storočí*. Bratislava : Infopress, 1998, pp. 181–193.

27 JURIGA, Ferdiš. Krajinský snem. In *Slovenské ľudové noviny*, 16 June 1911, pp. 2–3; WARD 2018, p. 135; PETRUF, Pavol. Téma „novej Európy", „nového európskeho poriadku" a „životného priestoru" na stránkach novín *Slovák* (1939–1940). In IVANIČKOVÁ, Edita. *Kapitoly* z *histórie stredoeurópskeho priestoru* v 19. a 20. *storočí*. Bratislava : HÚ SAV, 2011, pp. 338–354.

28 FINNIS, John. *Natural Law and Natural Rights*. Oxford : OUP, 2011, pp. 398–403.

29 POLLARD, John. Corporatism and political Catholicism: the impact of Catholic corporatism in inter-war Europe. In COSTA PINTO, Antonio. *Corporatism and Fascism*. London : Routledge, 2017, pp. 42–59.

30 CHAPPEL 2018, pp. 59–107; TAYLOR, Leonard. Catholic Cosmopolitanism and the Future of Human Rights. In *Religions*, 2020, no. 11, pp. 1–16; MOYN, Samuel. *Christian Human Rights*. Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania, 2015.

31 DRÁBIK, Jakub. *Fašizmus.* Bratislava : Premedia, 2019, p. 465.

framework of Christian totalitarianism resembles an attempt at realizing the Italian myth of national renascence.[32]

Polakovič studied philosophy in Rome in the 1930s, which provided him direct experience of how Catholicism operated within a fascist political framework. He applauded the rise of Catholic action after conclusion of the Lateran Treaties, the sense of protection against the imaginary enemies of Catholicism and civilisation and the "ideological re-education of nation."[33] His idea of the transformation of the Slovak nation is a modification of the Italian version containing several more contemporary notions of religious concepts of the period, such as finding a sense of suffering or an emphasis on the lived experience.[34] Polakovič espoused Blondelism, a stream of Catholic philosophy of life epitomised by a relatively high openness to secular modernity in light of European Catholic thinking in the first half of the 20th century. French Catholic intellectual Maurice Blondel (1861–1949) criticised nationalism and integralism, while embracing democratic and left-wing values.[35] Nonetheless, in the 1930s and 1940s, Polakovič read Blondel as a guide to opening himself to a fascist-type of modernity by selectively adopting fascist elements and applying them to the Slovak environment while promoting the interests of the Slovak nation and Catholicism.[36]

Blondelism is also apparent in Polakovič's concept of "nation." Blondel considered an individual to be the basis of being and individual's path to God to be the foremost earthly mission. Conscience was an important aspect in this regard, as each person ought to have a naturally instilled hierarchy of values. As a philosopher of life, Blondel emphasised reason and rational knowledge along with emotions, will and, above all, activities.[37] Polakovič also placed God, man and salvation first, subjecting to them the nation, state and values such as health, which were to be paths to salvation. He included love for nation—meaning nationalism—among the emotions to be properly navigated to not mislead man on his path to God and similarly, weaken the unity of

32 WARD 2018, pp. 214–233; KATUNINEC, Milan. Režim slovenského štátu a jeho vývojové konotácie. In FIAMOVÁ et al. 2014, pp. 125–136; PEKÁR 2014, pp. 137–152; POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. *K základom slovenského* štátu. Martin : Matica slovenská, 1939, pp. 13, 20–22, 28, 33–56, 76–81, 85–90, 110–114; POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. Integralizmus. In *Svoradov,* 1937, vol. 6, no. 3–4, pp. 10–12.

33 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. Za aktivizmus kongreganistov. In *Mariánska kongregácia*, 1934, no. 1, pp. 5–7; POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. Na margo mojej knihy. In *Slovenské pohlady*, 1939, vol. 55, no. 11, p. 638. On the relationship between Catholicism and fascism after the Lateran Treaty, see POLLARD, John. *Catholicism in Modern Italy*. London; New York : Routedge, 2008, pp. 69–107; POLLARD, John. "Clerical Fascism": Context, Overview and Conclusion. In *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 2007, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 436–437.

34 DAGNINO, Jorge. *Faith and Fascism.* London : Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 121–124.

35 BERNARDI, J. Peter. *Maurice Blondel, Social Catholicism, & Action Française*. Washington : The Catholic University of America Press, 2008; CONWAY A. Michael. Maurice Blondel and Ressourcement. In FLYNN, Gabriel – MURRAY, D. Paul. *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*. Oxford : OUP, 2012, pp. 65–82; SUTTON, Michael. *Nationalism, Positivism and Catholicism*. Cambridge : CUP, 1982.

36 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. Scholastika a blondelizmus. In *Svoradov,* 1934, vol. 4, November, pp. 2–4. POLAKOVIČ 1937, pp. 10–12; POLAKOVIČ 1939, Na margo mojej knihy, p. 638.

37 LETZ, Ján. Blondelizmus vo filozofii Štefana Polakoviča. In KOLLÁR, Karol – KOPČOK, Andrej. *Dejiny filozofie na Slovensku v XX. storočí.* Bratislava : Infopress, 1998, pp. 61–66; BLONDEL, Maurice. *Filosofie akce*. Olomouc : Refugium, 2008.

the nation. He argued that "love for the nation" is not chauvinism, but important means of human salvation. Linking "nationalism" with "salvation" is mystical in itself, and the Blondelian emphasis on activity led Polakovič to celebrate different heroic forms of sacrifice for the nation, ranging from supporting families to increase the nation's population growth, and extending as far as death on the "altar of the homeland."[38] In Polakovič' eyes, the young Slovak generation of intellectuals was to play a key role in the renascence of individuals, elevating the life of nation by creating high culture. This mission resembled that of the 19th century intellectuals and leaders surrounding Ľudovít Štúr, leader of the Slovak national renascence that "awakened the Slovaks from lethargy and endeavoured to inspire them to sacrifice their lives and serve the nation."[39]

Polakovič's concept of "nation" included different religious themes and biblical images. Like other philosophers, he sought evidence of Christian nationalism in the Bible stating, "Jesus, too, loved his peoples; he wept bitterly at their hardship and the destruction of the holy nation-city. Paul was willing to perish for his people."[40] In a Christmas editorial for the Nitra-based periodical *Svornosť*, he longed for "Christ the King [to] become King of Slovakia." It continued with, "Our generation is weak. The rotten European atmosphere poisons also Slovak air. We therefore need cleansing from bacilli eating into the Slovak souls and threatening us with severe mental conditions [...] Let us also beg for national faith to be strong for any future events."[41] Yet, he never attempted to interfere with the very content of the Bible and reinterpret theological dogmas, as did the so-called German Christians. Their attempts to theologically link Christianity to racism shall be discussed further in this study.[42]

Initially, Polakovič's concept of "nation" also contained a critique of the theory of pure race, which he explicitly applied to the Magyars.[43] Marius Turda suggests that the ideologically refined research by Hungarian anthropologists and the artificial construct of the "pure Magyar race" were important arguments in disputes over new territories and a key part of negotiations of the Vienna Arbitration.[44] Polakovič therefore argued that though nations evolved from a single biological tribe (family), it was altogether unimportant as spiritual bonds outweighed biological origin. He asserted that pure races no longer existed in Europe; they were mixed and a nation was defined by culture: "Let's realise how much Slovak blood was required for the Magyar

38 POLAKOVIČ 1939, K základom slovenského štátu, pp. 35–43, 48–54.
39 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. Nové víno do nových nádob. In *Svoradov*, 1935, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 7–8.
40 POLAKOVIČ 1939, K základom slovenského štátu, pp. 50–51; CHLADNÝ HANOŠ, Maximilián. *Láska k národu*. Martin: Matica slovenská, 1941; MÜNZ, Teodor. Nacionálna otázka u katolíckych teológov za slovenského štátu. In *Filozofia*, 1992, vol. 47, no. 1, p. 21–29.
41 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. Adeste fideles. In *Svornosť*, 24 December 1939, p. 1.
42 Cf. "theological" work of Karol Körper. SZABÓ 2019, *Klérofašisti*, pp. 73–75.
43 The term "Magyar" refers to a member of an ethnic group or "race" according to the terminology of the time, which is subject to this study. "Hungarian" refers to an inhabitant of the state – either the Kingdom or the Republic of Hungary.
44 TURDA, Marius. "If Our Race Did Not Exist, It Would Have to Be Created." In WEISS–WENDT, Anton – YEOMANS, Rory. *Racial Science in Hitler's New Europe, 1938–1945*. Lincoln; London : University of Nebraska Press, 2013, p. 246.

nation to lose the biological traits that connected them to the Mongols. Today, everyone would consider the Magyars to be Aryans."[45] Polakovič repeatedly returned to this argument. Race anthropologists claimed that the Mongol race was distinctive to Asia and Heinrich Himmler (1900–1945), and anthropologists surrounding him considered it the worst racial type to be borne into, *inter alia*, Jewish and Roma.[46]

At the same time, Polakovič criticised the idea of the superiority of one race and nation over another. He did not question the very concept of race nor the ideas of "improving man,"[47] understanding races and nations to be the work of God and deeming them to be equal on the grounds of natural law, yet different according to "culture height." Closely related was his idea that nations without a suitably advanced culture could be "swallowed up" by those with higher culture. He considered it a defining attribute of nation and an important element of its integration and ideological re-education. So it is no surprise that he supported anti-Semitic legislation and used it to defend the revision of the Vienna Award and the reciprocity act applicable to the Hungarian minority.[48]

Adolf Hitler as the Advocate of Natural Law

It was in 1935 that Polakovič warned against the ideology of German National Socialists, which he compared—because of racism—to the same peril as (Jewish) Bolshevism. Only with the establishment of the Slovak State did Hitler begin to feature as the protector of the Slovak nation in his works, particularly of the southern border of the Slovak State.[49] The initial stages of the adoption of beliefs from German National Socialism can be traced back to Polakovič's time in Nitra in early 1940.

In February 1940, local chaplain Polakovič addressed a debate session of Nitra intellectuals on the sense of inferiority within the nation, contending that it was a consequence of the absence of fine Slovak culture because of its past systematic absorption by Hungarian culture. He then proposed to build a monument to the medieval prince Svätopluk on the local hill of Zobor.[50] In April 1940, a public rally was held in Nitra where Polakovič welcomed Catholic priest Imrich Kosec who had served in Bánov between 1938 and 1939, a village that became part of Hungary as a result of the Vienna Award. The local Hlinka Guard newspaper *Nitrianska stráž* reported that

45 POLAKOVIČ 1939, K základom slovenského štátu, pp. 58–59.
46 HEINEMANN, Isabel. Defining "(Un)Wanted Population Addition." In WEISS-WENDT, Anton – YEOMANS, Rory. *Racial Science in Hitler's New Europe, 1938–1945*. Lincoln; London : University of Nebraska Press, 2013, p. 40.
47 Distinctive for some young Italian intellectuals. DAGNINO 2017, pp. 74–75. See also Catholic eugenic thought in the Slovak context. HRUBOŇ, Anton. „Budujme slovenského nadčloveka." In *Vojnová kronika*, 2020, no. 2, pp. 4–11. As the case of Croatia shows, it was also possible to build the concept of an exclusive nation on the theory of a mix of several races. BARTULIN, Nevenko. *The Racial Idea in the Independent State of Croatia*. Leiden; Boston : Brill, 2014, p. 151.
48 POLAKOVIČ 1939, K základom slovenského štátu, pp. 59, 61, 131–151, 169–173.
49 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. Bezbožníctvo. In *Svoradov*, 1935, vol. 4, no. 8, p. 4; POLAKOVIČ 1939, K základom slovenského štátu, p. 98.
50 Nitra postaví Svätoplukovi pomník. In *Nitrianska stráž*, 25 February 1940, pp. 1–2.

Kosec vividly described the wrongs which Slovak Catholics had to face after the annexation of their territory to Hungary. Stories about starving Slovak workers, young people being punished or systematic Magyarisation did not leave Polakovič indifferent. His address included such proclamations as "We are those to be entitled, for we are wronged and we act in a Christian manner when calling for redress," "Hungarians cannot boast of Christianity, if they treat people so and claim other Slovak territories," "the Slovak nation has had a historical entitlement to this territory in Central Europe since the time of Svätopluk" and "the atonement of this wrongdoing is not merely a matter of divine justice, but also of the justice of the mighty of this world, including our great protector, Germany."[51]

Polakovič's theory of a Svätoplukian crown was an attempt to construct an otherwise missing Slovak historical constitutional tradition which fit into the concept of history put forward by the chief historian of the Slovak State František Hrušovský (1903–1956), and into the propaganda of the Slovak State. It also sought to legitimise the Slovak State by fostering the cults of Cyril and Methodius, and also that of Svätopluk,[52] both associated with Nitra. It thus comes as no surprise then that some Nitra-based priests, including Polakovič, contributed to the advancement of these two cults.[53]

Polakovič contended that Svätopluk was head of the first independent Slovak state, which led him to try to legitimise its existence by citing an incompatibility with the Czech idea of the crown of St. Wenceslas as justification and creating a counterweight to the Hungarian crown of St. Stephen, thus setting himself apart from the Hungarian heritage of Slovak Christianity. Polakovič built upon the thesis of the time advanced by Slovak Catholic nationalists of Cyril and Methodius and how leaders of the Slovak nation received Christianity and culture from them, which predated the "ancient Magyars." At the same time, however, Polakovič spoke of positive Christianity, unafraid of cooperation between the state and religion.[54]

Richard Steigmann–Gall describes positive Christianity as an ideology that combines Christianity with the racist anti-Semitism and social ethics of German National Socialism, including a reinterpretation of Christian doctrines. Alfred Rosenberg, one of the ideologues of German National Socialism, suggested that it was rather a matter of eliminating the distortions which the Catholic and Protestant churches had brought to Christian theology. The aim

51 Krivdy musíme odčiniť. In *Nitrianska stráž*, 28 April 1940, pp. 1–2.

52 LYSÝ, Miroslav. „I Svätopluk sa zaslúžil o slovenský štát." Používanie stredovekých symbolov v 20. a 21. storočí. In *Historický časopis*, 2015, vol. 63, no. 2, pp. 333–345; HUDEK, Adam. *Najpolitickejšia veda*. Bratislava : HÚ SAV, 2010, pp. 45–48.

53 Other priests who greatly contributed to the advancement of the cults of Cyril and Methodius, and Svätopluk were Juraj Hodál and Michal Boleček. HODÁL, Juraj. *Kostol kniežaťa Privinu* v Nitre. Nitra : Nákladom výboru cirkevno-národných slávností v Nitre, 1930; SZABOVÁ–BOLEČKOVÁ, Mária. *Michal Boleček* v *spomienkach*. Nitra : Spoločnosť Božieho Slova, 1991, p. 15, 21; HETÉNYI, Martin. *Cyrilo-metodské dedičstvo* a Nitra. Nitra : FF UKF, 2012; ŠKVARNA, Dušan. Cyrilo-metodský obraz v slovenskej kultúre 19. storočia. In PANIS, Branislav – RUTTKAY, Matej et al. *Bratia, ktorí menili svet*. Bratislava : SNM, 2012, pp. 187–212; HUDEK, Adam. Cyrilo-metodská tradícia na Slovensku v 20. storočí. In PANIS, Branislav – RUTTKAY, Matej et al. *Bratia, ktorí menili svet*. Bratislava : SNM, 2012, pp. 229–235.

54 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. Idea svätoplukovskej koruny. In *Slovenské pohľady*, 1940, no. 6–7, pp. 341–352; HUDEK 2012, pp. 229–235.

was to erase the Jewish tradition from the Christian faith and create an image of the Aryan Christ with a strong social sense, actively fighting against traditional Judaism.[55]

Polakovič's understanding of positive Christianity represents a modification of the German concept. He was not interested in the syncretism of Christianity with racism, nor in the removal of the Jewish tradition of the Christian religion. He was keen on defining the Hungarian tradition of Slovak Christianity within the context of the territorial aspirations of the Kingdom of Hungary, which he then presented as an attack on the natural law of the Slovak nation:

> We are not untamed savages for someone disseminating, by the power of a holy crown, culture among us. We are a nation culturally more ancient than the neighbouring nations. They have much to thank the ancient Slovak culture for, as it raised them [...]. The crown of St. Stephen, as presented by the Hungarian counts, has, apart from its founder, little in common with genuine Christianity and true understanding of culture. With this idea, the Hungarian lords merely cover their preposterous territorial claims. They believe it is only within the crown St. Stephen that Christianity is protected, and culture is possible. They thus attribute to the crown of St. Stephen the mission to save Christianity and spread culture in the Danube area.[56]

After the second Vienna Arbitration in September 1940 that resulted in the annexation of part of Romanian territory to Hungary, Polakovič came to call upon the Catholic Church to also open itself to the *völkisch* principle, "World events clearly point to the leading idea of the new era. Only a blind man fails to see that the idea of national community, völkisch (népi gondolat), wins uncontrollably."[57] This confirms the view that Polakovič's adoption of concepts from German National Socialism was originally based on Hungary's geopolitical aspirations. Polakovič later argued that it was the role of the clergy to adapt National Socialism to the teachings of the Church. After all, "we are those who subscribe to the populist ideology of HSĽS."[58] Unsurprisingly, the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* in the form of Slovak "national community" became part of this adaptation of National Socialism to Christianity.

Natural Law as the Foundation of People's Populism[59]

Polakovič gradually constructed the concept of Slovak national community between 1940 and 1943, during the so-called era of Slovak National Socialism. Although the adoption of the Leadership Principle in the Autumn of 1942 is deemed to mark the conclusion of the era, in terms of thinking, it

55 STEIGMANN–GALL, Richard. The Nazis' "Positive Christianity": a Variety of "Clerical Fascism"? In *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 2007, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 315–327; STEIGMANN–GALL, Richard. *The Holy Reich.* Cambridge : CUP, 2003.

56 POLAKOVIČ 1940, p. 350.

57 P. [POLAKOVIČ, Štefan] Národný socializmus a cirkev. In *Svornosť*, 8 September 1940, p. 1. "Népi gondolat" is the Hungarian term for the "Völkisch idea."

58 P. Národný socializmus a cirkev, pp. 1–2.

59 As mentioned above, Polakovič's concepts of "nation" and Slovak "national community" within his theory of Slovak National Socialism became parts of Tiso's vision of *People's Slovakia* and of the concept of "folksiness" of the Hlinka Youth. Therefore, the term "people's populism" is used in this part of the study in reference to these Polakovič ideas of "nation" and Slovak "national community".

continued to echo for some time. During a time of the introduction of further antisemitic and paternalistic legislation, it is in this period that biologism entered the nationalist discourse of Slovak political Catholicism in the most significant way.[60]

Terms distinct of the German National Socialists social policy, such as "performance," "work" or "support for population growth," became much more pronounced for both Slovak corporatists and National Socialists. Among the appropriated concepts, more attention was initially paid to the term "Slovak National Socialism" instead of the concepts of "nation" or "national community," yet a consensus was apparently reached on both sides regarding the segregating nature of "national community." A simultaneous discussion was held about the meaning of the terms "folksiness" and "people's populism."[61] Topics such as the "Slovak village" and "renascence of the Slovak folk" came to the fore, in connection with attempts to create a Slovak version of the *völkisch* ideology.[62]

Polakovič's vision of the Slovak version of *Volksgemeinschaft* within his theory of Slovak National Socialism was an attempt to construct a Slovak alternative to *völkisch* ideology. He adopted elements of *Volksgemeinschaft* into his own concept of "nation," and later began to use the term "national community" as Slovak equivalent to the German term. The Slovak nation within the concept of Slovak National Socialism bears a striking resemblance to the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft*. He envisioned it as a homogenised and hierarchical community, comprised exclusively of members of the Slovak nation, among whom harmony reigns. They are willing to sacrifice their personal goals for the higher interests of the nation, while the state has the right to rid itself of those groups that are deemed to be threats to the interests of the Slovak community. This homogenised Slovak national community was hierarchically divided into strata within which the members could rise as a reward for their efforts. "Work" and "performance" were thus the foundations of the national community.[63]

The original aims of Polakovič's project of Slovak nation building, like integration, ideological re-education, protection of morality or the revision of the Vienna Award, were still present, plus a new goal was added: an attempt to create a Slovak middle class. Polakovič's idea of the implementation of

60 KAMENEC, Ivan. Vnútropolitický vývoj slovenskej republiky v rokoch 1939–1945. In KAMENEC, Ivan – HRADSKÁ, Katarína. *Slovensko v 20. storočí*. Bratislava : Veda, 2015, pp. 153–182; SZABÓ, Miloslav. *Potraty*. Bratislava : N Press, 2020, pp. 50–88; ŠKORVÁNKOVÁ, Eva. *Strážkyne rodinných kozubov?* Bratislava : Veda, 2020, pp. 88–106. For the advisers, see TÖNSMEYER, Tatjana. *Das Dritte Reich und die Slowakei 1939–1945*. Paderborn : Schöningh, 2003. On Arianisation and deportations see, e.g., FIAMOVÁ, Martina. *„Slovenská zem patrí do slovenských rúk": arizácia pozemkového vlastníctva* židovského *obyvateľstva na Slovensku*. Bratislava : Veda, 2015; NIŽŇANSKÝ, Eduard. *Politika antisemitizmu* a *holokaust na Slovensku* v *rokoch 1938–1945*. Banská Bystrica : Múzeum SNP, 2016.

61 In reference to the ideology promoted by the HSĽS. In Slovak, "folksiness" refers to *ľudovosť* and "people's populism" *ľudáctvo*.

62 HRUBOŇ 2021, pp. 84–123; ŠUSTROVÁ 2020, pp. 122–131; ŠKORVÁNKOVÁ 2020.

63 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. *Slovenský národný socializmus*. Bratislava : Generálny sekretariát HSĽS, 1941, pp. 18–57; POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. *Náš duch*. Bratislava : HV HM, 1943, pp. 238–243; DRÁBIK 2019, pp. 304–312.

"Hlinka's spirit" by "Hitler's methods" was also reflected in the ever-current concepts he applied in connection with the nation, evidence of the overlap of Catholic and National Socialist discourse. "Health," "protection of family" or "the right to work" were important parts of the social policy of the Third Reich, as well as of the Catholic teachings of the Church.[64]

In conceptualising the "Slovak national community," Polakovič drew from a number of sources, one being Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. He was also well-versed in other ideologues such as Alfred Rosenberg, Richard W. Darré and Norbert Gürke.[65] His key inspiration, though, came from *Theorie der Politik* by Munich-based lawyer Wilhelm Glungler. Polakovič believed that no work of such importance had emerged since Aristotle's *Politics*.[66] Glungler develops, *inter alia*, his concept of a National Socialist state as a representative of absolute power led by the Leader, who navigates members of *Volksgemeinschaft* to achieve common good. He also spoke of the nation's right to life (*Lebensrecht*) that justified German expansionary policy.[67]

Glungler is considered a German National Socialist legal theorist, yet he also had ties to representatives of the so-called conservative revolution.[68] Although as legal theorist he has since somewhat fallen into historical oblivion, in the 1930s and 1940s, his work was much discussed in the German context and also read by Catholics in wider central Europe.[69] It is no coincidence that Polakovič chose Glungler's *Theorie der Politik* as the foundation for his concept of Slovak National Socialism, "Blondel and Glungler have identical ideas, albeit independent of each other." Glungler's emphasis on dynamism, life, deed and practice was in line with Polakovič's philosophy of life.[70] In his concept of Slovak National Socialism, Polakovič subscribed to Tiso's alternative, presented as a Slovak version of social policy inspired by German National Socialism, and an outcome of "the final solution to the social teachings of the Church." According to Polakovič, Tiso was to head the "Slovak community" as the Leader. His construction of the leadership cult included a presentation of Tiso's political activity not merely as a struggle for achieving autonomy and the establishment of the Slovak State, but also for achieving "social justice" for the Slovak nation.[71]

64 POLAKOVIČ 1941, Slovenský národný socializmus, pp. 57–118.

65 Polakovič's review of Ľudovít Zachar's book *Katolicizmus* a *slovenský národný socializmus*. In *Filozofický zborník*, 1941, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 62–65.

66 Polakovič's review of Wilhelm Glungler's *Theorie der Politik*. Book review. In *Filozofický zborník*, 1940, vol. 1, no. 4, p. 250.

67 GLUNGLER, Wilhelm. *Theorie der Politik*. München : F. & J. Voglrieder, 1939; CHAPOUTOT, Johann. *Law of Blood*. Cambridge : HUP, 2018, pp. 321–351.

68 MEIERHENRICH, Jens. *The Remnants of the Rechtstaat*, Oxford : OUP, 2018, p. 100; KEPPELER, Lutz Martin. *Oswald Spengler und die Jurisprudenz*. Tübingen : Mohr Siebeck, 2014, pp. 65–66.

69 KEPPELER 2014, pp. 65–66. In Germany it was e.g., Otto Schilling in *Theologische Quartalschrift*, 1939, vol. 120, no. 2, pp. 268–269.Glungler's book was read by the Czech Dominicans. Dr. Wilhelm Glungler, Theorie der Politik (review). In *Filosofická revue*, 1940, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 39–40; Glungler's thinking also inspired a Polish lawyer and a Catholic corporatist Leopold Caro. MACIEJEWSKI, Marek. "Polscy uczeni prawnicy międzywojenni o ustroju i prawie Trzeciej Rzeszy". In *Miscellanea Historico-Iuridica*, 2016, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 115–116.

70 POLAKOVIČ 1940, Book review, p. 250.

71 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. *Z Tisovho boja*. Bratislava : Generálny sekretariát HSĽS, 1941; POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. *Tisova náuka*. [S. l.] : Generálny sekretariát HSĽS, 1941.

Polakovič interpreted the Catholic concept of the right to work for fair remuneration as the right to work exclusively for members of the Slovak nation. Instead of sympathising with the poor, he considered idleness to be social crime. He even endorsed deportations, arguing that "it will be fair, if the state deems it necessary, to deport another contingent of foreigners in the event of a lack of work opportunities for Slovaks," as was the case in Germany.[72] Despite the endeavour to associate the "Slovak national community" with Tiso and his Social Catholicism, such a concept of national community did not have a long or stable tradition in the language of Slovak political Catholicism. And so, Polakovič had to invent it.

Use of the term "community" (*pospolitosť*) in Slovak political and journalistic discourse can be traced back to the end of the 19th century. It referred to specific groups of people based on nationality, religion, status and social stratum, with attributes such as "Slovak," "Catholic," "People's," "Peasant," "Czechoslovak" or "Labour Democratic Community" across Slovak political currents, including political Catholicism.[73] Thomas Lorman, who analysed the dawn of the Slovak People's Party in Hungary, compares "people's populism," or "folk-populism"—a need to protect the rural environment as bearer of Slovak identity, Catholicism, tradition and criticism of urbanisation—to the German *Völkisch* movement.[74]

In drawing the concept of "folksiness" and "Slovak national community," Polakovič turned to the political concepts of Ľudovít Štúr (1815–1856) and Štefan Marko Daxner (1822–1892). In the period of the Slovak State, most of Štúr's works were published during the building of Slovak National Socialism.[75] As one of the leaders of the Slovak nationalist movement in the first half of the 19th century, Štúr was a theorist of the Slovak national distinctiveness within the great family of Slavic nations and tribes. He defined himself vis-à-vis Magyar nationalism and was directly influenced by German Romantic philosophers and their concepts of "nation." In 1845, Štúr published an article in *Slovenské národné noviny* to discuss community. In the spirit of Hegel's dialectic, he attempted to justify the importance of individuality for the whole.[76] Polakovič, however, applied Štúr's concept of community differently, using it to derive the "law of common purpose" and argued that the interests of individuals and minorities had to be subordinated to the majority and the higher interests of the nation. Polakovič further referred to Štúr when theorising

72 POLAKOVIČ 1943, pp. 240–241.

73 BOTTO, Július. Myšlienky o výchove národa mimo školy. In *Dom a škola*, vol. 6, no. 5, p. 9; Slováci a čeština. In *Hlas*, 1903, June, p. 290; SIVÁK, Jozef. Poďme do Ríma. In *Slovák*, 27 February 1925, p. 1; Už je zvrchovaný čas. In *Slovenský denník*, 28 April 1932, p. 1; Boli sme pred Hitlerom, budeme aj po ňom. In *Slovenský denník,* 21 June 1938, p. 3; Boj o politickú moc. In *Nástup*, 1935, vol. 3, no. 5, p. 100; Kultúrna solidarita. In *Prúdy,* vol. 8, no. 1, p. 1.

74 LORMAN 2019, p. 39.

75 Publishing Štúr's works was not extensive during the Slovak State. DEMMEL, József. *Ľudovít Štúr*. Bratislava : Kalligram, 2017, pp. 36–39; CHMEL, Karol. *Ľudovít Štúr. Dielo*. Bratislava : Kalligram, 2007, pp. 528–531; AMBRUŠ, Jozef. *Hlas k rodákom*. Turčiansky sv. Martin : Kompas, 1943; AMBRUŠ, Jozef. *Slovo na čase I., II*. Turčiansky sv. Martin : Kompas, 1941; AMBRUŠ, Jozef. *Sobrané básne*. Turčiansky sv. Martin : Kompas, 1942; ŠTÚR, Ľudovít. *Hlasy o živote*. Bratislava : ČAS, 1943.

76 TRENCSENYI et al. 2016, pp. 311–312; CHMEL 2007, pp. 101–115.

the law of "kin-to-kin." His appeal to members of the community to support the enterprise of an exclusively Slovak population resembled the negative inclusivism of *Volksgemeinschaft*.[77]

Lawyer Štefan Marko Daxner was influential in the history of Slovak natural law philosophy, considering natural law to be eternal, and placing it superior to positive, historical law which derived its origin from God. In his mind, it belonged to every individual and nation and was inalienable. He included among such privileges the right to life, to self-determination, to a country, speech, schooling in mother tongue and to political self-government. Daxner derived these rights from liberalism and built upon the model of the French Revolution.[78] Nonetheless, Polakovič developed extreme anti-liberalism tendencies while in Italy and considered it essential to strip nationalism of its liberal roots. Moreover, the group surrounding Ľudovít Štúr were Protestants.[79] Polakovič thus attempted to conceive the Catholic and "people's" roots of Slovak nationalism, arguing that the Catholic priest and poet Ján Hollý (1785–1849) had a fundamental influence on the entire Štúr generation. Just as the *völkisch* ideology had its roots embedded in German Romantic philosophers, when it came to Slovakia, Polakovič contended, the ideology of "folksiness" began to unfold from Hollý, the first Slovak poet to artistically address the theme of the "Slovak peoples."[80]

Just as Daxner extended liberal natural law concepts from man to nations, Polakovič did the same with the then Catholic concept of human rights, including among those rights: life, land, the economic yield of the land, culture, speech, honour to the state and autonomy over one's own destiny. According to Polakovič, the essence of natural rights should be the natural state and nature, which Catholics understood as the work of God. Yet, in his words, races were also a part of nature:

> Like man, nations have certain rights that arise from the very natural state, from the very substance of nations as such. Nature is the immediate source of these rights. The last originator of the rights bestowed in nature is God, the creator of natural state. As God awarded certain rights upon man by nature, so He awarded some rights to nations by nature. No one in the world can abolish these natural rights except for God, and neither can God abolish these rights until they abolish the nature from which they derive.[81]

Polakovič elaborated more extensively on Daxner's idea of natural rights in 1942, as he began to apply the concept of the "pure race" to his theory of the nation. In the initial phase of the period of Slovak National Socialism at the turn of 1940 and 1941, Polakovič still considered a nation to be a spiritual community, though he no longer mentioned the insignificance of biological nature of a nation which had faded over time. He defined a nation as a

77 POLAKOVIČ 1943, p. 239–243; ŠUSTROVÁ 2020, p. 90.
78 DUPKALA, Rudolf. Sociálno-politické myslenie Š. M. Daxnera. In *Społeczeństwo i edukacja*, 2011, no. 1, pp. 99–105; HOLLÝ, Karol. Memorandum národa slovenského ako historiografický prameň. In *Studia Academica Slovaca*, 2011, pp. 104–106.
79 POLAKOVIČ 1939, K základom, p. 57.
80 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. Obsah ľudáctva a tradícia politiky. In *Slovák*, 12 June 1942, p. 1.
81 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan, Prirodzené práva národov. In *Slovenské pohľady*, 1942, no. 11, p. 710.

spiritual and blood line community where spiritual bonds play a more vital role. His earlier criticism of the "pure race" had also vanished, while biological arguments entered his thinking on the rivalry of nations based on culture height. "The power of culture is so mighty that an awareness of biological ties altogether disappears. How many so-called Magyars belong biologically to the Slovak national community?"[82] Polakovič referred to a contemporary work by anthropologist Ľudovít Franěk, who conducted research of the Slovak population through the academic category of race. Franěk argued that, although the Slovak nation was not the bearer of a pure race, the predominant type was the Nordic race and the Magyar nation bore certain biological features characteristic of the Slovak population.[83]

Polakovič fully embraced the concept of a "pure race" when the Slovak authorities begun deporting the Jewish population (1942).[84] Though he continued to define the nation as a spiritual community during this period, he considered blood and biological origin among its most important attributes. The distinctiveness of the Slovak nation was thus to be proved not merely by its culture and language, but above all by its blood, while the representatives of the Slovak nation were to be the bearers of "the only pure blood in Central Europe:"

> Slovak blood is the biological foundation of Slovak distinctiveness [...]. This blood is the biological wealth of the Slovak nation. Its power was also proven by the fact that the Danube basin has a biologically uniform character. For the signs of the Mongol race disappeared from it [...]. We needn't be afraid of speaking of Slovak blood. Slovak blood is a fact. We emphasise our vital blood purity, because, among all the nations of Central Europe, we have maintained an exceptionally pure biological character.[85]

Polakovič expressed the originality and primacy of the Slovak nation in central Europe in the category of race, which was not only defining but also a superior. The theory of a "pure race" of the Slovak nation was part of his wider concept of "Slovak living space" (*slovenský životný priestor*), which is a modification of the National Socialist concept of *Lebensraum* (living space). To Polakovič, the idea of "Slovak living space" meant the existence of an ethnically united population of the Slovak State. In addition to revision of the Vienna Award, it presupposed the deportation of the Magyars—after deportations of Czechs and Jews. "Slovak living space" was to represent God-given territory, and the deportation of ethnic minorities was the natural law of the Slovak nation, resembling the concept of *Lebensrecht*:

> Every nation has the sovereign right to live in its territory. Minorities in the national space of a nation are guests who have the right to life, but are not legal subjects of the right to space. This ratio is akin that between the house owner and its guests. If loyal, they may live in the owner's house. The owner cannot and must not take away their right to life. Nevertheless, he may expel them from his house, if they cause it damage. Thus, it turned out to be important to evict the Czech

82 POLAKOVIČ 1941, Slovenský národný socializmus, pp. 123–125.
83 FRANEK, Ľudovít. Staré Slovensko a jeho obyvateľstvo z hľadiska antropologického. In *Historica slovaca*, 1940/1941, pp. 138–154.
84 CASE, Holly. *Between States*. Stanford : Stanford University Press, 2009, pp. 182–184.
85 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. *Slovenské národné vyznanie*. Bratislava : HVHM, 1942, Hlava prvá; POLAKOVIČ 1943, p. 9.

> minority from Slovakia, as it exploited the existential options of the Slovak people. Similarly, it proved vital to evict the Jewish national minority, as they morally, culturally, economically, politically harmed Slovak national life [...]. For all the nations of the world same laws apply. God established it so, and it is manifested by nature itself: blood and the spirit of honour.[86]

Polakovič did not consider these statements to be anti-Christian. On the contrary, he thought of them as a matter of Christian justice in accordance with natural law. He read the Pope's critique of racism in a way that the problem with the concept of race lies in its stylisation into the status of eternal principle and a justification of expansionary politics. "Nonetheless, we do not make our Slovak blood a source of law or of any claim to power over others. Similarly, our blood is not a source of religious thought. We merely see in our Slovak blood a rich source of our physical ability and we protect this source."[87] It was this reason Polakovič referred to Daxner's idea of the natural rights of nations and reinterpreted it in the spirit of the contemporary Catholic concept of God-given natural human rights. This allowed him to adopt the concept of "pure race" and Slovak exclusiveness on a racial basis without slipping into heresy and colliding with the Pope.

Natural Law as the Foundation of Post-war Europe

Between 1944 and 1945, Polakovič continued to legitimise the existence of the Slovak nation, though without such radical concepts inspired by the German National Socialists. The natural right of nations was to become the foundation of post-war Europe, a condition of peace, and all attempts to build it on another principle were deemed to be false.[88] In German translations of these texts, he did not use the term *Naturrecht* for natural law as at the time it was used by German jurisprudence in reference to racial principles and by Catholics as natural law. Polakovič used the term *natürliches Recht* instead.[89]

The concept of pure race and national community was abandoned by Polakovič and he continued to criticise the policy of expansionism and the belief in power as the source of law. Ján Hollý, Ľudovít Štúr and Štefan Marko Daxner remained part of Polakovič's interpretation of the Slovak nationalist discourse, though without ties to *völkisch* ideology.[90] His return to National Socialist concepts was exemplified in a January 1945 address at the Congress of the Young People's Populist Generation. Though Polakovič's retreat from fascist to nationalist positions at the time is quite apparent, he did not with-

86 POLAKOVIČ 1943, pp. 117–118.
87 POLAKOVIČ 1943, p. 9.
88 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. *Vývin základných myšlienok slovenskej politiky*. Bratislava : Úrad propagandy, 1944, p. 44.
89 POLAKOVIČ, Stephan. *Die Etwicklung der Grundideen der slowakischen Politik*. Bratislava : Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft für das Auslandslowakentum, 1945, p. 56. The German correspondent similarly translated Hanus' concept of natural law in 1941. According to M. Szabó, this was done to distinguish Hanus' idea of natural law from the German concept. SZABÓ, Miloslav. Kritická diskusia, alebo apológia? In *Dějiny – teorie – kritika*, 2020, no. 1, p. 132; NISSING, Hanns-Gregor. *Naturrecht und Kirche im Säkularen Staat*. Wiesbaden : Springer VS, 2016, pp. 1–10.
90 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. *Warum eine freie Slowakei?* Bratislava : Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft für das Auslandslowakentum, 1945, p. 16; POLAKOVIČ 1944, pp. 15–38.

draw from political involvement or collaboration.[91] It wasn't until his exile in Argentina that Polakovič reassessed the idea of the role of a Catholic in secular world through close and active cooperation with fascist politicians to achieve Catholic and nationalist goals, which arose from his own interpretation of Blondelism. Methodical positioning centred around the concept of race as an eternal principle and the foundation of law or vis-à-vis the expansionary policy occurred in his thinking largely within the context of Hungarian nationalism. This allowed him to retrospectively declare himself an open and courageous critic of German National Socialism during the period of the Slovak State.[92] The deportations of the Magyar minority, which Polakovič called for in 1943, did not occur until after the war when Czechoslovakia was restored and named the People's Democratic Republic (1946–1947). Historian Radka Šustrová offers evidence of the link between the concept of the Czech "national community" and the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans.[93] Nonetheless, the legacy of the Slovak "national community" remains a subject of further research.

Conclusion

In addition to active resistance or the adoption of fascist elements in an identical form, the selective acquisition and modification of certain fascist ideals was another of the Catholic responses to the "fascist effect" of the time. Polakovič's method of working with *Volksgemeinschaft* as a racial foundation for the concept of "nation" shows how learned Catholic intellectuals who did not reject modernity and thoroughly understood Catholic dogma often balanced on the edge of Catholic Orthodoxy in their tactical support to fascism.

The concept of "nation" evolved gradually in Polakovič's thinking. He followed the corporatist line of national discourse within Slovak political Catholicism and at the same time, deviated when necessary, having found inspiration in Blondelism and in the fascist myth of the renascence of nation. His understanding of race was also dynamic; he resorted to it when positioning himself against the Hungarian minority and the territorial plans of the Kingdom of Hungary.

A number of events demonstrate the method and origin of Polakovič's work with the *Volksgemeinschaft* concept. Initially preferring the political model of Italian fascism for the rise of Catholicism, Polakovič perceived of German National Socialism as a patron of the existence of the Slovak nation and Catholicism since the establishment of the Slovak State. A critical topic in Polakovič's mind was the endeavour to achieve a revision of the Vienna Award, which has so far escaped the attention of Slovak historiography. Hitherto research has focused rather on Štefan Polakovič exclusively as an ideologue of Jozef Tiso's politics in the power struggle with Vojtech Tuka.

91 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. *Za život národa, za trvanie štátu*. Buenos Aires : Zahraničná Matica slovenská, 1985, p. 155–157.
92 POLAKOVIČ 1985, pp. 105–118.
93 ŠUSTROVÁ 2020, p. 101.

Even though the era of Slovak National Socialism represented a period of the greatest escalation in the adoption of German National Socialist concepts among Slovak Catholic corporatists, Polakovič began a few months earlier. This challenges the notion that the relationship of Slovak corporatists to German concepts was the exclusive result of ideological pressure from the Slovak National Socialists. Despite Polakovič's effort to unite the Slovak national community with Slovak and Catholic sources, the ideas were inspired by the racial understanding of the German National Socialist nation.

Polakovič's concept of "nation" and the Slovak national community significantly relied on the idea of natural law, which was a part of Slovak Catholic nationalism and of the Catholic critique of the ideology of German National Socialists in terms of the protection of human rights. This enabled Polakovič to adopt the concept of a "pure race" without combating with Catholic Orthodoxy. Meanwhile, it also served as the basis for his apologetic arguments in the post-war period. The legacy of the Slovak national community in the context of Slovak post-war right-wing emigration, and in that of Czechoslovak people's democracy, remains a subject for further research.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Michal Kopeček, Adéla Gjuričová and anonymous reviewers for their help and comments on the earlier version of this article. I am also thankful for the English translation of this study by Lucia Faltin.

FORUM HISTORIAE Journal and Portal for History and Related Disciplines
ISSN 1337-6861

Forum Historiae, 2022, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 88–104

www.forumhistoriae.sk

Between Historiographies of Finitude and Appropriation of the Annales School: The "National Question" in Post-1945 Croatian Intellectual History

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Keywords
Croatian historiography, intellectual history, contemporary history, Annales School

DOI
10.31577/forhist.2022.16.1.6

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Cite
BALIKIĆ, Lucija. Between Historiographies of Finitude and Appropriation of the Annales School: The "National Question" in Post-1945 Croatian Intellectual History. In *Forum Historiae*, 2022, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 88–104, doi: 10.31577/forhist.2022.16.1.6

Abstract

BALIKIĆ, Lucija. Between Historiographies of Finitude and Appropriation of the Annales School: The "National Question" in Post-1945 Croatian Intellectual History.

The present article outlines the main trends in post-1945 Croatian intellectual history writing, with special attention paid to the unique dynamics of the reception and influence of the Annales school, plus other external historiographical trends dominant in "Western" historiographies of the time. Moreover, the intellectual history was oftentimes written from a teleological perspective, culminating in either the people's liberation struggle (*narodnooslobodilačka borba*) and socialist revolution, or in the making of an independent Croatian nation-state, whereby numerous ideologies were fashioned to fit these two goals. In contrast, a more self-reflexive and open-ended intellectual history inspired by the Annales School opposed these type of schemes. Nevertheless, both historiographical traditions of the period primarily grappled with the so-called national question and the historical interplay between the Yugoslav and Croatian national movements and ideologies, debating the intellectual and social origins of the former from a zero-sum perspective, while attempting to alienate the latter from the projects of Yugoslavism and socialism in the period after the wars of the 1990s. Using primarily the example of Mirjana Gross and her treatment of the ideology of rightism (*pravaštvo*) together with the polemics she developed with other historians about its morphology and relevance for the development and content of Croatian nationalism, the article demonstrates the aforementioned argument about historiographical trends and debates, as well as their notable transformations in the given period.

The writing of intellectual history in Croatia in the period after 1945 materialized amidst a wider context of noticeable tension between the current historiographical approaches, mainly Marxian (non-dogmatic),[1] self-centred, positivistic history and a more self-reflective, theoretically sensitive and widely understood social history (comparative perspective), primarily adopted from outside socialist Yugoslavia.

However, the main debate surrounding the position intellectual history should take, as well as alternatives to such a narrowly

1 The term Marxian (instead of Marxist) is used in order to demonstrate that this genre had only certain elements of positivist Marxist historiography (e.g. teleological stucture with dialectical class struggle as the dominant explanatory model for historical development), but it was also oftentimes underpinned by the "frozen" national conflict (esp. Serbian–Croatian). It served as analaytical framework for a debate on the nature of common history and measuring national achievements against each other.

conceived political history, was occurring within broader historiographical debates about theoretical and methodological innovation, its origin, necessity, applicability and relevance. Intellectual history was often simultaneously researched in the adjacent fields of political philosophy and political science, outside of the framework of history departments, yet with a strikingly similar approach. Moreover, after the collapse of socialist Yugoslavia and the proclamation of an independent Croatia, a new and stronger wave of positivistic, teleological nation-building historiography expanding on the achievements of nationalizing historiography during the socialist period[2] gained momentum and became the new focal "opponent" of social historians, who were becoming increasingly more receptive to wider historiographical trends such as the linguistic turn, constructivist theories of nationalism and comparative history. Due to unique geopolitical, historical and intellectual circumstances, the post-1945 development of Croatian historiography offers fertile ground for a more abstract inquiry into the dialectical dynamics of theoretical and methodological innovation between Western and East-Central European historians, as well as related questions regarding the translation of new vocabularies, personal and institutional cooperation around the Cold War and the morphology of the nationalization[3] of this particular historiographical tradition.[4]

Furthermore, the widespread perception of theoretical and methodological innovation as inherently of external origin often resulted in a false dichotomy between contemporary historiography[5]—oftentimes conceptualized as inauthentic, supranationally-focused and hardly applicable to local history—and the allegedly timeless national historiography—thought of as neutral and positivistic with positive connotations.

Such conceptualizations were strongly reflected within institutional policies as well, whereby "contemporary historiography" became almost entirely separated from the rest of historiographical culture and production, soon realizing its own university department chair and peer-review positions in journals. Throughout the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, members of both camps reacted differently to the challenges and opportunities emerging from outside of the country or the broader region, often di-

2 The "national question" that subsumes discussions on Croatian history is defined here as the historical, and in some contexts legal, legitimacy of independent Croatian statehood.

3 Nationalization will, in this instance, be defined not only in terms of a resurfacing of older debates and arguments that primarily served a sort of nation-building agenda, as would more be the case in the states of the Eastern-bloc proper, but more importantly, as a process which functioned both within the socialist and Yugoslavist framework without questioning or undermining any of them, and thus performing the function of both appropriating national narratives into those frameworks as well as redefining such meanings in themselves. In other words, the main actors in focus here will not be those who overtly claimed that there was a process of denationalization during the socialist period, but rather those who were protagonists of the debates and appropriations of national narratives into the aforementioned frameworks, and who managed to remain in those positions later, during the period of democratic transition and the realization of independent Croatian statehood.

4 For wider regional context, see SORIN, Antohi – TRENCSÉNYI, Balázs – APOR, Péter. *Narratives Unbound: Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*. Budapest : Central European University Press, 2007.

5 Not *Zeitgeschichte*, but rather understood as a field that subsumes contemporary theoretical and methodological approaches in historical sciences.

vided through self-attributed labels of professional or non-professional historians—intellectualized as apolitical or political—or those who were explicitly doing the work of nation-building and those who aimed at toning down the national level of inquiry[6] in favour of regional and comparative perspectives,[7] especially after the fall of Yugoslavia.

One notable consequence of both camps repeatedly acknowledging the external agency of theoretical and methodological innovation, and often using external—primarily Western in both a broader and looser sense—points of reference in studying local or national historical development, resulted in a distorted image of local history dominated by the actions of political actors, often with a teleological tone, and the regional, European and world history by the social, intellectual and other motors of development. Moreover, the somewhat patronizing, self-proclaimed mediators between Western "contemporary" historiographical trends and local historiography helped to deepen existing hierarchies and animosities between the camps, at times excluding the possibility of original local thought on those issues. However, it is the social history in fact, in the broadest possible sense, often incorporating intellectual history in particular, that came out of the 20th century as a winner in terms of theoretical and methodological innovation, as various generations of historians, spanning from the early 1950s until the present day, made efforts to provide alternative constructions of the national history, not only by offering legitimization for the communist project through the means of Marxian historiography, but also very much contributing to the genre of historical sociology.[8] The aim of this article is, therefore, to first theoretically assess the general trends and tendencies among relations between Western and East-Central European historians and historiographies, not only in terms of content, but mainly regarding theoretical considerations.

In this light, a specific Croatian case will be examined through the prism of generations that vacillated between approaches and maintained different understandings of the aforementioned relationships with Western historiographies as well as their theoretical stakes as generators or/and recipients of innovations. Besides introducing the protagonists and their intellectual biographies, the intention here is also to partially reflect on the main debates they

6 A lively discussion about the various traditions that different generations of Croatian intellectual historians belonged to, and comparison with other Central European historiographies, can be followed in the transcribed roundtable organized by the Department of History of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb in 2003: Okrugli stol Opus profesorice Mirjane Gross u srednjoeuropskoj historiografiji: iskustva i poruke: Ivo Goldstein, Mirjana Gross, Horst Haselsteiner, Geneviève Humbert-Knitel, Alojz Ivanišević, Zdenka Janeković-Römer, Drago Roksandić, Nikša Stančić, Arnold Suppan. In *Radovi: Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskoga fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu*, 2012, vol. 44, no. 1, pp. 17–57.

7 Some of the most successful works which went in the direction of localizing a multitude of imperial heritages (Habsburg, Ottoman, Venetian) in Croatian national identity, as well as developing theoretical models based on those cases, were products of an international research project *Triplex Confinium*, led by Drago Roksandić. See: *Triplex Confinium ili O granicama i regijama hrvatske povijesti: 1500–1800*. Zagreb : Barbat, 2003; or BLAŽEVIĆ, Zrinka. At the Crossroads. Methodologies for Liminal Spaces. In PRIJATELJ PAVIČIĆ, Ivana et al. *Liminal Spaces of Art between Europe and Middle East*. Cambridge : Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2018, pp. 1–11.

8 JANKOVIĆ, Branimir. *Mijenjanje sebe same: preobrazbe hrvatske historiografije kasnog socijalizma*. Zagreb : Srednja Europa, 2016.

were part of, namely the historicizing of Croatian nationhood and statehood, through carefully mapping the ideological underpinnings of the intellectual history they were writing. Finally, in conclusion, a contribution will be made to possible future avenues of research as well as the opportunities Croatian historical and geographical settings offer to the latest historical studies in the wider region and beyond.

A *Sui generis* Historiographical Environment within and beyond the Cold War

To begin, it is important to note several historical factors that contributed to Croatian historiography's unique situation during the Cold War and later. Firstly, after the Tito-Stalin split and the exclusion of socialist Yugoslavia from the Communist Information Bureau, the diplomatic position of the country enabled historians to maintain strong professional and personal relationships with historians from both sides of the Iron Curtain, an advantage in comparison to colleagues from each of those blocks. In other words, their research was not strictly limited to the archives and libraries of any given country or region and as such, was much more prone to placing Yugoslav historical accounts among broader spatial and temporal contexts. Moreover, this enabled many personal or institutional connections from the interwar period to continue in a certain way and maintain the dominant reference points of the past, especially with regard to Germany and Austria, but also those of Western Europe in the narrower sense.

Lastly, the civil war that turned into an intensively mythologized[9] war for independence (1991–1995),[10] provided historians with opportunities as well as a responsibility to re-focus on the national history, and in fact reinforced the divisions detailed above into supporters of those more sensitive to and respective of theoretical innovations and the positivistic nation-builders and memory entrepreneurs.[11] However, despite the beneficial diplomatic position of Yugoslavia and resulting ability to maintain connections with traditional historiographical hubs and centres of interest such as German-speaking historiographies, in the generations of historians that marked the second half of the 20th century in Croatia, the pioneers of intellectual history and its contemporary developments were not as numerous and often did not strictly

9 CVIJANOVIĆ, Hrvoje. On Memory Politics and Memory Wars: A Critical Analysis of the Croatian Dialogue Document. In *Politička misao: časopis za politologiju*, 2018, vol. 55, no. 4, pp. 109–146.

10 The interpretation concerning the character and length of the war is still a very controversial and troublesome task as there is no consensus among historians or the general public; neither on the moment when it transformed from a civil war into a war of independence, not least due to war crimes and ethnic cleansing committed in the context of the latter. See for instance: PRLIĆ, Jadranko et al. (IT-04-74). United Nations, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. https://www.icty.org/en/case/prlic (last viewed on 11 April 2022).

11 The process of democratic transition in Croatia, particularly in the context of the war and the post-war developments following the break-up of Yugoslavia as well as the ramifications on historiography, has been analytically noted and tentatively evaluated recently by Drago Roksandić in a collection of essays: ROKSANDIĆ, Drago. *Historiografija u tranziciji*. Zagreb : Srpsko kulturno društvo "Prosvjeta", 2018.

distinguish between social history, primarily in the context of the Annales school in Croatia,[12] and intellectual history as a distinctive unit of analysis.

Furthermore, the overarching topic of study in intellectual history was nationalism, often in a teleological way, with a sort of nation-state as the ultimate goal, including questions related to statehood and inter-ethnic relations in the Yugoslav space or in its immediate surroundings. More specifically, the key debates revolved around the character and the nature of the early 19th century Illyrian movement,[13] the ideology of Croatian Rightism[14] and the extent to which it inspired the Ustaša movement, the history and the development of the Croatian left accentuating the social-democrats, as well as Serbo-Croatian relations, (integral) Yugoslavism[15] and the history of the Serbs in "Croatian lands,"[16] in the Military Frontier in particular.[17] It is, however, important to note that both the camp of Marxian positivist historians, who prioritized the League of Communists' discursive approach to history in the state-socialist period, and the group engaged in nation-building through historiography during the 1990s structured their narrative in a similar, teleological way, oftentimes insisting on the finitude of history. In the case of the first, the goal was the realization of a classless society in socialist Yugoslavia and the triumph of the Partisans' revolution in the—paradigmatic victory—of the Second World War, while in the case of the latter, it was the realization of independent Croatian statehood through—also a paradigmatic victory in the War of Independence—the idea of which, embodied in the concept of a "Croatian state-creating idea,"[18] allegedly persisted throughout history.[19]

12 The lasting potency and influence of the Annales school for the orientation of Croatian historiography can be exemplified by the most recent contribution by the younger generation of Croatian scholars of the Habsburg Monarchy and their new publication: ROKSANDIĆ, Drago – ŠIMETIN-ŠEGVIĆ, Filip – ŠIMETIN-ŠEGVIĆ, Nikolina. *Annales in Perspecitve: Designs and Accomplishments.* Zagreb : Centar za komparativnohistorijske i interkulturne studije, 2019.

13 While this was the topic of many heated debates because of its underlying implications on the tension between the Croatian, Serbian, and Yugoslav solutions for national integration of the South Slavic peoples, it escalated most notably in the case of Roksandić's PhD defense, where he was accussed of "national disloyalty," with the case receiving the international attention of prominent émigré scholars from East Central Europe, see: BANAC, Ivo et al. Fired in Belgrade. In *The New York Review of Books*, 29 March 1990. https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1990/03/29/fired-in-belgrade (last viewed on 25 March 2022).

14 GROSS, Mirjana. *Povijest pravaške ideologije*. Zagreb : Institut za hrvatsku povijest Sveučilišta, 1973.

15 GROSS, Mirjana. *Vijek i djelovanje Franje Račkoga*. Zagreb : Novi Liber, 2004.

16 "Croatian lands" (*hrvatske zemlje*) is one of the key, pervasive concepts used to extend the contemporary territory of the Croatian nation-state into the historical past, often used to decontextualize—especially when discussing imperial state structures—the story and ascribe indepdendent statehood with historical legitimacy.

17 The debate on this issue was most prominent between Croatian and Serbian historiography, and the question of the cultural authenticity of Serbs from Croatia-Slavonia where Serbian historiography often went off into various victimization narratives, generalizing the national and historical facets, their identity, and Croatian historiography, mainly in the socialist period, chose a much more nuanced perspective which called for incorporating them into Croatian history as one of its indispensible elements.

18 Often also conceptualized as a Croatian state-creating (*državotvorna*) political thought, idea or movement, its meaning is closest to the German concept of *Staatsbildende Idee*; a focus on quality and not the process. It was a prominent trope in nationalist political discourse and Croatian historiography of the 1990s, aiming at providing the nation-state with historical continuity and legitimacy.

19 GOLDSTEIN, Ivo. Od partijnosti u doba socijalizma do revizionizma 90ih: ima li građanska historiografija šansu? In LIPOVČAN, Srećko – DOBROVŠAK, Ljiljana (eds.) *Hrvatska historiografi-*

Thus, both groups were much less concerned with external theoretical and methodological input, unlike the social historians, whose narratives were often more open-ended, analytic in nature, based on problematizing certain issues and, in the most recent period, post-structuralist in character. On the contrary, finite historiographies depend on the portrayal of a series of subsequent political thinkers whose ideas are teleologically about to be realized in the given political order and asserted by contemporary political actors, whether it is the independent ethnonationalist state or the realization of a communist classless society.

The Case of Mirjana Gross and the Ideology of Rightism

Taking the example of one of the most notable Croatian intellectual historians of the period, Mirjana Gross (1922–2012), it is in fact possible to claim that the study of intellectual history was highly influenced and mediated by the appropriation of the Annales school of Croatian historiography.[20] While Gross was the first Croatian historian to explicitly and systematically touch upon the nature of the relationship and penetration of external historiographical trends into Croatian historiography,[21] and thus to inspire her contemporaries and students to critically reflect on the same questions and strive towards developing their own theories and methodologies, it was her work on intellectual history that deserves the most attention here.

Intellectually, she grew from the traditions of her predecessors, Jaroslav Šidak and Vaso Bogdanov, both of whom were members of the Department of History at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of the University of Zagreb. Bogdanov, a notable member of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, protagonist of the interwar "conflict on the literary left"[22] and a staunch defender of arguably one of the most known left-wing intellectuals and Croatian literary figures of the 20th century, Miroslav Krleža, represented

ja XX. stoljeća: između znanstvenih paradigmi i ideoloških zahtjeva. Zagreb : Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar, 2005, pp. 57–71.

20 In particular, historiographical trends inspired by the Annales school included going beyond positivist and idealist approaches, with an emphasis towards tracing the changes and transformations within broader social structures, as well as generalizations and abstractions of the data analyzed thereat. This was reflected in studies of nationalism and analyzing the way ideas spread from the elite to the masses, for instance, in the seminal study by Miroslav Hroch and in the development of fields such as memory studies or microhistory, which contribute to the knowledge of one individuals' or communities understanding and actions within broader transformations of nationalist ideas. In the Croatian context and that of Mirjana Gross' works, however, it was comprised of the understanding of societal modernization as one of the main contexts for the emergence of nationalism, imparting a combination of Annales-inspired social and intellectual history without determinist claims.

21 GROSS, Mirjana. *Suvremena historiografija: korijeni, postignuća, traganja*. Zagreb : Novi Liber, 1996; JANKOVIĆ, Branimir. Rijetka predanost metodologiji historije. Mirjana Gross (1922–2012). In *Historijski zbornik*, 2012, vol. 65, no. 2, pp. 479–500; JANEKOVIĆ-RÖMER, Zdenka. Mirjana Gross: traganje za novim putevima povijesnog mišljenja. In *Radovi: Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskoga fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu*, 2000, vol. 32–33, no. 1, pp. 481–484.

22 BROZOVIĆ, Domagoj. Sukob na književnoj ljevici u novohistorističkom ključu. In *Umjetnost riječi: Časopis za znanost o književnosti*, 2015, vol. 59, no. 1–2, pp. 133–154; PERUŠKO, Ivana. The short life of socialist realism in Croatian literature, 1945–1955. In DOBRENKO, Evgeny – JONSSON-SKRADOL, Natalia (eds.) *Socialist Realism in Central and Eastern European Literatures under Stalin: Institutions, Dynamics, Discourses*. New York : Anthem Press, 2018, pp. 165–182.

Marxian historiography and was primarily working, both during the interwar and the post-war periods, on the topics of Southern Slav participation in the revolution of 1848–1849 in the Kingdom of Hungary and the conspiratorial Jacobine group of Ignjat Martinović.

What connects him to Gross are his studies on rightism, social history—primarily labour history—and matters of the Illyrian movement, the ideology behind it as well as questioning its scope and a sort of proto-Yugoslav, Serbo-Croatian orientation.[23] Šidak was, on the other hand, a formative figure for Gross in a more personal and professional sense, since it was him who was her supervisor and included her in some of the most notable collaborative projects at an early stage of her career, such as a comprehensive synthesis of Croatian history between the renewal of constitutionalism and the beginning of the First World War. It was published in 1967,[24] shortly after and arguably in a similar tone as the famous "Declaration about the name and the status of the Croatian literary language,"[25] which was one of the main cornerstones in the build-up to the highly decentralized massive political-cultural conflict around the Croatian language and political claims, also known as the "Croatian Spring," that would follow in 1971.[26]

In the aforementioned roundtable discussion from 2003, one of Gross's closest colleagues, Nikša Stančić, overtly brings that book as well as her best recognized intellectual history piece, *The History of Rightist Ideology* (1973), into connection with the Croatian Spring and a rethinking of the history of Croatian political thought and Serbo-Croatian relations from the early 19th century onwards.[27] Šidak, himself coming from a background of the most notable, complex and eventually controversial collaborative project in the history of historiography in socialist Yugoslavia, an unfinished Marxian state-sponsored multi-volume synthesis *The History of Yugoslav Peoples*,[28] introduced Gross to the network of his collaborators, both inside and outside of Yugoslavia. Šidak was an important intellectual mentor to Gross as well, since he was very much focused on 19th century Croatian intellectual history as well as the Illyrian movement and the Croatian role in the 1848–1849 revolution, similar to Bogdanov. While he was often accused of Marxian positivism and had some open conflicts on methodological grounds with Gross in later periods, he can still be considered one of the decisive figures of Croatian intellectual history writing of that period.

23 ŠVAB, Mladen. Vaso Bogdanov. In *Hrvatski biografski leksikon*. Zagreb : Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 1989, http://hbl.lzmk.hr/clanak.aspx?id=2219 (last viewed on 25 March 2022).

24 ŠIDAK, Jaroslav et al. *Povijest hrvatskog naroda 1860-1914*. Zagreb : Školska knjiga, 1968.

25 Declaration on the name and status of Croatian Literary Language, 1967, http://cultural-opposition.eu/registry/?uri=http://courage.btk.mta.hu/courage/individual/n247666 (last viewed on 25 March 2022).

26 Additional proof of the controversy this book created can be found in the reactions received in Belgrade as well as Gross' response: GROSS, Mirjana. Maliciozne marginalije o 'delikatnim' pitanjima. In *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 1971, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 211–222.

27 Okrugli stol Opus 2012, p. 22.

28 GRAFENAUER, Bogo – PEROVIĆ, Dušan – ŠIDAK, Jaroslav. *Historija naroda Jugoslavije. Vol. 1–2*. Zagreb : Školska knjiga, 1953, 1959.

Regarding any concrete consequences of Gross' inspiration from the Annales school, which she first got introduced to at the 10th International Congress of the Historical Sciences in Rome in 1955,[29] it is necessary to explore her research interests for gender history, the development of civil society[30] and the history of everyday life,[31] as well as her rapprochement with structuralist approaches.

One of the main contributions of Mirjana Gross, besides mediating the Annales school perspectives into a Croatian context, was providing new methodological vocabulary in translating many terms from French, German and English. The primary theoretical concepts and *longue durée* processes she identified and worked on were those of modernization and national integration.[32] These were two key concepts which also provided a background and structure to her work on the national themes, bringing them together with the Marxian philosophy of history embodied in societal modernization—in the structuralist and relational manner, taking into account broader European intellectual history.[33] In this context, her most notable works on the "original" Croatian rightism of Ante Starčević and Eugen Kvaternik show allegiance to the aforementioned Annales-inspired concepts and approaches,[34] outlining its ideological tenants against a backdrop of societal "modernization" and portraying it as one of the engines of national integration, and more broadly, history. Her understanding of nationhood is in this context not essentialist, but rather explicitly constructivist as she is constantly situating and comparing the concept of nation within Ante Starčević's rightism to multiple alternatives within and outside of the Party of Rights, ranging from political Catholicism to different versions of Yugoslavism. Crucially, this positioned her against the dogmatic Marxist and emerging nationalist historiographies of finitude as she maintained an open-endedness of history and developed a considerable amount of conceptual sensitivity to the various incarnations of nationhood espoused in the material she studied.

29 GROSS, Mirjana. Plaidoyer za profesionalnu historiografiju. In *Radovi: Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest*, 1996, vol. 29, pp. 7–10.

30 More in the sense of 19th century *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* than the projection of contemporary transitologist conceptualization of civil society.

31 Perhaps her most notable social history work in the strict sense, which incorporates all of the aforementioned elements is GROSS, Mirjana. *Počeci moderne Hrvatske: neoapsolutizam u civilnoj Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji 1850–1860*. Zagreb : Globus, 1985.

32 While adopting classical social-science normative modernization theory and also most often successfully integrating a sort of "class struggle" in her 19th century narratives of Croatian history, the notion of national integration is often an ambigous one in her works. It actually comprises all the intellectual and ideological positions of the available options for the realization of independent statehood, most often either Croatian, to which the book on rightist ideology mainly refers to, or Yugoslav, to which her book and articles on Franjo Rački and the People's party (Narodna stranka) refer to.

33 For a discussion of Gross' attempts at arguing for the applicability of structuralism in historical science in a comparative perspective, see: KRIZMANICS, Réka. *Fruitful Inconsistencies: Historical Knowledge Production in Late Socialist Hungary and Croatia*. Doctoral dissertation. Budapest; Vienna : Central European University, 2020, pp. 81–82.

34 On Mirjana Gross' reception of the Annales school and employing of Braudelian structuralist framework in the Croatian context, see: RADONIĆ, Ljiljana. Post-socialist politics of history in Croatia. In LUTHAR, Oto (ed.) *Red Dragons and Evil Spirits: Postcommunist Historiography Between Democratization and New Politics of History*. New York : Central European University Press, 2017.

Gross' Intellectual Legacy: Between Fertilization and Nationalist Exploitation

Among her students and intellectual successors, such as the aforementioned Nikša Stančić, or Iskra Iveljić, Mario Strecha, Drago Roksandić and Branimir Janković, it was Zrinka Blažević who wrote a significant number of essays exploring and translating the new concepts and terms that were in circulation among European and American historiographies around the turn of the millennium.[35] It was another of Gross' students, Mario Strecha, who focused much more on confronted national ideologies (*pravaštvo* and *narodnjaštvo*; rightism and populism),[36] particularly on the Croatian tradition of political Catholicism as well as its interplay with liberalism.[37] An additional strong influence Gross exerted upon Croatian historiography was the adoption of a comparative perspective and the employment of comparative methodologies in general, which eventually resulted in a notable volume of translations of key theoretical texts in that field, edited by Drago Roksandić.[38]

Her books on rightist and populist ideologies maintain a strong comparative perspective and bring wider Western and East-Central European comparative cases and existing entanglements to light as a relevant context. Further, Gross was not afraid to portray the inherent contradictions and extreme positions held by historical actors, especially Ante Starčević and Eugen Kvaternik, who have typically been idealized and utilized for nation-building purposes in Croatian nationalist historiography, which oftentimes selectively reads and decontextualizes their calls for independent Croatian statehood based on a "historical right."

Nevertheless, almost the entirety of her students and successors continued to base their perspectives of Croatian historical development on modernization theory inherently, with a few nuances. This valorisation and thematization of the multiplicity of imperial and hence, cultural borderlands in Croatia and the Balkans more broadly has also been analysed in the Braudelian key and portrayed as a historical "added value" in terms of the originality of political concepts and ideologies devised therein.

War In and Around Historiography: New Readings of Rightism and the Birth of Independent Croatia

It is important to put Gross's writings and research choices into the context of the late socialist Yugoslav crises, spanning from the massive political and cultural movement and conflict that raised the issue of Croatia's position within

35 BLAŽEVIĆ, Zrinka. *Prevođenje povijesti: teorijski obrati i suvremena historijska znanost*. Zagreb : Srednja Europa, 2014.

36 The former being a radically democratic Croatian exclusivist independentist tradition and the latter belonging to a typical mid-19th century liberal national tradition with a strong orientation towards South Slavic cultural and political cooperation.

37 STRECHA, Mario. *Katoličko pravaštvo: politički katolicizam u Banskoj Hrvatskoj u predvečerje Prvoga svjetskog rata (1904–1910)*. Zagreb : Srednja Europa, 2011.

38 ROKSANDIĆ, Drago. *Uvod u komparativnu historiju*. Zagreb : Golden marketing, 2004.

the Yugoslav federation in 1971, namely the Croatian Spring,[39] to the beginning of the civil war in Croatia in 1991 and beyond. In this particular setting, it can be asserted that the role of researching the ideologies behind various "solutions" for the "national integration" of primarily Croatian peoples had multifold implications. First of all, the intellectual history around the rightist movement directly tackled, heavily contextualized and partially affirmed the legitimacy of the question of independent Croatian statehood. The parallel between the Yugoslav federation and the multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire, as well as legally strained relations with other nations and an economically and politically exploited Croatia, might have resonated with the moderately nationalist voices around the Croatian Spring and the civil war, especially during the War for Independence.[40]

In fact, while Gross was approaching the topic seriously and using her intellectual resources to show the ideology of rightism as relationally and dialogically as possible, the political thinkers and historians around her managed to selectively extract arguments and motives from her narrative, fashioning the figure of a mid-19th century radical democratic—almost Jacobine—ethnonationalist Ante Starčević as "Father of the Homeland" by accentuating his anti-Serbian stances as well as those that overtly evoked the integration of Bosnians and the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina into the Croatian state.[41] Moreover, in this new reading of her work and the ideology of rightism, nationhood became increasingly essentialized, dehistoricized and naturalized, while independent Croatian statehood was shown to be legally and historically legitimate.

Most importantly perhaps, these tendentious interpretations cantered around the concept of Croatianness and Croatian statehood, breaking away from the Yugoslav and socialist frameworks more broadly. Furthermore, the rehabilitation of the Ustaša movement and symbols during the war itself went hand in hand with the politicization of the history of rightist movement by the political and part of the intellectual elite, which used it to inflate the claim on the historical continuity of Croatians striving for independent statehood. Another partially intellectual[42] historian was in fact responsible for drawing the direct, uninterrupted line of development of Croatian political thought

39 For a more detailed inquiry into the popularization of history as well as the use of history for political purposes in and around the Croatian Spring see: BRANĐOLICA, Tomislav – ŠIMETIN-ŠEGVIĆ, Filip. Historiografija i popularna historija u vrijeme Hrvatskog proljeća. In *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 2019, vol. 51, no. 3, pp. 699–739.

40 However, it is worth mentioning that this parallel was previously raised in interwar Croatian historiography by the notable Croatian intellectual historian and journalist Josip Horvat in his works: HORVAT, Josip. *Ante Starčević: kulturno-povijesna slika.* Zagreb : Antun Velzek, 1940; HORVAT, Josip. *Stranke kod Hrvata i njihove ideologije.* Beograd : Politika, 1939.

41 For instance, one of her opponents in this context was a historian of political Catholicism, see KRIŠTO, Jure. *Prešućena povijest. Katolička crkva u hrvatskoj politici 1850–1918.* Zagreb : Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 1994.

42 While many contemporary professional historians disapprove of Tuđman's academic status and historiographical contributions, it is important to note that he was essentially tackling very similar research questions and topics as other historians who gradually transitioned from studying the social and/or intellectual history of 19th century Croatian lands to questions of the legitimacy of independent statehood and the national *others* (e.g., Serbian, Yugoslav) against which the contemporary Croatian identity could be defined.

between the two (namely the rightist movement and Ustaša regime as historical forces that worked towards Croatian independence); the first president of independent Croatia, Franjo Tuđman, who relatively tacitly permitted the use of these arguments for the purposes of ideological mobilization.[43] Gross worked hard to counter these tendencies and references in the Croatian public discourse around the war, due not only to her Jewish identity and surviving the horrors of Holocaust as a child, but also her professionalism as a historian. Playing an important role before and after the collapse of socialist Yugoslavia, the ideology of Yugoslavism is another complementary research choice of hers. Not only did it subsume the work of major political thinkers of the 19th century who were engaged in a dialogue with those on the side of Croatian rightism, and thus showing how they managed to reinforce each other, but the work also provided her an opportunity to portray the complexity of the issue of South Slavic political and cultural integration in and around the Habsburg Monarchy. She also recognized, as did many other historians, that one of the key elements and intellectual origins of integral Yugoslavism at the turn of century was Dalmatian rightism.[44]

Furthermore, this allowed her to reflect on the assumptions and implications the unification had for the Croatian people in particular, which was rarely discussed separately in Marxist political historiography. It was especially after the war that the entirety of Yugoslav-related topics were extremely problematic to deal with and were often discriminated against in favour of projecting Croatian nationhood and statehood into the historical past. This is when her work on these topics managed to ease tension and normalize the discussion about intellectual tendencies and political thought in relation to integral Yugoslavism.

In other words, while she used her works on Yugoslavism to openly criticize some arguably more "official," ideologically-motivated and unprofessional approaches to the history of Yugoslavism in socialist Yugoslavia,[45] she used

43 Nevertheless, Tuđman's role as a historian is also relevant, not only because of his intellectual history works on Croatian nationhood and statehood, such as: TUĐMAN, Franjo. *Velike ideje i mali narodi*. Zagreb : Matica Hrvatska, 1969; but also his personal situation as a sort of "national dissident," which additionally publicized and realized the question of the position of Croatian intellectual history within the broader Yugoslav historiography at the time. For a deeper analysis of the ideological underpinnings of his view of history, see ĐURAŠKOVIĆ, Stevo. Nation-building in Franjo Tuđman's Political Writings. In *Politička misao: časopis za politologiju*, 2014, vol. 51, no. 5, pp. 58–79, whereby Đurašković argues that it was based on "the narrative on the nature of humankind as teleological struggle to achieve independent national states; the narrative of supranational ideologies—such as liberalism and communism—acting as a pure geopolitical means used by the great nations to subjugate small ones. And finally the narrative of the Croatian thousand-year long struggle to achieve an independent national state."

44 Dalmatian rightism, while immensely heterogeneous in terms of party politics and ideological associations throughout the second half of 19th century, had a liberal strain which went beyond political Catholicism and Dalmatian autonomist pro-Italian traditions, both of which were dominant forces up to the turn of century. This liberal and progressive rightist thread, personified in the figures of Frano Supilo and Ante Trumbić, argued for unification of Dalmatia with Croatia-Slavonia in cooperation with Serbian political actors as part of their broader Yugoslavist framework, with the support of Ferenc Kossuth's Independentist Party of '48ers, all against the German *Drang nach Osten*. It thus differed from the narrowly Croatian, Catholic and socially conservative rightist traditions that were dominant in Croatia-Slavonia and Istria at the time.

45 GROSS, Mirjana. *Vladavina Hrvatsko-srpske koalicije 1906–1907*. Beograd : Institut društvenih

the result of that same research to bring it back into the picture at a time when it was being severely and pro-actively distorted and abused in the 1990s and early 2000s. In the first case, during state-socialism, she managed to decentralize and conceptually excavate the intellectual origins of Yugoslavism through her work on the ideology of one of the key thinkers of the 19th century who espoused it, Franjo Račk, even if it went against the political assertions of the day. Her polemic with Serbian historians Vladimir Dedijer, Milorad Ekmečić and others, on the occasion of publication of the notable volume *History of Yugoslavia* (1973),[46] which was an attempt to substitute the aforementioned never-finalized comprehensive state-sponsored project *History of the Yugoslav Peoples*, is especially worth mentioning here.[47]

In a staunch criticism of the book, she exposed and countered numerous fallacies, baseless claims and tendentious nationalist arguments around 19th century conceptions of South Slavic integration, particularly those which attempted to portray the Serbian state and intellectual actors as the crucial "inventors" of the content and carriers of Yugoslavism as an ideology, but also as the main contributors of Yugoslavism's political realization, allegedly due to Serbian peasantry-based and Croatian aristocracy-based political cultures. In order to add some complexity, she disconnected the class base from the articulation of national ideologies and demonstrated the ideological interaction and also cross-fertilization between Croatian, Serbian and Yugoslav nationalisms in the Habsburg Monarchy of the time, showcasing them as vehicles of societal and state modernization.[48]

After the war, she countered the exclusionary, nation-building historiography which promoted a narrow understanding of the origins and development of Croatian national ideology by abusing and de-contextualizing the results of previous studies on rightism and 19th century intellectuals, portraying such political ideas as "state-creating" (*državotvorne*) in character, and thus over-stating the continuity and potency of the movement towards independent Croatian statehood.[49] In particular, she invested into countering the then-dominant decoupling of Croatian and Yugoslav ideological frameworks within Croatian historiography. Namely, in the second edition of her book on "original rightism" published in 2000, about three quarters of the content being the results of a completely new study, she relied on the Annales-inspired *longue durée* perspective, employing the methodology of the *histoire des mentalités* and portraying it in relation to multiple other intellectual streams in

nauka, 1960; GROSS, Mirjana. Ideja jugoslavenstva u XIX st. u "Istoriji Jugoslavije". In *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 1973, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 8–21; GROSS, Mirjana. Ideja jugoslavenstva u XIX stoljeću i "dogmatski nacionalizam". In *Jugoslovenski istorijski časopis*, 1975, vol. 3–4, pp. 121–160.

46 BOŽIĆ, Ivan et al. *Istorija Jugoslavije.* Belgrade : Prosveta, 1973; translated to English: BOŽIĆ, Ivan et al. *History of Yugoslavia*. New York : McGraw-Hill, 1974.

47 SINDBAEK, Tea. *Usable History. Representations of Yugoslavia's Difficult Past From 1945 to 2002*. Aarhus : Aarhus University Press, 2013, p. 96.

48 GROSS 1973.

49 MATKOVIĆ Stjepan. *Čista stranka prava 1895–1903*. Zagreb : Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2001; TURKALJ, Jasna – MATIJEVIĆ, Zlatko – MATKOVIĆ, Stjepan. *Pravaška misao: zbornik radova*. Zagreb : Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2007; MATKOVIĆ, Stjepan. *Izabrani portreti pravaša: prilozi hrvatskoj političkoj povijesti*. Zagreb : Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2012.

a synchronic and diachronic perspective. In this way, she denaturalized and showcased rightism as solely one of many rather politically marginal "solutions" for the national integration of Croatian and other South Slavic peoples in the mid- to late-19th century when it transformed from a youth sect centred around charismatic leaders such as A. Starčević and E. Kvaternik to a massive political movement at the turn of century.

Importantly, she also went against the predominant reading of Yugoslavia in the paradigmatic vision of the "Homeland War" of the 1990s/2000s—akin to understanding the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy of the triumphalist historiography of the 1920s—as a "prison of peoples" in which Croatia could not realize its otherwise historically and legally justified claims to independence and, hence, free cultural and economic development. Simultaneously with Gross' and others' efforts inside local historiography, there were intellectual historians who attempted to answer similar questions from an émigré perspective, and it is in that context, important to mention the role and the work of historian, writer and politician Ivo Banac, who was awarded a PhD from the University of Stanford and subsequently taught at Yale University, Central European University and the University of Zagreb. While principally researching a narrowly conceived political history, Banac's contribution towards Croatian intellectual history can in part be recognised as one of raising the "nationality question in Yugoslavia" in his most notable book,[50] as well as the closely related "Croatian language question."[51]

The postmodern perspectives and linguistic turnaround in the 1990s enjoyed a somewhat mixed reception within Croatian historiography, which can be exemplified not only by Mirjana Gross's essay in which she explicitly expresses scepticism towards the new trends arriving from social sciences and partially from other humanities,[52] but also by the notable discussion it prompted between her and one of her students and intellectual successors, Zrinka Blažević, who became a practitioner and participant in some of the schools which grew out of these traditions relatively quickly, relying mainly on post-structuralist approaches and literary theory. Lastly, a number of historians and political scientists who dealt with conservative and radical right thought as well as the relationship between culture and the Ustaša movement, all of which were pertinent questions after the 1990s war when Ustaša symbolism and ideologuemes were rehabilitated by state institutions, used historical methodologies and constructivist traditions promoted by Gross to contextualize, diversify and interpret the ideas of the thinkers they were studying. Stevo Đurašković's studies on the "mediterranism" of Bogdan Radica[53]

50 BANAC, Ivo. *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics.* Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 1984.

51 BANAC, Ivo. *Hrvatsko jezično pitanje.* Zagreb : Društvo hrvatskih književnika, 1991.

52 GROSS, Mirjana. Dekonstrukcija historije ili svijet bez prošlosti. In *Historijski zbornik*, 2009, vol. 62, no. 1, pp. 165–194.

53 ĐURAŠKOVIĆ, Stevo. Mediteranizam Bogdana Radice kao ideja slobode nasuprot totalitarizmima. In ROKSANDIĆ, Drago – CVIJOVIĆ-JAVORINA, Ivana (eds.) *Split i Vladan Desnica 1918–1945. Umjetničko stvaralaštvo između kulture i politike: Zbornik radova sa znanstvenog skupa Desničini susreti 2015*. Zagreb : FF Press, 2016, pp. 233–244.

and the conceptual intricacies of Franjo Tuđman's ideology, or Tihomir Cipek's work on the numerous ideological incarnations of Croatian national identity, as well as Višeslav Aralica's reading of Croatian nationalism in the agrarian populist, fascist and totalitarian contexts all strongly contributed to nuancing the otherwise plastic, teleological perspectives on the ideological morphology of Croatian nationalism in the modern era, even beyond its perceptions as "useful" for the 1990s political moment and historicization of a homogenous nation-state.

Enduring Legacies and the Prevalence of Historiographies of Finitude

Intellectual history writing in Croatia from 1945 onwards displayed a persistent tendency to reflect upon questions of Croatian nationhood and statehood from a more or less social perspective. Furthermore, literature was rarely conceptualized as a separate unit of analysis and was either imagined as a part of social history, or as cultural history defined strictly against what was considered political history. The main concepts that came to be juxtaposed to Croatian nationhood and statehood towards the 1990s were the projects of Yugoslavism and state-socialism, with special attention paid to the role of the Serbian minority in Croatia and its conduciveness to the development of the modern Croatian national identity and the (nation-)state. Yugoslavism was increasingly portrayed as alien to Croatian intellectual history and the process of national integration, as well as a vehicle for the realization of Serbian national interests at the expense of Croatian intentions. After the 1990s war, however, the Serbian national minority in Croatia became the constitutive "other" of Croatian national identity, which was consequently strongly reflected in nationalist historiography and contemporary political discourse.[54] Croatian historiography attempted to follow certain trends and turns that were occurring in other national or regional historiographies around Europe throughout this period, but they were often heavily negotiated with Marxist political ideals and gradually nationalizing positivist historiographies. There were several notable exceptions which genuinely invested effort into comparative contextualizing and accounting for the latest developments on the international historiographical stage, especially with regard to social history.

Along with attempts to make use of Croatian and wider Yugoslav heritage by multiple imperial histories overlapping for the purpose of developing innovative perspectives, theories and methodologies, went the process of re-focusing on other levels of research (e.g., regional or micro-history), leaving aside the national account, or putting it into a comparative perspective. Though, due to the experience of the war and the realization of national independence, there was immense political pressure to rethink existing historiographical approaches and patterns and to provide a new, much more Croatian history for the state in the making, something that managed to seriously distort efforts

54 JOVIĆ, Dejan. *Rat i mit. Politika identiteta u suvremenoj Hrvatskoj*. Zagreb : Fraktura, 2017.

that were underway in the late socialist period and beyond. In a nutshell, writing the "national" history and thus the "national" intellectual history of those intellectual figures who claimed to be Croatian, became an imperative and any questioning of the new canon, even if it was completely progressive and aligned with the contemporary European and global historiographical trends, became problematic and was rejected in favour of positivistic, nation-building master narratives.

The most contemporary trends often build on such work, mainly by omitting the heritage of Marxist, socialist and communist thinking from Croatian intellectual history and hence, the national identity, simultaneously rehabilitating radical right wing or fascist thinkers fashioning them primarily as "victims of communist terror" or as intentionally "forgotten" by the Marxist positivist historiography.[55]

Moreover, the most recent example of decontextualization and new understandings of thinkers from multiple traditions of rightism can be found in a recently published book[56] by Stipe Kljaić from the Croatian Institute of History, which combines a series of biographies of, he argues, conservative political thinkers, spanning from Mihovil Pavlinović to Bogdan Radica. The author claims that the reading of the "true", namely conservative or counterrevolutionary, intellectual character of their writings can only be done in the present day, after the "silence" induced by alleged liberal-communist hegemony in historiography was lifted.

Nevertheless, as intellectual history gains momentum as an independent field of study internationally, Croatian state institutions are investing in relatively large-scale domestic and international research projects in the field.[57] Included are some less positive examples of such collaborative projects in which the wider East-Central European paradigms, such as cultural opposition and dissidentism,[58] are intentionally mistaken and applied to the Yugoslav case

55 KLJAIĆ 2022; TOMAS, Domagoj. *Ideologija, krivnja i odmazda. Vlaho Lovrić i (dis)kontinuiteti prve polovice 20. stoljeća*. Zagreb : Alfa, 2021.

56 KLJAIĆ, Stipe. *Povijest kontarevolucije. Hrvatska konzervativna misao od 1789. do 1989*. Zagreb : Naklada Pavičić, 2022; KLJAIĆ, Stipe. *Nikada više Jugoslavija. Intelektualci i hrvatsko nacionalno pitanje (1929–1945)*. Zagreb : Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2017.

57 Hrvatska znanstvena i filozofska baština: transferi i aproprijacije znanja od srednjeg vijeka do dvadesetog stoljeća u europskom kontekstu (IP-2016-06-6762), (Croatian scientific and philosophical heritage: transfers and appropriations of knowledge from the Middle Ages to the 20th century in the European context) led by Željko Dugac from the Department for history and philosophy of science at the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences (2017–2021); Moderne misleće žene: intelektualni razvoj žena u Hrvatskoj 20. stoljeća (IP-2018-01-3732) (Modern thinking women: intellectual development of women in 20th century Croatia) led by Andrea Feldman from the Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb.

58 This particularly refers to the way in which the Hrvatski institut za povijest (The Croatian Institute for History) participated in the international project COURAGE, Cultural Opposition: Understanding the Cultural Heritage of Dissent in the Former Socialist Countries, funded by Horizon 2020, the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2016–2019), which was notably problematized by Dubravka Ugrešić in her article, *An Archaeology of Resistance*, in *New York Review of Books,* 16 November, 2020, whereby she argued that one of the intellectual intentions behind the Croatian part of the project was to refashion certain problematic thinkers as dissidents and labeled it part of a campaign of historical revisionism and a lumping together of liberal and democratic, as well as Nazi-supporting enemies of the socialist Yugoslav regime; see: https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2020/11/16/an-archaeology-of-resistance/ (last viewed on 11 April 2022).

in such a way as to rehabilitate the ultranationalist intellectual figures and portray them as merely culturally dissident, without problematizing their ideological legacies. This tendency is especially evident in a recently opened question in Croatian intellectual historiography and memory politics from the present day, which is the totalitarian paradigm and its applicability to the Yugoslav case. The institutions of the European Union and Western European historiographies often insist on equating the totalitarian experiences of Nazism and Communism in their memory cultures, and post-Yugoslav historiography tends to count Yugoslav history as one of those.

As long as this continues, there will be legitimacy for the occurrences such as the state-led "Council for Dealing with Consequences of the Rule of Non-Democratic Regimes,"[59] which was established by the Croatian parliament in 2017 in an attempt to "finally come to terms with the past"—following the German example of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*—and close some interpretations and discussions once and for all. It could be argued that this attempt in itself displays totalitarian tendencies by establishing a "historical truth," firmly remaining in the Croatian tradition of the historiographies of finitude. The case of Mirjana Gross demonstrates how an attempt to provide a comprehensive intellectual account of a local intellectual stream of thought without serving the contemporary political agenda evoked equally unprofessional reactions, both in the state-socialist and nationalist historiographical environments, which then served as a basis for dehistoricized, decontextualized, selective and politically tendentious reading of local thinkers in the period of establishing of a new political order from the 1990s onwards.

Conclusion

Croatian intellectual history writing in the post-1945 period was markedly characterized by a duality between the historiographies of finitude and a self-reflexive, open-ended ones. The former relied on a teleological view of history, culminating either in Tito's partisans' revolution and the creation of a socialist, federal Yugoslav state, or in the independent Croatian statehood, depending on the period. On the other hand, the latter stream countered these tendencies by introducing constructivist, relational and comparative methodologies with a focus on similar themes and historical periods that often had to do with historicizing Croatian nationhood and statehood. Moreover, the historiographies of finitude were generally less receptive to external or internal theoretical and methodological developments and advances, remaining mostly on the positivist line throughout the period.

On the other hand, the historiography that was more self-reflexive predominantly engaged in appropriating trends originating from the Annales school to local context, and used concepts from political or literary theories to analyse crucial political ideas and ideologies that shaped Croatian nationalism and

59 Recommendations adopted by the council for dealing with the consequences of undemocratic regimes, https://vlada.gov.hr/recommendations-adopted-by-the-council-for-dealing-with-the-consequences-of-undemocratic-regimes/23539 (last viewed on 10 March 2022).

claims for statehood throughout the ages. Both in the state-socialist period and in the subsequent period, the historiographies of finitude can be said to have been less inclined to cooperate or engage in the polemics with their counterparts within the Yugoslav state or in the post-Yugoslav space, instead closing themselves into self-referential circles, which oftentimes resulted in a decontextualized and one-sided perspective on key topics.

The case of Mirjana Gross, who was arguably one of the most significant intellectual historians in Croatia and belonged to the self-reflexive historiographical tradition, demonstrates the sophisticated strategies of transgressing challenges posed by the historiographies of finitude through engaging in direct scholarly polemics with unfounded positivist arguments by showcasing the constructed, relational, mundane, comparative, *longue durée* and contingent aspects of one nationalism's development. Finally, during the state-socialist period, Mirjana Gross' work on the ideologies of rightism and Yugoslavism countered state-promoted interpretations simplified for the political legitimation of the state, as well as the Serbian nationalist current that was aiming at a gradual rewriting and replacing of the 19th century input of Croatian intellectuals to a Yugoslav political integration with the Serbian one. Furthermore, after the 1990s wars and the establishment of an independent Croatian state, her expertise was applied to the intellectual history of Europe and the Habsburg Monarchy in re-contextualizing the history of original rightism and its subsequent incarnation in the original ideological and intellectual context, arguing for understanding it as a marginal radical movement until the turn of century, which was in dialogue with the much more influential program of South Slavic cultural and political integration that the 1990s historiography was increasingly attempting to remove from the intellectual history of the period.

Acknowledgements

I would like to sincerely thank Barbora Buzássyová, Institute of History, Slovak Academy of Sciences, for her suggestions and comments during the initial phase of the paper, my supervisor, Balázs Trencsényi, who prompted me to publish this article and the two anonymous reviewers whose comments greatly helped enrich this article's focus and argument.

FORUM HISTORIAE Journal and Portal for History and Related Disciplines
ISSN 1337-6861

Forum Historiae, 2022, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 105–122

www.forumhistoriae.sk

The Nationalist Perspective within Slovak Communist Intellectual Thinking (1921–1968)

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Keywords
Communism, nationalism, Czech–Slovak relations, intellectuals, federalization, Ľubomír Lipták

DOI
10.31577/forhist.2022.16.1.7

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Cite
HUDEK, Adam. The Nationalist Perspective within Slovak Communist Intellectual Thinking (1921–1968). In *Forum Historiae*, 2022, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 105–122, doi: 10.31577/forhist.2022.16.1.7

Abstract

HUDEK, Adam. The Nationalist Perspective within Slovak Communist Intellectual Thinking (1921–1968).

This study deals with the idea of nationalism in the thinking of Slovak communist intellectuals from the early 1920s until the end of the 1960s. The variety of roles that national communism took during these decades are detailed, including an "intellectual exercise" in the 1930s, an ideological deviation in the 1950s, a program of national emancipation in 1960s and finally, the narrative of legitimizing the normalization orthodoxy after the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion into Czechoslovakia. The aim of this paper is to explore the variety of ways Slovak communist intellectuals connected the Marxist-Leninist worldview with their own nationalist discourse in different periods, describing how encountered ideological dilemmas were solved and then integrated into the program of Slovak national communism. The opening pages discuss the first generation of Slovak Marxist intellectuals in the interwar period, who defined the essential points of the Slovak national communist program. Next, following the example of historian Ľubomír Lipták, the second part documents the "intellectual de-Stalinization" of the 1960s, which included profound criticism of the Slovak position in the republic. The final piece of this study analyzes the culmination of discussions regarding Czech-Slovak relations in 1968 and 1969.

Throughout the last decade, questions of "socialist patriotism" and "national communism" maintained a constant presence in any analysis of the socialist states of Central Eastern Europe (CEE). Questioning traditional interpretations of communism as a foreign, forcefully implemented "anti-national revolution" reshaped discussions on the historical development of the Soviet bloc. Current research reveals that communist party ideologists and Marxist intellectuals did not understand nationalist discourse solely as an instrument of communist legitimization but rather, for a significant part of the communist intellectual elite, nationalism was an essential part of their ideological self-identification. Communism was viewed not as a program of one political group, but as an ideology of the whole nation. Paraphrasing a statement from Bradley F. Abrams, the struggle for the socialist project was, to a great extent, a "struggle for the soul of the nation."[1]

This study is part of a project funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Widening Fellowship No. 101038067. It was researched in the scope of the Agency for the Support of Research and Development project no. APVV-20-0526 "Political socialization in the territory of Slovakia during the years 1848–1993," carried out at the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

1 ABRAMS, Bradley F. *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation. Czech Culture and the Rise of Communism*. Lanham : Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005.

Since the end of the Second World War at the very latest, communist parties in CEE have presented themselves as heirs of national traditions and guardians of national interests. Resonating ideas of "national unity," "national rebirth" and "social and national revolution" were based on a mix of socialist and pre-communist nationalist traditions. However, the latter point had to be reinterpreted in a way that supported communist mobilization of the population.

In scholarly works, the phrase "national communism" is employed to describe a process of "positive reevaluation of the patriotic legacy" as well as "the use of the concept of national sovereignty as a legitimizing device."[2] In general, "national communism" can be understood as applying universal Marxist–Leninist ideology to individual national political, economic, social and cultural conditions. However, since late 1970, nationalist principles tended to overshadow the communist utopia in most CEE communist dictatorships, and since the 1980s, the national communists were inclined to speak more about national issues and less about Marxism–Leninism.[3] In the end, connecting national traditions with "proletarian internationalism" was contradictory and generally unsuccessful. The problem of nationalism and its relationship to the socialist project remained one of the most obvious dilemmas of the communist ideologists, especially Marxist intellectuals.

The dispute between modern nationalism and communist ideology can be clearly seen in the works of Marx and Engels. As Walter A. Kemp noted, "the classics" left their followers with many unanswered—or very ambiguously answered—questions.[4] Even Lenin's interpretation of Marxism did not address such issues. He approached nationalism very pragmatically and viewed it exclusively in terms of achieving the goals of the Bolsheviks. Communist International (Comintern) founded in 1919, utilized and supported ethnic cleavages and conflicts to destabilize European "bourgeois" states, and the Leninist recognition of the right of all nations to self-determination until secession needed to be perceived accordingly. The right to national freedom was only one step toward eliminating national conflicts, which Lenin saw as an obstacle on the way to proletarian internationalism.[5] However, after the Russian Civil War, it became clear that with the victory of Bolshevism, the concept of the "nation" would not go away, even later becoming self-evident in the conditions of building communism in one state.[6]

2 TRENCSÉNYI, Balázs et al. *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe. Negotiating Modernity in the 'Short Twentieth Century' and Beyond. Part II: 1968–2018*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 13.
3 KOLLÁŘ, Pavel. *Soudruzi a jejich svět. Sociálně myšlenková tvářnost komunismu*. Praha : NLN, 2019, pp. 104–107.
4 KEMP, Walter A. *Nationalism and Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. A Basic Contradiction?* London : Macmillan Press, 1999, p. 31.
5 KEMP 1999, pp. 47–48.
6 KEMP 1999, p. 54.

Discussions on nation-building concepts could not be avoided in a multi-ethnic Central Europe full of national conflicts.[7] There was no possibility for communists of CEE to ignore this topic, and most did not even try. For communist intellectuals in particular, nationalist discourse sooner or later became a crucial part of their narrative. In Czechoslovakia, the relationship between Marxism and the national question came to the fore immediately after 1918, remaining an integral part of the ideological development of—not only—Slovak communists since the establishment of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPC) in 1921.

The founding Congress of the Slovak Communist Party that took place in January 1921, immediately and without any reservations approved the conditions for admission to the Comintern, which required the existence of only one centralized, hierarchical Communist party per state and explicitly rejected any other separate ethnic groups. However, this rule resulted in perpetual tension as, despite strict directives from Moscow, leading Slovak communists again and again sought an arrangement that would allow them to address "specific problems of Slovak development" with a certain independence from the center in Prague.

This study deals primarily with nationalism in the thinking of Slovak communist intellectuals, covering the period from the early 1920s to the Prague Spring in 1968, and starting with the first generation of Slovak Marxist intellectuals in the interwar period. Despite their initial critique of Slovak nationalism in the 1930s, the so-called Davists[8] defined the essential points of the Slovak national communism program for the following decades, which eventually led to an accusation of "bourgeois nationalism" and subsequent silencing in the early 1950s. Based on historian Ľubomír Lipták, the second part of this study documents the "intellectual de-Stalinization" process of the 1960s, which led to renewed interest in the problem of Czech-Slovak relations. The final part analyzes the culmination of this process during the liberalization era of the Prague Spring (1968). The main aim is to explore how Slovak communist intellectuals in various periods connected the Marxist-Leninist worldview with their nationalist discourse; how they solved the ideological dilemmas encountered and integrated them into the ever-evolving program of Slovak national communism.

7 KOPEČEK, Michal. Historical studies of nation-building and the concept of socialist patriotism in East Central Europe 1956–1970. In KOLÁŘ, Pavel – ŘEZNÍK, Miloš (eds.) *Historische Nationsforschung im geteilten Europa 1945–1989*. Köln : SH-Verlag, 2012, p. 123.

8 A group of authors named after the journal *DAV*, which was stablished as a platform of the left-wing, Marxist literary avant-garde. Its founders and main contributors were often called "Davists," even among themselves. The Slovak word "Dav" means "crowd" and refers to the worker masses and collectivism of the radical left. See NOVOMESKÝ, Ladislav. Slovensko – DAV – Komunizmus. In ROZENBAUM, Karol. *Splátka veľkého dlhu. Publicistika 1963–1970*. *I. zväzok*. Bratislava : Nadácia Vladimíra Clementisa, 1992, pp. 282–316; ROSENBAUM, Karol (ed.) *DAV. Spomienky a štúdie*. Bratislava : Vydavateľstvo SAV, 1965; DRUG, Štefan. *DAV a davisti*. Bratislava : Obzor, 1965.

Intellectuals of the Interwar Slovak Communist Movement

The history of the communist movement in Czechoslovakia suggests that communists could never complain about the lack of sympathy from intellectuals. Support for Marxism in this milieu was already considerable during the interwar republic, significantly more so in the Czech part, though in post-war Czechoslovakia, the phenomenon grew to mass proportions. However, initial intellectual support for the communist movement in the Slovak territory was far from straightforward. There were several reasons for this.

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, most Slovak intellectuals still associated the socialist movement with the lowest strata of society. It was thought of as imported from the German, Hungarian, Jewish or Czech environment, and seen as contrary to the alleged Slovak national traditions that most Slovak intellectuals sought to protect. As historian Juraj Benko explains, the Slovak intelligentsia "was politically exhausted by the national question" and saw in the workers' movement only "mass potential for supporting the national movement."[9]

Before the First World War, no one from the small group of Slovak intellectual and political elite anticipated any possibility of the Marxist left entering the struggle for the Slovak "village and factory." Leaders of the Slovak labor movement reacted critically to such disinterest,[10] and the result was bitterness and distrust towards intellectuals, which made its way into the Slovak communist movement.[11] Unlike the situation in neighboring Hungary, Austria, Germany, or even to a lesser extent, the Czech lands where intellectuals played an essential role in the communist movement, no relevant intellectual in Slovakia joined the radical left in the turbulent times after the end of the First World War.[12]

There was some anticipation by the Slovak radical left that after resolving the Slovak national issue in the form of the Czechoslovak Republic, the interest of intellectuals will focus on solving Slovakia's social and economic problems. On the contrary, a brief episode in the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919 had a significantly negative impact on the image of the communist movement in Slovakia. The invasion of Hungarian communists into eastern Slovakia enabled a connection between the "Bolshevik threat" and Hungarian irredentism. In this way, Soviet-style Bolshevism threatened simultaneously the traditional social and economic order and the newly acquired national freedom of Slovaks. From the Marxist point of view, the events of 1919 were considered a wasted opportunity to start a socialist revolution, an opinion that appeared during the 1920s and in the post-war period, became a permanent

9 BENKO, Juraj. Miesto a funkcia inteligencie v slovenskom komunistickom hnutí v medzivojnovom období. In MICHÁLEK, Slavomír et al. *Gustáv Husák: moc politiky – politik moci*. Bratislava : Veda/Historický ústav SAV, 2013, p. 58.

10 RUTTKAY, Fraňo. Storočnica prvého slovenského robotníckeho časopisu. In *Otázky žurnalistiky*, 1997, no. 3, pp. 233–240.

11 CONNELLY, John. *Zotročená univerzita*. Praha : Karolinum, 2008, p. 425.

12 CHORVÁTH, Michal. Čo je to Dav? In CHORVÁTH, Michal. *Z prielomu. Štúdie, články, recenzie.* Bratislava : Slovenský spisovateľ, 1970, pp. 256–266.

part of the Slovak Marxist national story. The narrative also included a judgement about the failure of the Slovak intelligentsia, which did not support "progressive development."

In a retrospective, the foremost member of the first generation of Slovak communist intellectuals, poet Ladislav Novomeský, wrote that "fear about nationality made the older intelligentsia shut away from new and different ideas unregistered in the national vocabulary."[13] According to Novomeský, the central role of "nationality" in the minds of the old and new generations of the Slovak intelligentsia caused a rejection of communist ideas. As the journal DAV wrote in the editorial of its first issue, "Slovak intelligentsia is like a docile maiden, entering the service of the capital."[14] This belief shaped the intellectual development of the first generation of Slovak Marxist intellectuals in the 1920s, feeling that if the Slovak national tradition moved Slovaks towards direct conflict with the secular, progressive left ideas, it must be abandoned as soon as possible.

Representatives of the DAV group (Davists) formed in 1924, considered themselves the only part of the Slovak intelligentsia that successfully resisted the encumbering pressure of Slovak national traditions. They believed it was because some of them were brought up in the Hungarian environment (Ladislav Szántó, Ladislav Novomeský) with a solid revolutionary tradition. The "internationalist" contribution of Jewish Davists (Eduard Klinger) was also viewed positively. The Czech element, in turn, mediated contacts with the most influential left-wing intellectuals (Zdeněk Nejedlý, Vítězslav Nezval, František Xaver Šalda, Jaroslav Seifert, Stanislav Kostka Neumann) and Prague based communist student organizations (Proletkult and Kostufra).[15]

Davists found only one useful current in Slovak politics—the Czechoslovakists. Czechoslovakism, or the idea of the Czechoslovak nation, was a belief that had existed in various forms since the early 19th century. During the First World War, it was used as the crucial legitimizing argument for the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic. After its establishment in 1918, the Czechoslovakist idea that Czechs and Slovaks are two branches of one nation became the official state doctrine, though during the second half of the 1920s this view became strongly contested in Slovakia, where it was seen as a tool for Czech dominance in the common state. As a result, an emancipating credo stressing that Slovaks are an independent nation with a right to self-determination and at the least, political autonomy, gained popularity among Slovak voters.[16] The problem of Czechoslovakism was very much present also among the Czech and Slovak communists.

13 NOVOMESKÝ, Ladislav. O DAVe. In ROZENBAUM, Karol. *Splátka veľkého dlhu. Publicistika 1963–1970. I. zväzok*. Bratislava : Nadácia Vladimíra Clementisa, 1992, p. 91.
14 DAV. In *DAV*, 1924, vol. 1, no. 1, without page number.
15 CHORVÁTH 1970, p. 261.
16 See HUDEK, Adam – KOPEČEK, Michal – MERVART, Jan. *Czechoslovakism*. Abingdon, New York : Routledge, 2022.

However in the early 1920s, leading Slovak communist intellectual Vladimír Clementis continued to argue that the right solution to the Czechoslovak question was to establish the closest possible connection of Slovaks with the more advanced Czech environment,[17] aiming to eliminate an alleged Slovak cultural and intellectual backwardness. Despite statements about genuine internationalism coming from the Marxist–Leninist doctrine, the Davists presented themselves as convinced Czechoslovak patriots. In other words, the young Davist generation was moving towards "national communism" from the beginning, though until the mid-1930s, it was Czechoslovak national communism. The Slovak version was created elsewhere and met with the disapproval of the Davists.

In the mid-1920s, Július Verčík, leading Slovak communist personality, became the most vocal proponent of Slovak national communism. In many aspects, Verčík was a typical representative of the first generation of the Slovak Marxist left; young, he was 31 in 1925, a former social democratic trade unionist, Marxist autodidact radical and politically inexperienced. In 1921, he stated openly that Slovak communists firmly supported the unified Czechoslovak Republic and rejected any form of "autonomist separation."[18] His support of Czechoslovakia was based on the hope that it could be transformed into a communist country.[19] However, Verčík made it clear that if the Slovak communists were to lose that hope, their opinion would change on the "Slovak question" in Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakia was far from becoming a communist state in the mid-1920s and Verčík lost his patience. In Slovakia, communists were dwarfed by their archenemy; the autonomist, clerical-populist Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (Ľudáks).[20]

Verčík came to the conclusion that if the Communists were to be successful in Slovakia, they must defeat the Ľudáks on the issue of Czech–Slovak relations. He argued that the communists needed a straightforward, feasible national program, stating that the national question is as important as the social one and that solving social problems does not mean automatically solving national issues. Thus, the Communist Party needs both an attractive social and national program. Verčík declared that autonomism is a specific manifestation of the Slovak working-class struggle against the Czech bourgeoisie and

17 CLEMETIS, Vladimír. Kapitoly o nás. In *Mladé Slovensko*, 1923, vol. 5, no. 3, p. 68.

18 ŠUCHOVÁ, Xénia. "Heslo autonómie alebo právo na odtrhnutie?" (Komunistické ponímanie národnostnej a "slovenskej" otázky do polovice 20. rokov). In ŠUCHOVÁ, Xénia (ed.) *Ľudáci a komunisti: Súperi? Spojenci? Protivníci?* Prešov : UNIVERSUM, 2006, p. 36.

19 ŠUCHOVÁ 2006, p. 36.

20 Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, colloquially called the Ľudaks, was the strongest party in interwar Slovakia, gaining about a third of the votes. It formed at the beginning of the twentieth century as a Catholic wing of the Slovak national and political movement under the leadership of charismatic Catholic priest Andrej Hlinka. As a clerical and ethno-populist party, the Ľudaks strongly opposed the state idea of the Czechoslovak nation as well as the concept of a unitary, centralized state. The party demanded recognition of Slovak national particularity and the associated right to self-government in the form of political autonomy. During the 1930s, the party gradually moved to an anti-democratic, authoritarian platform. See LORMAN, Thomas. *The Making of the Slovak People's Party: Religion, Nationalism and the Culture War in Early 20th-Century Europe*. London : Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019.

its Slovak allies.[21] It was only because of mistakes by the CPC that the Ľudáks were able to misuse this authentic movement.[22]

His arguments caused strong disagreement among the Davists. In an article *K národnostnej otázke* (On the National Question),[23] Clementis argued that the solution to the Slovak question has no national but only a social dimension, which must be the only focus of the communists. According to Clementis, creating a national program means accepting the demands of the Slovak bourgeoisie. Moreover, Slovak political autonomy would only help the Hungarian irredenta as Slovakia is not sufficiently prepared for greater independence, and the Slovak people do not even demand autonomy.[24] However, there was one specific manifestation of nationalism among the Davists that was not mentioned by Verčík; a warning against the excessive influence of communist functionaries of Hungarian origin who allegedly supported Hungarian chauvinism.[25] A certain degree of anti-Hungarian resentment remained typical for several Davists, and also became a trait of Slovak national communism.

In the 1920s, the foremost figures of the Davist group considered Czechoslovakism, or at least the close connection between Czechs and Slovaks, to be a useful concept in serving the goals of the communist movement. In the Davist view, Slovak autonomy would only complicate the influence of the progressive Czech cultural environment in Slovakia. For them, the impact of Prague's left-wing circles, which fundamentally shaped their worldview, was irreplaceable. Until the late 1920s, the sporadically issued journal DAV and its circle of editors, who also worked for other communist periodicals, barely mentioned the varied views on the Slovak question within the communist movement.

The continuous existence of the Czechoslovak state remained an indisputable axiom of the Slovak Marxist intellectuals' political activities. However, from the Great Depression in 1930, their understanding of Czechoslovakism, the Czechoslovak nation and the problem of Czech-Slovak relations in general gradually began to change. The desperate economic situation in Slovakia led the Davists to the conclusion that Slovakia needed a different approach regarding its problems than the Czech lands; therefore, in their view, Slovakia had had to acquire some form of autonomy. In the 1930s, the topic of Czech–Slovak relations, the rejection of Czech hegemony and Prague centralism became fundamental issues for the entire Slovak political and intellectual spectrum. Davists, and especially the younger generation of radical left-wing intelligence around Gustáv Husák, vehemently joined the discussions. Ideological

21 KRAMER, Juraj – MLYNÁRIK, Ján. Revolučné hnutie a národnostná otázka na Slovensku v 20. rokoch. In *Historický časopis*, 1965, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 423–443.

22 PLEVZA, Viliam. *KSČ a revolučné hnutie na Slovensku 1929–1938*. Bratislava : Vydavateľstvo SAV, 1965, p. 20.

23 CLEMENTIS, Vladimír. K národnej otázke. In *DAV*, 1924, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 2–4.

24 Pamflet. Zápas o davy na Slovensku. In *DAV*, 1924, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 41–49.

25 ROZNER, Ján. Dav a problematika jeho doby. In ROSENBAUM, Karol (ed.) *DAV. Spomienky a štúdie.* Bratislava : Vydavateľstvo SAV, 1965, p. 49; BENKO, Juraj. The Hungarian communist exiles and their activities in the years 1919–1921. In *Historický časopis*, 2016, vol. 64, no. 5, pp. 873–897.

changes in the Soviet Union also played a significant role as Stalin's turn to "national Bolshevism"[26] in the early 1930s was noticed by the Slovak communist intellectuals. This turn resulted in a departure from materialist proletarian internationalism and a focus on state-oriented patriotic ideology and ethnocentric traditions in order to support state-building and the legitimization of Party leadership.[27]

Influenced by the new Soviet cultural policy, Davists decided to reconsider their radically pessimistic view of the "heritage of the past" and national traditions.[28] It meant that the ideas of the Slovak national emancipation and Marxism–Leninism could be complementary, and the idea of national emancipation could also be part of the Slovak communist movement. The speed and radicalness of this process ultimately manifested at the 1932 Congress of Young Slovak Intelligentsia in Trenčianske Teplice. Here, Clementis openly spoke in favor of cooperation with young Ľudáks as long as it was directed "against exploitation and social as well as national oppression caused by the Czech–German bourgeoisie in Slovakia."[29] Clementis did not question the idea that Slovaks are an independent nation with the right to self-determination, and thus, also autonomous status in Czechoslovakia.

At the Congress, Clementis suggested a nationwide program that would put national and social exploitation on the same level. He was not seeking a fight against the weak domestic opposition, but primarily the ruling Czech–German bourgeoisie, offering cooperation on development of the "national culture" to his ideological enemies.[30] His understanding of this phrase is hard to define. Most likely, it was a general appeal for collaboration on further modernization of Slovakia, which was not limited only to the sphere of culture. What is probably more important, all this happened during the most sectarian period in the development of the Communist Party, when an uncompromising struggle was announced against the Czech bourgeoisie's imperialism and the chauvinism of the Ľudáks.[31]

The fact that CPC leadership did not criticize the Slovak communist intellectuals may seem strange, but it had its logic. Davists did precisely what the Party expected from them—their activities resonated in the intellectual milieu and offered a more attractive, less sectarian face of the communist movement. They also effectively linked the national issue with the communist protest against Czechoslovakia's current social and economic situation. In addition, although Clementis' national program was radical at first glance, contrary to

26 BRANDENBERGER, D. L. – DUBROVSKY, A. M. "The People Need a Tsar": The Emergence of National Bolshevism as Stalinist Ideology, 1931–1941. In *Europe-Asia Studies*, 1998, vol. 50, no. 5, pp. 873–892.
27 BRANDENBERGER – DUBROVSKY 1998, pp. 873–874.
28 DRUG 1965, p. 61.
29 CLEMENTIS, Vladimír. Trenčianskoteplické rozcestie: K socializmu či k fašizmu. In *DAV*, 1932, vol. 5, no. 6, p. 76.
30 CLEMENTIS 1932.
31 SOMMER, Vítězslav. Revoluce nebo spolupráce? KSČ a otázka sjednocení levice před VII. kongresem Kominterny. In KÁRNÍK, Zdeněk – KOCIAN, Jiří – PAŽOUT, Jaroslav – RÁKOSNÍK, Jakub (eds.) *Bolševismus, komunismus a radikální socialismus v Československu. Zv. VI*. Praha : Dokořán, 2011, p. 25.

Verčík's proposals, it did not include any plan for implementation. Clementis stayed loyal to the traditional Marxist–Leninist axiom that the question of nationality can and will be resolved only after the definitive victory of the proletariat, a position that degraded the Davist national program to a mere ephemeral manifesto.

The destruction of Czechoslovakia, the establishment of the Slovak state in March 1939 and subsequent start of the Second World War led to a radical new approach from the Slovak communist movement on the issue of Czech–Slovak relations. Firstly, the Communist Party of Slovakia (CPS) was established by order of the Comintern. In August 1939, top members of the illegal leadership of the CPS refused to use the slogan, "For a new Czechoslovakia!,"[32] and introduced the Soviet Slovakia program. However, after the German invasion of the USSR in 1941, Stalin ordered the Czech and Slovak communists[33] to return to restoring Czechoslovak statehood and start collaboration with non-communist elements in the anti-fascist resistance.

Due to prior massive arrests of high ranked communists in Slovakia, this mission fell on improbable candidates: communist intellectuals Ladislav Novomeský and Gustáv Husák. Led by the CPC emissary from Moscow, Karol Šmidke, their ascent to the illegal Party leadership provided an unexpected opportunity to infuse their federalist ideas into not only the CPS program, but also the unified Slovak resistance. The program of unified resistance from December 1943 was clear in this regard, "We desire that the Slovak nation and the Czech nation, as the closest related Slavic peoples, form their further fates in a new Czechoslovakia, a common state of Slovaks and Czechs, and on the basis of the equal peers principle."[34] The agenda of Slovak national communism, formulated into a political program, was built strictly on the demand for federal organization of a renewed Czechoslovakia.[35] The federalisation of Czechoslovakia thus became one of the main imperatives of the anti-fascist insurrection, later named the Slovak National Uprising (SNU), which broke out at the end of August 1944.

Slovak communist intellectuals generally perceived the SNU as the beginning of a new era, when the communist program became the program of the entire Slovak nation. Direct participation in the Uprising, the status of heroes, acknowledgment from the Party leadership and non-communist politicians gave them confidence that they would play a major role in building a new (Czecho) Slovakia. In 1946, L. Novomeský elaborated on this vision in a lecture entitled *Komunizmus v slovenskej národnej idei* (*Communism in the Slovak National Idea*), in which he defined the Slovak communists as "an assembly of the best,

32 ŠUCHOVÁ, Xénia. *Idea československého štátu na Slovensku 1918–1939*. Bratislava : Prodama, 2011, p. 270.

33 The CPC leadership was exiled in Moscow from 1939.

34 The Christmas Agreement is available online. See https://sk.wikisource.org/wiki/Vianočná_dohoda (last viewed on 13 March 2022).

35 BENKO, Juraj – HUDEK, Adam. Slovak communists and the ideology of Czechoslovakism. In HUDEK – KOPEČEK – MERVART 2022, pp. 313–342.

most self-sacrificing and to Slovak affairs, most devoted sons of this nation."[36] For him, the communist program was the essence of decades-long Slovak emancipatory efforts: "In this sense, the ideology of Slovak communism is not an ideology of one party, but an ideology of the Slovak nation."[37] Novomeský promised that Slovak communists would consistently fight against the Czech hegemonic demands. "It is indisputable that our cultural venture will be Slovak in all respects. We will no longer have to argue with anyone about the national character of cultural life in Slovakia."[38]

However, Novomeský, Husák and their supporters did not realize that the leadership of the Czechoslovak Communist Party did not support these visions for resolving Czech–Slovak relations. In the highest echelons of the CPC, it was known that Stalin did not consider the Soviet type of federalization to be a suitable solution for Central Europe.[39] Slovak national communists did not realize that in postwar Czechoslovakia, the existence of the CPS as an independent actor lost its justification. It was not disbanded but downgraded to a mere territorial organization fully under the control of the Central Committee of the Central Committee of CPC (CC CPC). This means it could not function as a powerbase for the Slovak national communists.

Instead of federalization, removing Slovakia's economic and social backwardness[40] became the preferred course of CPC leadership. Paradoxically, in this, the communist official policy was very similar to the DAV program from the mid-twenties, long forgotten by its original creators. The Tito–Stalin Split in mid-1948 put "federalists" in the CPS into a dangerous situation. Subsequently, in the early 1950s, the Stalinist concept of an escalating class struggle, which included a campaign against "bourgeois nationalists" among the Slovak communists, silenced an entire generation of communist intellectuals who had been formed in the inter-war period.[41] The following decade in Czechoslovakia was dominated by state ideology celebrating the fraternal unity of Czech and Slovak working classes.

36 NOVOMESKÝ, Ladislav. *Komunizmus v slovenskej národnej idei*. Bratislava : Sekretariát ÚV KSS, 1946, p. 19.
37 NOVOMESKÝ 1946, p. 18.
38 NOVOMESKÝ, Ladislav. Na okraj našej kultúrnej politiky (article in the journal *Nové slovo*, 15 June 1945). In PAVLÍK, Ondrej (ed.) *Slovenská kultúra a osveta na prahu socializmu*. Bratislava : Obzor, 1979, p. 26.
39 FARALDO, Jose M. Die Hüterin der europäischen Zivilisation Kommunistische Europa-Konzeptionen am Vorabend des Kalten Krieges (1944–1948). In FARALDO, Jose M. – GULINSKA-JURGIEL, Paulina – DOMNITZ, Christian (eds.) *Europa in Ostblock. Vorstellungen und Diskurse (1945–1991)*. Köln; Weimar; Wien : Bohlau, 2008, pp. 97–98.
40 ŠIROKÝ, Viliam. Pomer Čechov a Slovákov v novej Československej republike. Lecture in Slovakian house in Prague, 8 October 1945. In ŠIROKÝ, Viliam. *Za* šťastné *Slovensko* v *socialistickom* Československu. Bratislava : Pravda, 1952, p. 101.
41 See KINČOK, Branislav. Takzvaný buržoázny nacionalizmus a vnútrostranícky boj v KSS 1948–1951. In KALOUS, Jan – KOCIAN, Jiří (eds.) Český *a slovenský komunizmus (1921–2011)*. Praha : ÚSD AV ČR/ ÚSTR, 2012, pp. 106–116; DOSKOČIL, Zdeněk. *V* žaláři *a vyhnanství. Ladislav Novomestský v* éře *stalinismu a poststalinismu*. Praha : NLN, 2020.

The Communist Intellectual of the New Type

The new political reality required a new type of intelligentsia. After 1948, the Communist Party grew suspicious of independent thinkers, even if they were Party members. It was no longer necessary to create and cultivate any discourse for the movement, to stimulate heated debates or attract politically indifferent people. After seizing power, the Communist Party was more interested in "soldiers" obediently performing tasks decided by Party ideologists,[42] and as such, the Party decided to create a new intelligentsia better suited for the tasks at hand. On IX Congress of the CPC in May 1949, Party leader Klement Gottwald introduced the general line of building socialism in Czechoslovakia. He drew attention to the necessity to educate a new intelligence which was class conscious, ideologically connected with the working people and who were brought up in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism and dialectical as well as historical materialism.[43]

Young Slovak student Ľubomír Lipták became an enthusiastic supporter of the project. He had just turned eighteen at the time of the communist takeover in 1948 and was thus a member of the first generation of students who were no longer exposed to the "ideological heritage of the past" during their university studies. As he wrote in the late 1960s, he belonged to a generation that, considering the prevalent spirit in society at the time, had a very intense feeling for laying the foundations of something completely new; the self-confidence of pioneers, the zeal of missionaries and the blind faith of sectarians. Marx's claim that it is not the job of intellectuals to explain the world but to change it was extremely appealing to many young, ambitious students,[44] especially when the communist regime provided some of them the means to make such changes.

Lipták did not come from an ideal class background, but he was enchanted with the new reality after 1948. Choosing the University of Political and Economic Sciences (UPES), a Communist Party college, he studied journalism and economics. Established in the second half of 1949, its curriculum and staff were directly controlled by the Department of Culture and Propaganda at the Central Committee of the Communist Party.[45] According to Lipták's memoir, "with only a few exceptions, the chairs of the University professed a vulgarized substrate of the new faith."[46]

After a wave of arrests and subsequent political trials in the early 1950s, Party officials openly expressed their trust in the young generation who had been indoctrinated by the communist school system. The two most prominent rep-

42 KOPEČEK, Michal. *Hledání ztraceného smyslu revoluce*. Praha : Argo, 2009, p. 65.
43 Spoločná česko-slovenská parlamentná knižnica, NR ČSR – stenoprotokoly, schôdza 15. 6. 1949, http://www.snemovna.cz/eknih/1948ns/stenprot/030schuz/s030002.htm (last viewed 10. 2. 2013).
44 RUPNIK, Jacques. Intelektuálové a moc v Československu. In *Soudobé dějiny*, 1993–1994, vol. 1, no. 4–5, p. 542.
45 DEVÁTÁ, Markéta.Vysoká škola politických a hospodářských věd jako nástroj indoktrinace marxisticko-leninského vědeckého světového názoru. In JIROUŠEK, Bohumil (ed.) *Proměny diskursu* české *marxistické historiografie*. České Budějovice : Jihočeská univerzita, 2008, p. 193.
46 LIPTÁK, Ľubomír: *Storočie dlhšie ako 100 rokov*. Bratislava : Kalligram 2012, p. 41.

resentatives of Slovak Marxist historiography from the 1950s and 1960s came from the UPES, Ľubomír Holotík and Ľubomír Lipták. They were colleagues at the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS) for almost 20 years. At the time of their admission to the Institute, both were considered promising scholars. It was also no coincidence that the leadership of the Slovak Academy and the relevant party bodies turned their attention to Prague graduates in the search for young scholars as there remained an assumption that during studies in the capital, they did not come into contact with Slovak bourgeois nationalism or the ideas of "Slovak separatism." Working or studying at a school directly managed by the CC CPC was seen as a guarantee of ideological purity.[47]

Initially, their work was significant in shaping the Stalinist construction of the national narrative, though ultimately, the men played quite opposing roles in Slovak historiography. While Ľudovít Holotík, a former assistant at UPES, became the leading creator of a Stalinist conception of the Slovak modern history in the 1950s, his seven years younger student, Ľubomír Lipták, became one of its foremost critics in the 1960s.

The admission process at the Academy was very thorough. The institute, the SAS presidium, and the communist party apparatus assessed the prospects of future employees. However, the inspection did not always end with an acceptance. In 1952, party authorities emphasized to scientific institutions that young assistants and aspirants "cannot be burdened with bourgeois prejudices. They must be constantly monitored through departments, the party and trade unions, and those deemed unfit have to be dismissed."[48]

Communist ideologists stated clearly that historical science is useful only if it provides material for the current political practice, emphasizing to historians, "Historical questions must be asked and answered from a Party point of view, according to the goals of the Party."[49] In the early 1950s, the Party prescribed the following task to Slovak historiography: A theoretical elaboration of the fraternal coexistence of Czechs and Slovaks with special attention paid to the struggle against hostile ideologies—bourgeois nationalism and Ľudák ideology, which represented both clericalism and separatism.[50]

Similarly to all his colleagues at the Institute, Lipták accepted Party directives without question, stating later that the scientific process of writing history was replaced by several formulas of the Stalinist conception of historical development. Especially in the Slovak environment, Stalinism easily connected with some pre-existing ideas regarding Slovak history. As Lipták noted: "In Slovak

47 Although in the early 1950s, there were also ideological purges at the UPES, though, not connected to the bourgeois nationalism.

48 Archív Univerzity Komenského, fond (f.) Zápisnice zo zasadnutia Rady UK 1951–1952, II. riadne zasadnutie Rady Slovenskej Univerzity.

49 SIPOS, Peter. Hungarian Historical Scholarship and Marxism-Leninism. In GLATZ, Ferenc (ed.) *The Soviet System and Historiography 1917 – 1989*. Budapešť : Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1995, p. 97.

50 Slovenský národný archív, f. Predsedníctvo ÚV KSS, box (b.) 910, Perspektívny plán rozvoja vedeckých pracovísk SAV v rokoch 1956 – 1960.

conditions, the Stalinist historical concept, which had many nationalistic versions, in its distinct and absolutist class nature, had a magical appeal."[51] The main reason was its strong plebeian character. In the Slovak case, without traditions of independent statehood and until 1918, with foreign ruling classes, only "ordinary working people" were considered the "permanent subjects of Slovak history." In Lipták's view "if our [Slovak] history without the [own] state, the rulers, the nobility used to feel like something deficient, exceptional, in this new conception, it became 'normal' or even surprisingly, exemplary."[52]

Careful and slow de-Stalinization in Czechoslovakia initially had little effect on Slovak historians' work and efforts to change the plebeian conception of the national story were unnoticeable among the historical community. However, some changes did occur. In the early 1960s, Lipták emphasized that the immediate contributions to socialist (re)education and the ideological struggles of the Party are not the only tasks of a historian's work. In the future, historians should determine scholarly objectives that will not be directly linked to the demands of "current political needs."[53]

The demand for de-ideologization of the humanities was a typical feature of intellectual development in the 1960s. The intellectual should be no longer an obedient soldier but a strictly analytical Marxist scientist. In the case of Lipták, there was a clear transformation by the Party-serving historian into a critically thinking communist intellectual. On the other hand, the leaders and representatives of the Communist Party began to realize that in their efforts to raise their own "philosophical cadres," they unknowingly created qualified critics.[54]

Lipták was well aware of the paradoxes of the Czechoslovak liberalization:

> One of the specifics of Stalinism…is that it clears the ground of other alternatives and their bearers so thoroughly that there is actually no other chance to overcome it, only gradual development, beginning first with the struggle of Stalinists among themselves, a battle clique which often, for tactical reasons alone, creates a freer space used then for formulating other ideas about socialist development of society and their gradual transformation into an effective political force.[55]

A more open discussion on the "Slovak question" was made possible precisely by such struggles between the cliques of party officials. Without the benevolence of certain members of the CC CPC who pursued their own goals, Slovak intellectuals would not be able to express themselves as openly on the issue of Czech-Slovak relations as they did in the second half of the 1960s. For Lipták, the importance of history and especially historians for the reform process in Slovakia was not in doubt: "History has received an urgent order, not from the rulers but the opposition forces, to help revive what was seemingly buried forever in 1960, namely the Slovak politics."[56]

51 LIPTÁK 2012, p. 43.
52 LIPTÁK 2012, p. 45.
53 LIPTÁK, Ľubomír. Problémy spracovania dejín Slovenska v rokoch 1918–1938. In HOLOTÍK, Ľudovít (ed.) *Úlohy slovenskej historickej vedy v období socialistickej výstavby*. Bratislava : SAV, 1961, p. 134.
54 KOPEČEK 2009, p. 97.
55 LIPTÁK 2012, p. 46.
56 LIPTÁK 2012, p. 51.

The "revival" of Slovak politics through the activities of intellectual elites included strong support for the federalization of Czechoslovakia. It was, in fact, a return to the communist program of the Slovak National Uprising, combining socialism and federation as the ideal outcome. From the Slovak point of view, only the socialist part of the program was fulfilled, while the Stalinist deviations, especially the persecution of alleged "bourgeois nationalists," prevented a just solution for Czech–Slovak relations. According to the majority of Slovak communist intellectuals, this should have been righted as soon as possible. Lipták himself was a diligent and sharp critic of centralism and the overall state of Czech–Slovak relations. While acting as a "public intellectual," he published several essays dealing with the Slovak question arguing that the call for federalization is not a manifestation of Slovak nationalism or provincialism, but a legitimate and logical requirement of Slovak society. "To become a herald, promoter, or implementer of broad concepts without a clearly formulated and institutionally secured own national interest means to be seemingly a preacher of higher principles, but in reality, a facilitator of selfish foreign interests."[57]

From Lipták's point of view, Slovakia had to rule itself first, only then it could influence state politics; only a suitable solution to the Czech-Slovak problem could persuade Slovaks for the further democratization process in Czechoslovakia. Lipták remained a convinced communist for whom the events of 1948 meant a decisive step towards a better, fairer society, in which the Communist Party naturally played a crucial role. As such, he considered dealing with the legacy of Stalinism critical to the successful development of socialism in Czechoslovakia. Unlike many other Slovak politicians and intellectuals, Lipták did not consider the achievement of Slovak political emancipation to be a universal solution to the Czechoslovak problems. He saw plenty of new challenges, namely coping with the economic, cultural, and social backwardness of Slovakia and the legacy of Stalinism. In 1968, he demanded Slovak elites overcome the "narrow national-defensive character" of the Slovak interpretation of history, which tended to slip into "uncritical apologetics."[58] With this criticism, he was undoubtedly referring to the speeches he had heard from fellow Slovak communist intellectuals.

National Communism and Czech-Slovak Relations

Samo Falťan, a member of the young generation of Slovak national communists, declared in 1968: "It turned out that even with the transformation of the national democratic revolution into a proletarian revolution, the national moment does not even play a minor role."[59] He also reminded all that the interwar Communist Party did not have a reasonable national program regarding the Slovak question, something repeated and frequently pointed out in Slovak discussions regarding the history of the CPC. For the first time,

57 LIPTÁK, Ľubomír. *Nepre(tr)žité dejiny*. Bratislava : Q111, 2008, p. 51.
58 LIPTÁK 2012, p. 57.
59 FALŤAN, Samo. *Slovenská otázka v Československu*. Bratislava : Vydavateľstvo politickej literatúry, 1968, p. 54.

such hitherto unheard-of criticism appeared in the writing of historian Miloš Gosiorovský. In 1963, this former campaigner against bourgeois nationalism sent a study entitled *K niektorým otázkam vzťahu* Čechov *a Slovákov v politike Komunistickej strany Československa* (On Some Questions of the Relation of Czechs and Slovaks in the Policy of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia) to *Nová mysl*, the magazine of the CC CPC. It was rejected but distributed unofficially among Slovak intellectual, scholarly and political circles.[60] Gosiorovský criticized the CPC's lack of interest in the national equality of the Czechs and Slovaks, describing the policy of the Party as a continual chain of injustices towards Slovaks conditioned by Czech nationalism, emphasizing that Slovaks are the only Slavic nation without adequate "national authorities of socialist state power." [61]

How much the understanding of the relationship between national and economic aspects of building socialism has changed since the 1950s can be seen in the suggestive reaction of Ladislav Novomeský to the critique of Husák's interpretation of the Slovak National Uprising. "Since when does one question contradict the second one? Since when is it possible to repress the national issue in solving another social issue? Since when is it possible to put one question above the other, social over national, nota bene in the conditions in which the Uprising took place?"[62] Concepts such as nation, self-determination and sovereignty appeared more and more frequently in contemporary journalism. Moreover, the "nation" was understood in a "bourgeois" meaning; it did not refer only to the "Slovak working people" as in the 1950s but to all social classes. There were repeated allegations from Slovak intellectuals that Czechoslovakism is still alive in the Czech environment and that it is thriving within the CPC.

Publicly very active Novomeský wrote, "various shallow conceptions of 'two branches of one nation' which need to be 'not divided but united' have lived in the consciousness of the 'little Czech man' for a very long time. This erroneous idea has effectively survived even the twenty years of the socialist era in our social life."[63] In the Slovak environment, the motive of democratization during the Prague Spring was inextricably linked to federalization of the state. Slovak intellectuals generally perceived centralism and the idea of a united Czechoslovak working class as part of the Stalinist deformations of the 1950s. Thus, de-Stalinization meant removing factors that hindered a just solution to the "Slovak question." As the national communists emphasized, the liberalization process cannot be successful without a fair resolution of the national question.[64] In 1968, the well-known communist intellectual Pavol Števček

60 It was eventually published in 1968.

61 GOSIOROVSKÝ, Miloš. K niektorým otázkam vzťahu Čechov a Slovákov v politike Komunistickej strany Československa. In *Historický* časopis, 1968, vol. 16, no. 3, p. 369.

62 NOVOMESKÝ, Ladislav. Královo svedectvo, o ktorom nemožno inakšie. In *Odboj a revoluce*, 1966, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 166–168.

63 NOVOMESKÝ, Ladislav. Zmysel federácie. In Karol ROZENBAUM (ed.) *Splátka veľkého dlhu. Publicistika 1963–1970. II. zväzok*. Bratislava : Nadácia Vladimíra Clementisa, 1993, pp.197–198.

64 See BROWN, Scott. Socialism with a Slovak Face: Federalization, Democratization, and the Prague Spring. In *East European Politics and Societies,* 2008, vol. 22, no. 3, pp. 467–495.

wrote in the magazine *Kultúrny život*, the central tribune of the Slovak reformists: "Whether yes or no to the federation can no longer be discussed. We are talking here about the will of the nation, manifested by the history as well as the direct voice."[65]

The Slovak national communism program quickly assumed a place at the center of intellectual, and gradually, political discussions, becoming vital part of the Slovak reform plans. Thanks to the aura of martyrs, the national communists, especially Husák and Novomeský who survived the 1950s purges against "Slovak bourgeois nationalism," gained enormous social and political credit, enabling them to assume leading positions in the Slovak reform movement. Unequivocal support from the public, especially its intellectual, artistic and scientific elites, gave the Slovak national emancipation program an unquestionable legitimacy, which was subsequently acknowledged—albeit grudgingly—by Alexander Dubček's leadership of the Communist Party.

Slovak reformists, regardless of whether they belonged to the "democratic" camp around the *Kultúrny život* magazine or the more conservative wing led by Husák and Novomeský, were very concerned that, according to them, no one was preparing the Czech public for the federation and this alleged Czech indifference, benevolence and lack of enthusiasm caused considerable resentment on the Slovak side. According to Samo Falťan, the Czech rejection of federalization was "a misunderstanding of the principles of democracy in national relations, a testimony to the survival of old ideological and hegemonic views."[66]

On 1 August 1968, the journal *Nové slovo* published a petition on the title page, *Slovo Čechom aj Slovákom súcim na slovo* (A word to the Czechs and Slovaks worthy to be spoken to). Its author, historian Viliam Plevza,[67] claimed that in the Czech lands, the Czechoslovak centralist spirit is still haunting in many minds. It is taking on newer and newer forms and now focuses on the preparation of federalization. His statement rejected curtailment of the principle of national equality and attempts to delay the constitutional law "on a just, federal organization of our socialist republic."[68]

Discussions about the form of federation continued even after the Warsaw Pact invasion on 21 August 1968, though, it did not change the resolution that Czechoslovakia would be federalized and the corresponding constitutional law would be approved by the end of 1968. The details were no longer a subject of public debate but rather of the meetings of Czech and Slovak expert teams due to both the nature of the issues discussed and the fact that after the invasion, press freedom was the first victim of the normalization process.

65 ŠTEVČEK, Pavol. Po prvé, po druhé. In *Kultúrny* život, 1968, vol. 23, no. 15, p. 1.
66 FALŤAN, Samo. Akú federáciu? In *Nové slovo,* 1968, vol. 10, no. 4, p. 1.
67 During the normalisation era, V. Plevza became the personal historian of G. Husák. See MACHÁČEK, Michal. *Gustáv Husák*. Praha : Vyšehrad, 2017.
68 PLEVZA, Viliam. Slovo Čechom aj Slovákom súcim na slovo. In *Nové Slovo,* 1968, vol. 10, no. 11, pp. 1, 3.

Conclusion

Discussions on the problem of Czech–Slovak relations show a significant split between Slovak communist intellectuals in the form of growing opposition between those who considered the national issue only part of a broader process of democratizing the Czechoslovak socialist dictatorship and a faction that regarded the Slovak national emancipation and the solution of the Czech–Slovak relation as a matter of primary and unparalleled importance.

The discussion around the priority of democratization or federalization was solved after the Warsaw Pact invasion. "Democrats" were ousted by the new, "normalized" leadership of the CPC under Gustáv Husák, approved by the Soviets. The display of Slovak communist nationalism was tolerated only if it was not linked with political reformism. In the case of Lipták, the fact that his writings went beyond the Czech–Slovak settlement and fostered democratization determined his fate. Slovak "normalizers" used his texts as an example of "conscious negation of the gains of the previous [pre-1968] period," where "negation turned into negativism of everything that was created during socialism, and finally to the negation of socialism itself."[69] This resulted in a ban on any publishing activity, scholarly or popular, and relocation to a minor position in the Slovak National Museum.

In analyzing the development and basic configuration of the nationalist perspective in the thinking of the Slovak communist intellectuals, one finds both continuities and discontinuities. During the interwar period, emerging national communism movement positioned itself on the struggle against alleged imperialistic ideological domination by the Czech bourgeoise and the ideology of Czechoslovakism. Although Slovak Marxist intellectuals were late to embrace Slovak national communism, in the 1930s, they became the fiercest representatives in their demands for federalization of Czechoslovakia, relying on the pragmatic benevolence of Communist Party leadership.

The period of the Second World War saw a transformation of the ephemeral ideas of socialism and federation into a coherent political agenda for the united program of the Slovak antifascist resistance. At the same time, Slovak national communist intellectuals suddenly became politically influential figures in the Czechoslovak communist movement. Because of this new position, after the war and communist takeover in Czechoslovakia in 1948, the Slovak national communists became part of a long-term internal party struggle, no longer competing with external enemies, but with fellow party members.

Due to changes in the entire Soviet Bloc, the 1960s brought a massive revival of national communism. In the Slovak case, national communism played a key role in the reform era of the late 1960s as the bearer of emancipation and democratization efforts. As the national communists stressed, the liberalization process could not be successful without a fair solution to Czech–Slovak relations in the common state.

69 Ústredný archív SAV, f. RO SAV, b. 83, 296, Zasadnutie Predsedníctva SAV (25. 9. 1972), Rozbor situácie v spoločenskovednej oblasti SAV.

In the 1970s and 1980s, national communism became the dominant legitimizing narrative of normalization orthodoxy in Slovakia. The combination of Marxism–Leninism and Slovak nationalism thus became part of the official communist doctrine, though, the price was that Slovak national communism had to give up any reform potential and defend the status quo in the form of real socialism. In this respect, Slovak national communists of the normalization era were in a similar situation as the Davists in the 1930s. The radical nationalist statements barely masked the lack of any real impact on political development.

FORUM HISTORIAE Journal and Portal for History and Related Disciplines
ISSN 1337-6861

Forum Historiae, 2022, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 123–137

www.forumhistoriae.sk

The Normativity of a Nation: A Case Study of Slovene Historians in Early Post-socialism

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Keywords
nation, historians, post-socialism, Slovenia, conceptual history

DOI
10.31577/forhist.2022.16.1.8

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Cite
KONOVŠEK, Tjaša. The Normativity of a Nation: A Case Study of Slovene Historians in Early Post-socialism. In *Forum Historiae*, 2022, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 123–137, doi: 10.31577/forhist.2022.16.1.8

Abstract

KONOVŠEK, Tjaša. The Normativity of a Nation: A Case Study of Slovene Historians in Early Post-socialism.

This paper focuses on an issue many would consider a minor episode in Slovene historiography. A public discussion took place on the pages of *Delo*, one of the central Slovene newspapers in 1993, where some of the most prominent historians debated the relationship between the nation, politics and history, eventually roughly establishing two different world-views: one connected to past experiences and the other focused on the unknown of the future. Within the framework of conceptual history, this paper tackles the concept of "nation" as it was understood by these debaters themselves, establishing an understanding within the specific historical circumstances to which it belonged, thus historicizing the debate itself. While the question of 1989 as a break has generally already been well-researched with regard to politics, economy and memory, much less is known about the connections between the break, historiography and politics. Uncovering more than superficial disagreements within a community of historians, this paper aims not to be solely a contribution to the understanding of nationalism in post-socialism between a small group of people, but rather, to underline the link between a radically different view of the past among professional historians and the establishment of a new political and social order after 1989. Some historians involved realized the opportunity to directly channel their views into political and state-related activities, such as a bilateral commission and the educational system.

A basic understanding of the concept of "nation" as set by Benedict Anderson is that of the nation as an idea of an imagined community based on the shared experience of a synchronized time, enjoying roughly the same formative experience from the 18th century onwards. However, at the same time, the concept of "nation" itself as used in other contexts includes a number of radical asynchronicities, between and within different communities, such as political, generational, ethnic, professional and others.[1] One such instance is Helge Jordheim's case of the European nation states and their own temporalities when meeting in the common European space in light of European economic and political integration. The other is, on

The author acknowledges the financial support from the Slovenian Research Agency (research core funding No. P6-0281).

1 ANDERSON, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London : Verso, 1991; JORDHEIM, Helge. Europe at Different Speeds: Asynchronicities and Multiple Times in European Conceptual History. In STEINMETZ, Willibald – FREEDEN, Michael – FERNÁNDEZ-SEBASTIÁN, Javier (eds.) *Conceptual History in the European Space*. New York; Oxford : Berghahn Books, 2017, pp. 53–54.

a much smaller scale, the debate under examination here. During the aforementioned disagreement between Slovene historians in 1993, the concept of "nation" emerged as an expression of asynchronized time and experience among the participants, having lived through the same events but subjectively experiencing them fundamentally differently. In their individual thinking, some parts of the historical narrative were pulled together while others pushed further away. Divisions within the historical community revealed the concept of "nation" as being infused with different temporal structures and experiences by, in this case, historians in order to achieve different ends.

By analysing and charting the meaning of "nation" in Janko Prunk's work, *Slovenski narodni vzpon* (The Slovene national ascent),[2] as well as his fellow historians' reactions to the work, a certain understanding of "nation" will be shown to have had telling consequences in the newly established Slovene nation-state. Such a debate was indeed carried out in the years immediately after a profound mobilization of national sentiment in Slovenia. Historians included actively participated in consolidation of the political and social change of early post-socialism beyond the narrow academic world, such as being active in politics, state commissions, minority protection, writing primary school textbooks and crafting entries in new, post-communist Slovene encyclopaedias and lexicons.

Unlike in the 1993 debate, however, questions about the historical events of the last few centuries will take a secondary role. Instead, the understanding of the concept of "nation" will unfold in the same way the discussion participants used it. Drawing from the field of conceptual history, meanings hidden within the idea of "nation" will be examined and the concept itself connected to the political and social circumstances that were entrenched in the debate, which in turn, influenced the individual actions of the historians involved, in this way taking into account the reciprocity between historical circumstances and individual agency evident in the public discussion occurring in *Delo's* literature section which followed the publication of *Slovenski narodni vzpon*.[3]

The main actors in the debate were all prominent, publicly recognized Slovene historians. Janko Prunk, author of the book that kindled the discussion, obtained his doctoral degree in history at the University of Ljubljana in 1976.[4] In later years, he became a researcher and visiting professor at the University of Freiburg (1984–1985 and 1994–1995) and the University of Cologne (1988–1989), all the while staying in touch with the Slovene academic circles. From 1966 to 1995, he was on the staff of the Institute of Contemporary History in Ljubljana and the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University

2 PRUNK, Janko. *Slovenski narodni vzpon. Narodna politika (1768–1992)*. Ljubljana : Državna založba Slovenije, 1993.

3 KOSELLECK, Reinhart. *Futures past. On the Semantics of Historical Time*. New York : Columbia University Press, 2004, pp. 75–76.

4 PRUNK, Janko. *Pot krščanskih socialistov v Osvobodilno fronto slovenskega naroda: razvoj 1918–1941*. Doctoral dissertation. Ljubljana : University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, 1976.

of Ljubljana.[5] Within the setting of the early post-socialism, the Institute of Contemporary History and the University of Ljubljana were the leading institutions in historiographical research of the post-1918 period in Slovenia.[6]

The first historian to respond to Prunk's work, Peter Vodopivec, likewise obtained his doctoral degree at the University of Ljubljana only two years after Prunk, in 1978.[7] Like Prunk, Vodopivec also spent considerable time abroad continuing his studies in Paris (1978–1979) and the United States of America (1982), and was a visiting professor in Klagenfurt (1987), Cleveland (1991), Graz (1993) and Budapest (1995–1996). Also similar to Prunk, he maintained a professional position in Slovenia, employed at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana from 1979 to 1999, and from 1999 to 2012, as a researcher at the Institute of Contemporary History in Ljubljana.[8]

While both career trajectories feature many similarities, their historical perspectives developed through the early post-socialism years proved different in many ways. Vodopivec was credited particularly for bringing new approaches to Slovene historiography in the mid-80s through a professorship at the Faculty of Arts. His teaching helped prompt a new generation of Slovene historians to practice more innovative ways of writing history in the 1990s, including economic and cultural history, the history of everyday life, and the history of ideas in the traditionally tough and somewhat rigid field of political history. Many of his students, such as Igor Grdina and Janez Cvirn (both employed at the Faculty of Arts in 1993), were involved in the discussion that followed the release of Prunk's *Slovenski narodni vzpon* and Vodopivec's reaction to it.[9]

The Book: *Slovenski narodni vzpon*

> The many-sided unpredictable work, interests, and duties which the new time has brought since the fall of 1989 prolonged my writing of the book more than I planned. Still, I hope that with the gestation of both the time in Slovenia as well as the views on Slovene history, I have also matured myself and all that was in favour of the book. If nothing else, while writing this book I lived through the end-period of the long Slovene national development, the break of the state unity of the Yugoslav nations, and the creation of the independent Republic of Slovenia along with its international recognition. This fact alone allows and demands a considerably different view on the Slovene national path travelled in the past.[10]
>
> Janko Prunk

Early in the winter of 1993, the Slovene public was introduced to one of the first research studies concerning Slovene political history, produced after the tumultuous years of 1989–1992. The manuscript, *Slovenski narodni vzpon.*

5 GUŠTIN, Damijan. Janko Prunk, sedemdesetletnik. In *Contributions to Contemporary History*, 2012, vol. 52, no. 2, pp. 295–299.
6 DOLENC, Ervin. Slovensko zgodovinopisje o obdobju 1918–1991 po razpadu Jugoslavije. In *Contributions to Contemporary History*, 2004, vol. 44, no. 2, pp. 113–129.
7 VODOPIVEC, Peter. Socialni in gospodarski nazori v slovenskih in sosednjih pokrajinah v predmarčni dobi. Doctoral dissertation. Ljubljana : University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, 1978.
8 LAZAREVIĆ, Žarko – GODEŠA, Bojan. Peter Vodopivec – ob 70. obletnici. In *Contributions to Contemporary History*, 2016, vol. 56, no. 2, pp. 205–207.
9 DOLENC 2004, pp. 115–116.
10 PRUNK 1993, Slovenski narodni vzpon, pp. 8–9.

Narodna politika (1768–1992) (The Slovene national ascent. National politics, 1768–1992), was authored by well-known Slovene historian Janko Prunk. His newly published work illustrated the two and a half century long process of political development of a land that had only recently became an independent Republic of Slovenia. The approach he chose and the conclusions he drew soon turned out to be much more controversial for his historian colleagues than Prunk anticipated. While the introduction expressed gratitude to co-workers, colleagues and associates for their advice, collaboration, and support, many of the Slovene historians soon publicly expressed their opposition to the work, both for the way it was written as well as the conclusions it drew.

Starting in 1768, the book positioned the presumed beginning of the Slovene national existence into the time and space of the "European era of enlightenment," within the frame of the Habsburg monarchy as a central European empire that offered sufficient civilizational ground for a "Slovene national rebirth."[11] Maintaining a primordialist position, Prunk followed an purported linear path of the tiny Slovene nation through the hardships of the 19th and especially the 20th century towards national independence. With their own hands, so Prunk's narration went, Slovenes liberated themselves thrice. First, from the chains of the Habsburg monarchy whose existence, despite its potential for enlightenment, was in opposition to the natural tendencies of the Slovene nation to operate its own state. Second, liberation from the occupation of fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and their ally Hungary, only to be faced with a third enemy, communism, which forced Slovenes back into a Yugoslav state and curtailed their national potential for decades. It was the final supposed liberation, the fall of socialism and Yugoslavia, that the author lived through while writing the book and that he interpreted as fair and just reparations for the long and gruesome history the Slovene nation has had to endure. Prunk used the fact that at the time of the book's publication, Slovenes indeed lived in an independent, internationally recognized nation state, as supreme evidence for justification of his historical interpretation, which covered two and a half centuries in a little more than four hundred pages.

In late January 1993, the first public response to Prunk's account was published in one of the most widely read Slovene newspapers, *Delo*. It was a short article written by an anonymous journalist who described a great number of visitors at the book's launch, and praised the non-ideological affiliation of the celebrated author, the clear connection he drew between Slovene national history and European values and the complete assurance that this seminal work will become a fundamental, canonical work in the field of Slovene history and broader Slovene historiography.[12] As it transpired a few weeks later, not everybody shared the same enthusiasm in assessing Prunk's interpretation. One of the author's colleagues, Peter Vodopivec, took on the books eschatological reasoning in early March 1993, writing a sharp critique in *Delo's* own book

11 Original: "evropska prosvetljenska doba" and "slovenski narodni preporod." PRUNK 1993, Slovenski narodni vzpon, p. 15.

12 M. Z. Slovenski narodni vzpon zgodovinarja Janka Prunka. In *Delo*, 23 January 1993, p. 5.

review.[13] Vodopivec's straight-forward and well-argued recension opened the door to a months long public debate among Slovene historians. They passionately discussed the place of socialism, World War II and recent democratic changes in Slovene history along with historical methodology through the lens that Prunk himself had established: the nation.[14]

Context: Politics, History and Historiography

In 1993 Slovenia, the time was ripe for a debate on historical change and academic records. The events between 1989 and 1992 enabled a sudden, birds-eye perspective on what was only recently a living reality; with the end of state socialism, the entire 20th century suddenly seemed to come to a close, offering the opportunity for a different understanding of not only the present and the future, but also of the past.[15] Nineteen eighty-nine did bring crucial changes on the level of reshaping the Slovene political space, most notably changes of the republics' constitutions, even if the consequences became visible only in the next two years. Historiography—or more accurately, historians—did not exhibit any immediate reaction to the changes, but still, the end of socialism offered a unique backdrop for Prunk's 1993 book and the ensuing discussion.[16]

After decades-long and only partly effective debates within the Yugoslav Federation on whether to further centralize or decentralize its structure, individual Yugoslav Republics began changing their constitutions on their own accords. After the Federal Republic of Serbia arbitrarily altered its constitution in March 1989 to diminish the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina in its favour, Slovene political leadership responded with a similar move, passing amendments to the Slovene constitution in September and December 1989. Under pressure from a well-organized Slovene civil society and supported by the general public, the republic's socialist political elite enabled the registration of political parties and created conditions for democratic elections that took place in April 1990.[17]

In the two years following the election, Slovenia's political leadership was comprised of a group of newly established political parties joined in a coalition

13 VODOPIVEC, Peter. Zamujena priložnost. Kako je obravnavana tema, ki je 'že dolgo vabila pisca'. In *Delo*, 4 March 1993, p. 14.

14 Most of the Slovene historians included in the 1993 debate knew or still know each other personally. Even if that sociological aspect is not at the forefront of this paper, it is still a factor that played into the way the debate proceeded. The relatively small Slovene social space meant that debaters were in some cases co-workers, or at the very least, familiar with each other's professional and political views and activities.

15 HOBSBAWM, Eric. *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914–1991*. London : Abacus, 1994, pp. 1–17; TRAVERSO, Enzo. *Left-wing Melancholia: Marxism, History, and Memory*. New York : Columbia University Press, 2016, p. 2; LUTHAR, Oto. Post-Socialist Historiography Between Democratization and New Exclusivist Politics of History. In LUTHAR, Oto (ed.) *Of Red Dragons and Evil Spirits. Post-Communist Historiography Between Democratization and New Politics of History*. Budapest; New York : CEU Press, 2017, pp. 188–193.

16 HOZIĆ, Aida A. It happened elsewhere. Remembering 1989 in the former Yugoslavia. In BERNAHRD, Michael – KUBIK, Jan (eds.) *Twenty Years after Communism. The Politics of Memory and Commemoration*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 233.

17 MARK, James et al. *1989. A Global History of Eastern Europe*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2019, pp. 12–20; REPE, Božo. *Jutri je nov dan. Slovenci in razpad Jugoslavije*. Ljubljana : Modrijan, 2002, pp. 177–183.

called "Demos". Under their administration and in close cooperation with the former socialist elites, Slovenia continued with political and economic reforms, exited the Yugoslav Federation which was accompanied by ten days of armed conflict, accepted a new constitution and gained international recognition.[18] As elsewhere in the region, parliamentarism became the preferred form of government.[19] Therefore, after the first Slovene post-socialist coalition, Demos, lost its majority in the national assembly, a second election followed in December 1992. By 1993, the political space had reached a certain level of stability. With a convincing election win, control was handed to former socialist youth organization turned political party, the Liberal democratic party.[20]

The last decade of state socialism in Slovenia was closely tied to the national aspirations of the political and intellectual elite, who mainly expressed such wishes through encouraging the right of the people to determine their own form of statehood, more commonly known as the right to self-determination as it was formally stated in the constitution of 1974, through advocating broader use of the Slovene language in regard to the federation[21] and an intention to conserve the extensive study of Slovene literature in primary schools. Many instances that involved use of the Slovene language instead of Serbo-Croatian from the Yugoslav Federation, such as legal procedures and debates in the assembly, became opportunities to demonstrate support for Slovene anti-centralist politics.[22]

In the last decade of Yugoslavia's existence, the question of Slovene nationality surfaced among some of the most critical intellectuals of the time as a vital, unanswered question that held the key to the end of the Yugoslav political, social and economic crisis. Much of the criticism in the second half of the 1980s against the federation and socialist regime was articulated in terms of national freedom and independence, and to a lesser extent, other perceived European values. One such notable example was the 57th issue of *Nova revija* published in 1987 with the subheading *Prispevki za slovenski nacionalni program* (Contributions to the Slovene National Program). In it, a group of sixteen intellectuals, mostly prominent Slovene philosophers and sociologists, published their thoughts on issues such as the nation, Slovene statehood, use of the Slovene language, civil society, education and Slovenes

18 VILLA, Carlos Gonzáles. *Nova država za nov svetovni red: mednarodni vidiki osamosvojitve Slovenije.* Ljubljana : Založba/*cf., 2017, pp. 181–237.

19 GAŠPARIČ, Jure. Change and Continuity: Implementing Parliamentary Democracy in Eastern Europe After 1989 with a Focus on Slovenia. In AERTS, Remieg et al. (eds.) *The Ideal of Parliament in Europe since 1800*. Cham : Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, pp. 239–254.

20 ZAJC, Marko. Pragmatični, skeptični, drobnjakarski: ideološka in programska izhodišča ZSMS/ZSMS-LS v letih 1989–90. In PEROVŠEK, Jurij – ŠORN, Mojca (eds.) *Narod – politika – država. Idejnopolitični značaj strank na Slovenskem od konca 19. do začetka 21. stoletja.* Ljubljana : Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2020, pp. 243–266.

21 The most notable example that fuelled national sentiment was the trial of Janez Janša, Ivan Borštner, Franci Zavrl and David Tasić, who in 1988 were charged with leaking classified military information to the public in the magazine *Mladina*. Their trial was held in a military court and in Serbo-Croatian language. RAMET, Sabrina Petra. Slovenia's Road to Democracy. In *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 45, no. 5, 1993, pp. 870.

22 GABRIČ, Aleš. Uveljavljanje slovenščine kot uradnega jezika po drugi svetovni vojni. In ČEPIČ, Zdenko (ed.) *Slovenija v Jugoslaviji.* Ljubljana : Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2015, pp. 213–240.

living abroad.[23] As the editorial of this special issue specified, prompted by the crisis of Slovenes in Yugoslavia which manifested as despondency, emigration and the rising number of suicides in Slovenia, the contributors decided to publicly introduce options the Slovene state and its inhabitants had available when facing possible challenges within the Yugoslav federation in the near future.[24]

Stating an effort to minimalize self-censorship, the editors of *Prispevki* reserved their decision to discuss the Slovene national, linguistic and state aspirations openly in the moment, when the topic became "hot and contentious."[25] Indeed, this was a time when many Slovene intellectuals began to address the national question and by doing so, to openly represent different segments of society. As the editors of *Prispevki* explained, one of the most influential was none other than Janko Prunk's paper in *Revija 2000*, a journal that covered "Christianity and culture." When his book, *Slovenski narodni vzpon*, was later published in 1993, he was already widely recognized not only as an esteemed fellow historian by his colleagues, but also clearly publicly profiled as an important influence and advocate of the nascent Slovene conservative political movement.

In return, Prunk primarily based the last chapter of *Slovenski narodni vzpon*, concerning the era and demise of state-socialism, on the works of authors who were published in the 57th issue of *Nova revija*, most notably Dimitrij Rupel, Ivan Urbančič, Tine Hribar and Spomenka Hribar.[26] His appropriated diagnosis of the Yugoslav crisis of 1980s was a direct reflection of this. The fault, according to Prunk, was in the socialist system itself, which had "a specific ideological blindness for the laws of nationalism," suggesting that the crisis was an indicator of an overexerted self-management system that could offer no further possibilities for development. In its stead, the non-communist thinkers, with a direct focus on the nation, were the only ones that could offer a path forward.[27]

At this point, a distinction needs to be made between the relatively limited activity of certain groups of intellectuals and politicians in comparison with the general Slovene public, who mostly lived outside the capital and had only second-hand experience with the events that resonated among the political and intellectual elite. While the national sentiment in regard to the possible creation of an independent nation-state entered the minds of the broader Slovene public very late in the Yugoslav disintegration process, "nationality" was already the main focus of many publicly active intellectuals in the second half of the 1980s. The use of language, the national sentiment, and the ambition to create an independent Slovene state were all passionately debated within the Slovene public and political space, though, a clear distinc-

23 GABRIČ, Aleš. Zaostrenost mednacionalnih odnosov. In FIŠER, Jasna et al. (eds.) *Slovenska novejša zgodovina. Od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega priznanja Republike Slovenije 1848–1992.* Ljubljana : Mladinska knjiga, 2005, pp. 1171–1174.
24 GRAFENAUER, Niko (ed.) *Prispevki za slovenski nacionalni program.* Ljubljana : Cankarjeva založba, 1987, p. 1.
25 GRAFENAUER 1987, p. 2.
26 PRUNK 1993, Slovenski narodni vzpon, pp. 403–427.
27 PRUNK 1993, Slovenski narodni vzpon, pp. 412–418.

tion existed between the political and intellectual elite on one side and the general public on the other. While these issues came together to fuel political and economic change in the years between 1989 and 1992, the majority of Slovene citizens explicitly and repeatedly expressed their opinions in numerous public surveys, clearly framing their horizon of expectation within the Yugoslav Federation.[28]

Setting the Stage

The break of 1989, the contested use of language and the aspirations of the Slovene political and intellectual elite for an independent nation state emerging in late Yugoslav socialism directly affected the analyses is Prunk's book, as well as the subsequent pointed reactions to it. Both Prunk and his fellow debators were part of the intellectual, and in some cases political, elite that was actively involved in the conception and discussion of ideas that shaped the political and social development of the period between 1989 and 1992. In this view, *Slovenski narodni vzpon* was intrinsically tied to the early transition years and arrived as a final chapter, not only of Prunk's assumed development of the Slovene nation, but also of the political change of the last three years. A return to Europe, as Prunk suggested:

> The Slovene nation decided to return to the modern European civilizational and integrational processes alone, independently, without a mediator, without the federal Yugoslav form. With this, Slovenes have returned to the civilizational environment that allowed us to become a modern national entity before the First World War (i.e. the central European environment of the Habsburg monarchy).[29]

The idea of "the return to Europe" was not, by far, a uniquely Slovene phenomenon of the time, it was more or less visible in all post-socialist countries, such as the Czech Republic and Slovakia, where even specific political language was formed around it.[30] In the same vein, *Slovenski narodni vzpon* was presented to the public as a methodologically innovative synthesis that would support the independent Slovene state as a direct realization of the self-confidence and humanism of the Slovene national rebirth a couple of centuries ago.[31]

This overreaching theme became one of the first and central points of criticism that Vodopivec offered in his initial review, published at the beginning of March 1993. The national logic of a linear development heavily neglected the context and the reasoning of historical development and, as Vodopivec argued, presupposed a claim not supported by any convincing evidence of the "Slovene nation thinking about its complete state sovereignty in the last 200 years of the political development." On the contrary, Vodopivec continued,

28 TOŠ, Niko (ed.) *Vrednote v prehodu I. Slovensko javno mnenje 1968–1990.* Ljubljana : Fakulteta za družbene vede, 1997, pp. xi–xii.

29 PRUNK, Janko. Sedanji narodni trenutek, perspektive. In *Sobotna priloga*, 7 August 1993, p. 21.

30 IVANČÍK, Matej. State of Grace: A Probe into Understanding Democratic Trust and Legitimacy Through the Eyes of the VPN (The Public Against Violence). In *Forum Historiae*, 2021, vol. 15, no. 2, p. 136, https://doi.org/10.31577/forhist.2021.15.2.9; TULMETS, Elsa. *East Central European Foreign Policy Identity in Perspective. Back to Europe and the EU's Neighbourhood.* Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 1–24.

31 PRUNK 1993, Slovenski narodni vzpon, p. 427.

the latest political development—the emergence of the sovereign Slovene nation state—represents a complete break from traditional political thinking in the broader Slovene space that has, as Prunk himself unintentionally showed in *Slovenski narodni vzpon*, always been inclined to form connections with its neighbouring entities or find political solutions within existing state framework. As such, the latest political developments can and should only be sufficiently defined as an unrepeatable historical event with a concrete, albeit complex, chain of causality and consequence.[32]

A reply to Vodopivec's critique came from Prunk in the next edition of the *Delo* book review. The author marked the criticism as neither fair nor accurate and even more, he claimed the manner in which the commentary was delivered was reminiscent of public criticism from the socialism era, when public discussion aimed to discipline scholars and influence their work. The style of writing, Prunk explained further, was not as outdated as Vodopivec described, a method he defended as a classical way of researching the history of a nation. In Prunk's view, Slovenes became a nation later than other developed European nations, which is why the book emerged later, but still uses the same methodology as other works describing the history of a nation. In Europe, Prunk concluded, such a synthesis was perceived as superior in comparison to simple case-studies.[33]

The initial debate, first the book review by Vodopivec and then Prunk's response to it, signalled a division in understanding; the use of the concept of "nation" suggested two different approaches. The first, as explained by Prunk in his manuscript and response, was a "nation" joining the present and the past. In this view, the Slovene nation was a latecomer to the modern stage, but nonetheless had its roots in past European civilizations, a part of the nations of the now victorious democratic West, in comparison to, from Prunk's point of view, defeated anational socialism and communism.[34] This "nation" was an ancient and fixed type, while Vodopivec on the other hand, viewed the Slovene nation and its own nation state as a radical break from the past tradition of Slovene political thought and action, and as such, a distinct element of the yet unknown future. Expressed in Koselleckian terms, Prunk's concept of "nation" drew, with both temporal and spatial dimensions, from the alleged space of experience within the Habsburg monarchy, where the essence of the Slovene nation was reactivated in the 18th century, while Vodopivec's understanding belonged to a new, yet-to-be normality with unknown potential in the European space, and thus represented one of many points on the horizon of expectations.

This schism became an underlying theme for the majority of subsequent contributions to the debate. In the context of late-socialist and early post-socialist Slovenia, the "nation" became attractive and politically potent capital.

32 VODOPIVEC 1993, Zamujena priložnost, p. 14.
33 PRUNK, Janko. Za poštenost v znanstvenem razpravljanju. In *Delo*, 11 March 1993, p. 14.
34 BERGER, Stefan. Western Europe. In MISHKOVA, Diana – TRENCSÉNYI, Balázs (eds.) *European Regions and Boundaries: A Conceptual History*. New York : Berghahn, 2017, p. 23.

For historians, the question of how to frame the idea belonged to the field of academic expertise as well as to the wider social and political background.[35] As the debate evolved, a part of the understanding of "nation" developed in real time. While the individual debaters were all highly educated historians, many were familiar with the foreign historiographical and wider academic perspective during their prior work or study, the field of Slovene historiography, similar to other post-socialist situations, was only beginning to take shape outside the framework of socialism. Thus, it was not a coincidence that the discussion took place on the grounds of a widely read newspaper rather than any scholarly journals of the time. The understanding of "nation" was in early post-socialist Slovenia, a matter of public interest. The question of the debate thus also became, by extension, whether or not to leave the category of "nation" to conservative political discourse and the practice of the time supported by well-chosen but poorly advocated episodes from the past, or to place it within the realm of the profane, emotionally less charged category of civil existence.[36] While the first option was closer to Prunk's arguments in the debate as well as his political activity, the second point came closer to Vodopivec's views, which was soon supported by many of his colleagues.

Contesting the Concept

By the middle of March 1993, the ongoing debate exceeded the limits of dialogue and grew into a polyphony.[37] Vodopivec wrote another column defending himself from Prunk's accusations of a scarce bibliography and lack of professional experience and Janez Cvirn, a history professor at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana, joined in with an extensive piece criticizing Prunk, in turn supporting Vodopivec.[38] Cvirn especially urged Prunk to discard the notion of consistent progress throughout history in his further research of the Slovene political history.[39] This triggered a fierce rebuttal from Prunk, who maintained that despite many obstacles, he firmly believes that the Slovene

35 Prunk himself was a member of Social Democratic Party of Slovenia (Socialdemokratska stranka Slovenije, SDSS) from 1990 until 2008. SDSS was one of the members of Demos coalition between 1990 and 1992, led first by Jože Pučnik, and, since 1993, by Janez Janša. Peter Vodopivec has been one of the founding members of Slovene Democratic Union (Slovenska demokratična zveza, SDZ), also a member of Demos; and one of the editors of *Nova revija* since 1982. GUŠTIN 2012, pp. 295–299; LAZAREVIĆ – GODEŠA 2016, pp. 205–207; HADALIN, Jurij. Kaj bi rekel Henrik Tuma? Od socialdemokratske stranke Slovenije do Slovenske demokratske stranke. In *Contributions to Contemporary History*, 2021, vol. 61, no. 3, pp. 237–261.

36 ANTOHI, Sorin. Narratives Unbound. A Brief Introduction to Post-Communist Historical Studies. ANTOHI, Sorin – TRENCSÉNYI, Balázs – APOR, Péter (eds.) *Narratives Unbound. Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*. Budapest; New York : CEU Press, 2007, pp. ix–xxiii. This roughly corresponds to the attitudes the different political currents in post-socialist Slovenia took regarding the past, especially World War II and socialism. While conservative parties, including the Social Democratic Party of Slovenia, opted for a more transcendent notion of the nation, left-leaning parties maintained a position tying "nation" to the cosmopolitan view. For one such example, see the history of the idea of national reconciliation: CMREČNJAK, Sašo. Slovenska sprava: zgodovinski pregled. In *Historical review*, 2016, vol. 70, no. 3–4, pp. 382–436.

37 VODOPIVEC, Peter. Še zmerom: neproblemsko nizanje citatov. In *Delo*, 18 March 1993, p. 14; CVIRN, Janez. Prunkov slovenski narodni vzpon – v monografiji. In *Delo*, 18 March 1993, p. 14.

38 Janez Cvirn was a professor of history at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. STUDEN, Andrej. Prof. dr. Janez Cvirn (22. april 1960 – 7. avgust 2013). In *Contributions to Contemporary History*, 2013, vol. 52, no. 2, pp. 197–199.

39 CVIRN 1993, Prunkov slovenski narodni vzpon, p. 14.

national ascent was, in its essence, a constant national solidification and rise. "The Slovene people feel this way. Therefore, you are the one who will have to make an effort to prove otherwise. Europe and those European historians, that know such [national] developments assess it in the same way," Prunk answered Cvirn.[40]

In the following weeks of arguments, Prunk expounded upon his understanding of the "nation" and in parallel, its political implications on the present. The people who "awakened the nation" in the 18th and 19th centuries, Prunk claimed, were great people; educated in Europe, self-reliant and full of love and faith towards their own nation, in short, just the kind of people that are victorious in the present. Through their work, Prunk further argued, "national awakeners" of the past centuries initiated a historical process that has direct consequences in shaping the modern Europe and its values, to which Slovenia now, after the end of state socialism, also belongs.[41] This resonated heavily within the general Slovene political atmosphere, where aligning the political and economic spaces to the perceived European standards was widely supported by all parliamentary parties, even if they did not agree on how.

These expected European standards that Slovene politics strived towards in the years of post-socialism were simultaneously normative and yet flexible enough to be represented as a common political goal.[42] Not unlike the European norms of the 1990s, Prunk's understanding of the nation was on the surface, schematic; flexible enough to fit the current political and social mentality yet sturdy enough to be an analytical tool and an object of historical research. The "nation" became, for Prunk, the central axis along which history itself developed. Though he disagreed with the accepted Hegelian notion of historical—and national—progress itself, he maintained, despite rising criticism from fellow historians, the central understanding of Slovene national development as a sequence of phases which made the nation even stronger.[43]

Prunk found his strongest defender in prominent Slovene academic Janko Pleterski,[44] who urged others to see history as a pool of past experience from which to draw and in which to seek the "golden age" of the nation in the past two centuries of modernity. For Pleterski, an ex post assessment was what gave every community, in this case the Slovene nation, meaning to its existence. Pleterski defended nationalism as key for the past and present struggle for universal human rights, something that again resonated with the political idea of Slovenia's future in Europe. He further asserted that the resignation of ideological anti-positions, i.e., antifascism, has been declared and should be accepted as the European norm of decent political behaviour. Historiography was, with political changes, put to a test; no ideological position, i.e., Marxism, was enough

40 PRUNK, Janko. Ta teden mi je odgovoriti gospodu Janezu Cvirnu. In *Delo*, 25 March 1993, p. 14.
41 PRUNK 1993, Ta teden mi je odgovoriti, p. 14.
42 ERIKSEN, ERIK O. *The Normativity of the European Union*. Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 44–59.
43 PRUNK, Janko. Za filozofsko zgodovinsko konceptualno razhajanje gre. In *Delo*, 8. 4. 1993, p. 14.
44 PEROVŠEK, Jurij. Janko Pleterski – devetdesetletnik. In *Contributions to Contemporary History*, 2013, vol. 53, no. 2, pp. 187–195.

anymore to defend historical writing. However, he did not problematize nationalism as one of the ideological positions that influences historiography.[45]

In line with the spirit of the time, disposing with Marxism became one of the few points of agreement among Slovene historians of the entire debate. Arguments that deserved to be rebutted were often labelled in pejorative terms as "vulgar and Marxist."[46] While none of the historians involved in the *Delo* debate cited scholars too closely connected to Marxism in strengthening their arguments, there were no hesitations towards building claims with the help of those who were perceived to be at the pinnacle of the European historical scholarship. In doing so, another division appeared; while some historians found connections in their explanations to past historians and philosophers as well as current institutions from the German-speaking space (Prunk, Pleterski), others, most notably Cvirn and Igor Grdina, heavily referenced French authors. In the first case, quotes from Heidegger and places such as Köln (Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung), Freiburg, Tübingen, Münster and München were all used to argue in favour of the nationally set understanding of history and the European search for identity,[47] while, in the second, authors such as Jacques le Goff, Georges Duby, Fernand Braudel and the broader Annales school formed the frame of reasoning, often mentioned in connection to historical anthropology in the Slovene academic space.[48]

The central disagreement among the group of historians has, however, raised much less methodological and epistemological questions, even in professional journals, than the role of the book itself. Was it enough to present a work, including such factographic mistakes and interpretative implausibility pointed out by critics of Prunk's, as relevant only because of the moment in which it was produced? Was it enough that the book was a "nice cultural act with special meaning for our time," as one reviewer stated in the concluding weeks of the debate?[49] Was *Slovenski narodni vzpon* sufficient as "a contribution to the present day self-awareness and self-esteem of the Slovene nation," as another said?[50]

In the wider, popular and state supported history of the Slovene nation, the post-socialist period brought part of the answer to the question. All the contributors to the debate maintained their positions within the academic community and Prunk's *Sloveniski narodni vzpon* became one of the fundamental works cited mainly by professors—including Prunk himself—and former students of the Faculty of Social Science where he lectured. On the other hand, the community of historians remained ambivalent. In 2007, Vodopivec published

45 PLETERSKI, Janko. Po burji še beseda, izrečena že ob predstavitvi knjige. In *Delo*, 3 June 1993, p. 6.
46 CVIRN 1993, Prunkov slovenski narodni vzpon, p. 14; PRUNK 1993, Za poštenost, p. 14.
47 PRUNK 1993, Slovenski narodni vzpon, p. 8; PLETERSKI 1993, p. 6.
48 CVIRN, Janez. Ta teden se mi je spet zoperstaviti Janku Prunku. In *Delo*, 1 April 1993, p. 14; GRDINA, Igor. Čez teden dni bo g. dr. Prunku morda spet treba odgovoriti. In *Delo*, 1 April 1993, p. 14; GRDINA, Igor. Ni mi bilo v veselje pisati vseh teh vrstic – a treba je bilo. In *Delo*, 15 April 1993, p. 14.
49 VIDOVIČ-MIKLAVČIČ, Anka. Janko Prunk: Slovenski narodni vzpon. Narodna politika (1768–1992). In *Contributions to Contemporary History*, 1993, vol. 33, no. 1–2, pp. 227–231.
50 PEROVŠEK, Jurij. Janko Prunk, Slovenski narodni vzpon. Narodna politika 1768–1992. In *Historical Review*, 1993, vol. 47, no. 2, pp. 330–334.

a study covering roughly the same time period and topics as Prunk's contested work, *Od Pohlinove slovnice do samostojne države: slovenska zgodovina od konca 18. stoletja do konca 20. stoletja* (From Pohlin's Grammar to the independent state: Slovene history from the end of the 18th to the end of the 20th century). Since then, both Prunk's and Vodopivec's works are often mentioned as reference literature.[51]

Extensions of the Historians' Debate

Some historians that were central actors in the debate were at the time of the discussion, or in the years following, in positions that allowed them to assert their vision of nation, national history and historiography in general. However, due to extensive activity, it is almost impossible to comprehend the entire opus and subsequent influence. Some accomplishments do stand out as cornerstones forming the canonical frame of the newly established Slovene political, social and academic realm. Many members of the debate were included in major Slovene historiographic and other projects, and each provided a wealth of expertise.

One such example is the inclusion of historians, in this case I. Grdina and J. Prunk, in producing texts for lexicons and encyclopaedias. Grdina, who was also involved in the 1993 debate, became a member of the editorial board and an author publishing the *Novi slovenski biografski leksikon* (New Slovene biographical lexicon),[52] while Prunk authored some entries of the *Enciklopedija Slovenije* (Encyclopaedia of Slovenia), including *Narod* (the nation) and *Narodno vprašanje* (the national question). While Grdina's pieces reflect less his notion of the nation due to the nature of the bibliographic lexicon's entries, Prunk's encyclopaedic contributions gave him an opportunity for a more extensive passage, enabling a more expressive analysis.

In his two entries, Prunk and his two co-authors displayed a similar understanding of "nation" as expressed both in the book, *Slovenski narodni vzpon*, and in the debate; in differentiating between "narod" and "nacija" with regard to the presence or absence of an "own" state. If the nation did not have its own state, then it was a "narod," if it did, it was a "nacija." Thus, Slovenes have always been a *narod*, but only recently have they become a *nacija* with their own state. Although the entry recommended the work of Benedict Anderson as further reading, the basic narrative of national progress was repeated.[53] Even more than sub verbo *Nation*, Prunk's influence was visible in the entry entitled *The National Question*, whose content was outlined as a "cluster of cultural, territorial, economic and political questions that concern facts, obstacles or dilemmas of a development and existence of a nation. The national question includes preserving, developing and asserting the basic elements

51 VODOPIVEC, Peter. *Od Pohlinove slovnice do samostojne države: slovenska zgodovina od konca 18. stoletja do konca 20. stoletja.* Ljubljana : Modrijan, 2007.

52 Novi Slovenski biografski leksikon. Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Slovene Academy of Science and Arts. https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/kolofon/nsbl/.

53 GRAFENAUER, Bogo – PRUNK, Janko. S.v. narod. In JAVORNIK, Marjan (ed.) *Enciklopedija Slovenije*. Ljubljana : Mladinska knjiga, 1997, pp. 295–297.

of a nation."[54] Here, the view of the rebirth of the national sentiment in the 18th century and the presently victorious Slovene nation follows the same linear narrative of progress and determinism. Vodopivec's entry in the same encyclopaedia stands in stark contrast. Along with some others, he contributed a passage about the *Narodni prerod* (national rebirth), showing that the primordialist notion of a nation being born again in the 18th century was not only Prunk's understanding of the past. Nonetheless, true to the preferences he displayed during the debate, Vodopivec set the understanding of national rebirth as the first stage of a newly emerging national movement, followed by a laborious and uncertain historical development.[55]

Prunk and Vodopivec continued to further their contradictory understandings of "nation" by writing history textbooks for primary schools and by joining historical and other commissions established by the state. Prunk first published a textbook as a co-author in 1993, the same year as *Slovenski narodni vzpon* was published,[56] while Vodopivec co-published his own textbook two years later.[57] With regard to state-related activity, both Prunk and Vodopivec were also active. Prunk became a minister for Slovenians abroad in Janez Drnovšek's government between 1992 and 1993 and later, in 2005, he became leader of the Slovene part of the joint Slovene-Croatian commission assigned to suggest a state policy concerning relations between the states as well as their border disputes. Though the commission itself failed to produce a final report, it nonetheless helped in forming the official position of the Slovene Republic.[58]

Vodopivec engaged in somewhat different state activities. In the 1990s, he focused on the reform of history teaching in schools,[59] leading a commission that prepared a new school syllabus in 1998.[60] Together with university professorships, public and professional writing as well as other public appearances, Prunk and Vodopivec, as well as many other historians engaged in the well-known discussion of the relationship between state, nation, and history, were able to promote and actualize at least a part of their understanding within the realm of politics, society and in the end, history.

Conclusion

The concept of "nation" carried with itself a general synchronicity. While it meant sharing a part of historical development that produced a nation from a non-national entity, within the 1993 disagreement among Slovene historians

54 PRUNK, Janko – KOMAC, Miran. S. v. narodno vprašanje. In JAVORNIK 1997, pp. 335–337.
55 VODOPIVEC, Peter. S. v. narodni prerod. In JAVORNIK 1997, pp. 313–314.
56 NEŠOVIĆ, Branimir – PRUNK, Janko. *20. stoletje. Zgodovina za 8. razred osnovne šole.* Ljubljana : Državna založba Slovenije, 1993.
57 ŽVANUT, Maja – VODOPIVEC, Peter. *Vzpon meščanstva: zgodovina za 7. razred osnovne šole.* Ljubljana : Mihelač in Nešović, 1995.
58 GUŠTIN 2012, p. 299.
59 VODOPIVEC, Peter. Politics of History Education in Slovenia and Slovene History Textbooks since 1990. In DIMOU, Augusta. *"Transition" and the politics of history education in southeast Europe*. Göttingen : V&R unipress, 2009, pp. 45–69.
60 LAZAREVIĆ – GODEŠA 2016, pp. 207.

"nation" also became a prism, reflecting a partial break from the temporal experience. Even if, at first glance, it may seem like the discussion among historians could only be a personal or ideological disagreement, it was indeed much more than that: it was a disagreement on the nature of history and the way it connects to the discussants' lived reality. This is visible through (at least) two different understandings of the "nation," since the discussants divided themselves roughly in two groups, those who more and less agreed with Prunk and those who more or less disagreed with Prunk (and in turn supported Vodopivec). Thus, the debate reveals a deeper difference in comprehending historical experience.

On one hand, Janko Prunk and Janko Pleterski most notably shared a view of the "nation" connected to past experience. The sole fact that Slovenes in 1993 lived in a nation-state meant that much of the history of the last two centuries needed to be rewritten. The "nation", they argued, now proved to be the central notion around which historical development revolves. On the other hand, a group of historians including Peter Vodopivec, Igor Grdina, and Janez Cvirn, advocated an understanding of "nation" combined with the newly emerged Slovene nation-state as a radical and unexpected episode in the political development of the wider Slovene area that was, by no means, a historical necessity but rather a break with the traditional political views of the past. While the former understanding primarily sought legitimation in the past, the latter accepted the newly established environment of a nation state as a yet-unknown entity, unpredictable and thus intrinsically an element of the future for which only a limited amount can be learned about the Slovene political past. Both views have eventually found legitimacy, making their way into state institutions like schools and commissions, basic bibliographic writings, lexicons and encyclopaedias.