

**Appeal to Svätopluk: Narrativization and Instrumentalization of the Early
Medieval History in the Slovak Republic (1939-1945)**

By

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Abstract

This thesis aims to investigate the narrativization and instrumentalization of the early medieval period between years 1938-1945 in the independent Slovak state. Specifically, it focuses on how discourse produced during this period aimed to create legitimacy for the state through references to historical Slovak state tradition. Because of this, most of the analysis focuses on the representation of the two early medieval political units, 9th-century Pribina's Principality of Nitra and then Great Moravia.

The analysis is done through close reading and comparison of various texts produced during the period. Chosen texts include both scholarly writings of professional historians as well as ideological publications and speeches given by politicians. Based on the reading of this selection of the texts, it is possible to argue that there was a shift within the narrativization and representation of early medieval history in Slovakia. This shift consisted of emphasising the nature of Great Moravia and Pribina's Principality as states and the creation of the historical state tradition that legitimized Slovak independence. This shift was most prominent within the circles around the conservative wing of the ruling Hlinka's Slovak People's Party.

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Introduction

And yet it dawned...

Above the lands, where once the kingdom of the great Slovak King Svätopluk flourished in full glory, the Slovak flag freely and honourably waves as a state symbol of the full sovereignty of the Slovak nation...¹

These are the first words of the introduction of *On the Fundamentals of the Slovak State* by Štefan Polakovič. This text was part of an attempt to create a coherent ideology for the state that had come into existence only a few months prior. By writing this text, Polakovič, a western-educated Slovak philosopher², became a person who would be remembered as the propagandist of the wartime Slovak state. But in order to write this work and be remembered, Polakovič had to overcome several major obstacles that resulted from the specificity of the Slovak situation.

The first specificity was the fact that although the regime tried to present the foundation of the newly independent state as a historical triumph of the thousand-year-long Slovak struggle for emancipation, the truth was much more ambiguous. For the whole duration of the interwar First Czechoslovak Republic, the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party that came to rule in independent Slovakia aimed not for statehood but autonomy. To support their argument, they even called upon the authority of one of Czechoslovakia's founding documents, the Pittsburgh Agreement. As this aim of Slovak autonomy was achieved only in the autumn of 1938 and the whole declaration of independence was carried out under the duress of the international situation and a foreign power, it was hard to create a coherent state-building idea that would not seem too

¹ Polakovič, Štefan. *K Základom Slovenského Štátu: Filozofické Eseje*. Turčiansky Sv. Martin: Matica Slovenská, 1939.

² Štefan Polakovič. "Slovak National Socialism." In *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe 1770–1945*, Vol. IV.: *Anti-modernism: Radical Revisions of Collective Identity*, edited by Diana Mishkova, Marius Turda and Balász Trencsényi, translated by Pavol Lukáč, 370-378. Budapest: Central University Press, 2014.

forced. Furthermore, another obstacle to the creation of an ideological base for an independent state lay in the fact that Slovakia did not have any tradition of independent statehood. Even the proper boundaries of Slovakia were determined only in 1918 during the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic³.

As can be seen from the quote, one of the ways of how Polakovič decided to resolve these problems was to argue that it was not the foundation of Slovakia but its re-foundation. He does this by creating a representation of the Great Moravia as a Slovak nation-state and Svätopluk as a Slovak king to claim its historical legacy⁴. Although this claim was not new in Slovak nationalist discourse, Polakovič's focus on sovereignty and statehood was something that had not appeared often before this period. By this, it is easy to see how Polakovič instrumentalizes a historical narrative to create an ideological base for the new state.

This shows that instead of using late medieval state, the regime used the early medieval Kingdom of Great Moravia and Pribina's Principality of Nitra as the source of its historical state-building tradition. Because of this, the main aim of this thesis is to investigate the narrativization of early medieval history. More specifically, I want to look at how this narrativization was used to reinforce the legitimacy of the regime of the Slovak state as well as the possible legitimization of the regime's policies. This focus on the early medieval narrativization also allows to see the regime's way of handling previous historical narratives;

³ Heiss, Gernot, Árpád v. Klimó, Pavel Kolář, a Dušan Kováč. „Habsburg's Difficult Legacy: Comparing and Relating Austrian, Czech, Magyar and Slovak National Historical Master Narratives.“ In *The Contested Nation: Ethnicity, Class, Religion and Gender in National Histories*, autor: Stefan Berger a Chris Lorenz, 367-405. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

⁴ Great Moravia was a historical principality that existed in 9th century in territory of current Western Slovakia and Moravia region of Czech Republic. Svätopluk was the ruler of Great Moravia under which the principality was supposed to achieve its greatest territorial extent.

be it the Hungarian or Czechoslovakist narrative regarding early medieval period. This is important as both narratives provided direct challenges to the Slovak conception. Furthermore, and a bit more unintentionally, this focus also uncovers ideological divides within the ruling party as the two major factions within the government had different ways of narrativizing stemming from different way of approaching historicity.

Context and Current State of Art

The Slovak Republic, also called the Slovak State, was founded on the 14 March 1939. This was done by a vote of independence by the Slovak Diet. As a legislative body for the autonomous Slovak land, the Slovak Diet was established inside the Second Czechoslovak Republic following the Munich Agreement and the surrender of the Czechoslovak borderlands to Germany. Even the declaration of independence happened under strong German pressure. Right before the final destruction of the Second Czechoslovak Republic and the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Jozef Tiso, the future president of the Slovak State, was given the choice to declare independence or let Slovakia be divided between Hungary and Poland. Under this pressure, the Slovak parliament unanimously accepted the declaration of independence from Czechoslovakia.

The dynamics that played a role in the declaration of the Slovak independence shaped the Slovak political system throughout the whole existence of the republic. As such, in foreign politics, Slovakia became a staunch ally of Germany. This relationship was governed by the *'Treaty of the Protective Relationship between German Reich and Slovak Republic'*. This treaty stipulated that Germany was the protector of Slovak sovereignty. Furthermore, it allowed Germany to create a 'protective zone' in the western part of Slovakia. In this zone, Germany was allowed to station its army and create military bases. Lastly, in this treaty, Slovakia promised to align its military and foreign policy with Germany. As a result, the Slovak army assisted in the German invasion of Poland as well as USSR. Despite this treaty, the first Slovak

Minister of Foreign Affairs attempted to create an independent Slovak foreign policy, but he was replaced following the so-called Salzburg Conference⁵.

When it came to internal policy, Slovakia was largely autonomous. It was a one-party authoritarian state. The ruling party was the above-mentioned Hlinka's Slovak People's Party⁶. During the interwar period, it profiled itself as an autonomist and Slovak nationalist Catholic conservative party. Right before the declaration of the autonomy it officially integrated all other Slovak political parties except the Social Democrats and Communists. Prominent members of these parties then either left politics or went into exile. Although the main fraction of the party was not fascist, some of its members sympathized with fascism even before the war⁷. This division was further reinforced during the existence of the independent Slovakia when the party split into the 'radical' wing surrounding Prime Minister Tuka and the 'conservative' wing surrounding President Tiso. Even though in general, Germany preferred party conservatives over more openly fascist radicals, Slovakia started to accumulate various traits found among the fascist states. As a result, the state can be described as a para-fascist or authoritarian state with fascist trapping⁸. Similarly to other German allies in Central and Eastern Europe, the Slovak Republic created a deeply antisemitic system that was complicit in carrying out the Holocaust in its territory. It accepted the so-called Jewish Codex which created a special subordinate status for the Slovak Jewish population that was more racially restrictive than the

⁵ Salzburg Conference was a German mediation between Hlinka's Slovak People's Party struggle in between party conservatives and radicals.

⁶ Often referred to as Ľudaks (Ľudáci in Slovak) as a shortened form of the Slovak translation of the People's Party, Ľudová strana.

⁷ This showed itself in organization of paramilitary Rodobrana in 1920s. See Jelinek, Yeshayahu. „Storm-Troopers in Slovakia: The Rodobrana and the Hlinka Guard.“ *Journal of Contemporary History*, 1971: 97-119. Or Hruboň, Anton. „Fasistický mýtus znovuzrodenia v kontexte ideológie Národnej obce fasistickej a Rodobrans.“ *Český Časopis Historický*, 2015: 454-487.

⁸ See for example Drábik, Jakub. *Fašizmus*. Bratislava: Premedia, 2019.

Nuremberg Laws. Furthermore, through the programme of ‘Aryanization’, the Slovak government confiscated and redistributed Jewish property. Finally, after the implantation of the final solution, the Slovak government helped with and paid Germany for the deportation of its Jewish population.

The internal autonomy of Slovakia continued until August 1944 when the German army arrived to suppress the Slovak National Uprising, an uprising organized by the local united civic and communist resistance and supported by Czechoslovak government-in-exile as well as by both Western Allies and the USSR. Although the uprising failed, the regime did not exist much longer. Due to its dependency on the Germany, Slovakia was dissolved in 1945 and its territory was included in the renewed Czechoslovak Republic. After the war, state functionaries were either executed or imprisoned by Czechoslovakia for treason, or they went into exile.

The wartime Slovak Republic is one of the most researched and discussed periods in Slovak history⁹. This great deal of interest in this period exists mostly because it is the only state that can serve as a historical predecessor for the current Slovak Republic if one would like to stay away from both the Czechoslovak and Hungarian state-building tradition. This disregard is, quite unsurprisingly, mostly done with the aim of creating a purely Slovak nationalist tradition. As a result, the legacy of this so-called ‘Parish Republic’ plays a major role in modern Slovak political discourse¹⁰.

⁹ Andrej Findor. "(De)Constructing Slovak national mythology." *Sociológia*, 2002: 195-208.

¹⁰ Nickname ‘parish republic’ comes from novel by Dominik Tatarka. It symbolises the close relationship between the wartime state and the Catholic church. Not only due to the interwar ideology of the Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party but also because of figures such as Jozef Tiso, who was both the President of the state and ordained Catholic priest. A note to this is often used the fact that during his whole tenure as the president Tiso kept his position as parish priest in the town of Bánovce nad Bebravou. For use in historiography see one of the first monographs about the period: Jelinek, Yeshayahu. *The Parish Republic: Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, 1939-1945*. Columbia University Press, 1976.

The struggle for this legacy in historiography was felt the most during the 1990s. The fall of the communist regime opened a space for the re-evaluation of previously accepted historical narratives. Together with a pluralistic political spectrum in which nationalistic parties gained a lot of space, this re-evaluation allowed for heated debate about the legacy of a state which some called the ‘First Slovak Republic’¹¹. On the one hand, nationalist emigree historians, who were often children of officials who emigrated after the defeat of the state, defended the legacy of the Slovak State and celebrated its supposed importance for the development of the Slovak nation. On the other hand, academic historians in Slovakia had a much more critical view of wartime Slovakia. The most prominent contentious moment was when the Ministry of Education, led by a politician from the nationalist Slovak National Party, financed and introduced the *History of Slovakia and Slovaks*, a book written by an emigree, into school curriculum. This move stirred criticism from the Slovak Academy of Sciences. Since printing was paid for from funds provided by the EU, it transformed into an international issue before the Ministry relented¹². This debate somewhat subsided after the 1990s as an increasing number of professional historians rejected the nationalist tradition and embraced a more critical position. As a result, the nationalist and uncritical veneration of the wartime regime was pushed to the margins of professional Slovak historiography and certain segments of amateur historians¹³.

The most prominent topics within the historiography concerning the wartime republic were topics that played a major role in the controversy between the nationalist and critical reading of

¹¹ For example, see Kováč, Dušan. „Historiografia moderných slovenských dejín po roku 1989.“ Česko-Slovenská historická ročenka, 2003: 263-274.

¹² Andrej Findor. “(De)Constructing Slovak national mythology.”

¹³ Kováč, Dušan. „Historiografia moderných slovenských dejín po roku 1989.“ pp.267

the state. These topics concerned mainly the question of the foundation of the state, the state's collaboration in the holocaust, and an evaluation of the 1944 Slovak National Uprising. Since the marginalization of the controversy, historiography branched out to a much larger array of issues. Although these issues are not elaborated upon in this thesis, the current research contains studies devoted to the economy, military, the political or educational situation at the time¹⁴. For me, the most important of these newer topics concerning Slovakia in WW2 is the ideological nature of the regime. In this branch of scholarship, research debates whether the state could be defined as fascist or not, or the role played by the church and its teaching in the regime¹⁵. This is particularly important as the ideological nature of the regime influenced the regimes' understanding of history.

In general, there is a considerable amount of research on the history of Slovak nationalism. This research maps the evolution from the 19th-century romantic nationalism through Czechoslovakism or Catholic nationalism to the modern forms of Slovak nationalism¹⁶. As a

¹⁴ see for example collections from conferences Peter Sokolovič, *Od Salzburgu po do vypuknutia Povstania: Slovenská republika 1939-1945 očami mladých historikov*. Bratislava: Ústav pameti Národa, 2009. And *Život v Slovenskej republike: Slovenská republika 1939 – 1945 očami mladých historikov IX*. Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa, 2010.

¹⁵ Drábik, Jakub. *Fašizmus*. Bratislava: Premedia, 2019.

Hruboň, Anton. "Budovanie kultu Josefa Tisa ." *Kultúrne dejiny/ Cultural History*, 2017: 213-239

Hruboň, Anton. "K problematike ideológie slovenského národného socializmu." *Od Salzburgu po do vypuknutia Povstania: Slovenská republika 1939-1945 očami mladých historikov*. Bratislava: Ústav pameti Národa, 2009. 19-30.

Nedelsky, N. "The Wartime Slovak State: a Case Study in the Relationship between Ethnic Nationalism and Authoritarian Patterns of Governance." *Nations and Nationalism*, 2001: 215-234.

¹⁶ For example, Bakke, Elizabeth. "The Making of Czechoslovakism in the First Czechoslovak Republic." In *Loyalitäten in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik 1918–1938. Politische, nationale und kulturelle Zugehörigkeiten.*, by Martin Schulze Wessel, 23-44. Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2004.

Findor, Andrej. "Národná identita ako naratívna konštrukcia." *Sociology - Slovak Sociological Review*, 2000: 57-79.

Malová, Darina. "The Slovak National Movement: A Case of Successful Contention." In *an Uncivil society? Contentious Politics in Post-communist Europe*, edited by Cas Mudde and Petr Kopecký, 52-70. London: Routledge, 2003.

result of these studies, there also exist works devoted to Slovak historical narratives¹⁷. These works identified several periods that are important for Slovak history. For example, the ethnogenesis of Slavs in the territory, the period of Great Moravia, the 19th-century national awakening, or the periods of the First Czechoslovak Republic as well as the period of wartime Slovakia¹⁸. This kind of scholarship is important as my thesis looks at one of these important points within the Slovak narrative. Namely, it studies the representation of the period since the arrival of the Slavs into the Slovak territory until the end of the Great Moravia. One of the more prominent studies of these historical narratives is an analysis of history textbooks¹⁹. Especially interesting for my thesis is the book *Past as Supermarket*²⁰. In this book, its author Elena Mannová analyses current historical narratives in the Slovak context. Although this book focuses on contemporary narratives, it is interesting for my topic due to its theoretical approach and its central metaphor of the past as a supermarket; more specifically the way in which a narrative of the history is chosen in order to create boundaries of communities, be it local or national.

Apart from research into the Slovak nationalist narrative, there is a growing amount of works devoted to the evolution of professional Slovak historiography. This research contains both overviews of its development²¹ – works in this field are often focused on the life of Daniel

¹⁷ For example, Mannová, Elena. *Minulosť ako supermarket*. Bratislava: Veda, 2019.

Mannová, Elena, Krekovič Eduard, and Krekovičová Eva. *Mýty naše slovenské*. Bratislava: Premedia, 2013.

¹⁸ Adam Hudek. "Between Czech and Hungarians: Constructing Slovak National Identity from 19th Century to Present." *History Compass*, 2011: 257-268. And "Slovak historiography and constructing the Slovak national story up to 1948." *Human Affairs*, 2006: 51-65.

¹⁹ For example, Otčenášová, Slávka. *Schválená minulosť: Kolektívna identita v československých a slovenských učebniciach dejepisu (1918-1989)*. Košice: Filozofická fakulta UPJŠ v Košiciach, 2010.

²⁰ Mannová, Elena. *Minulosť ako supermarket*. Bratislava: Veda, 2019.

²¹ Stolárik, M. Mark. "The Painful Birth of Slovak Historiography in 20th Century." *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*, 2001: 161-187.

Rapant, the founder of professional Slovak historiography – and interwar academic debates regarding conceptions of the feasibility of Slovak and Czechoslovak history²². One of the most in-depth monographies in this field was devoted to the development and political use of historiography during the communist regime after 1948²³.

When it comes to the period of the Second World War, studies of Slovak historiography are mostly focused on the process of institutionalization of independent Slovak historiography²⁴. Regarding the political use of historical narratives in wartime Slovakia, it is focused on two main sources. Firstly, similar to research into historical narratives in different periods, it is an analysis of textbooks.²⁵ Secondly, research into this topic is also done through an analysis of state celebrations, or close analysis of texts written by regime aligned historians or ideologues²⁶.

This thesis adds to this scholarship by looking at a representation of one specific part of history to see how it was instrumentalized for the legitimization of the state or its policies. It adds not only to academic research of the ideological nature of the regime, but it also builds upon scholarship regarding Slovak historical narratives as most of them tend to look at Slovak historical narrative in its entirety, instead of looking at one specific period. Apart from this,

Kamenec, Ivan. "Začiatky marxistického historického myslenia na Slovensku." In *Spoločnosť-Politika-Historiografia: Pokrivené (?) zrkadlo dejín slovenskej spoločnosti v dvadsiatom storočí*, 141-143. Bratislava: Prodama, 2009.

²² Ducháček, Milan. "Václav Chaloupecký a Daniel Rapant- trauma z blízkosti." *Forum Historiae*, 2011: 78-97.

Hudek, Adam. "Slovak Historiography and Constructing the Slovak National Story up to 1948." *Human Affairs*, 2006: 51-65.

Hudek, Adam. "Slovenská historiografia a československá otázka 1918-1968." *Forum Historiae*, 2007: 49-62.

²³ Hudek, Adam. *Najpolitickejšia veda: Slovenská historiografia v rokoch 1948-1968*. Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV, 2010.

²⁴ Hudek, Adam. "Vznik a vývoj Slovenskej akadémie vied a umení v rokoch 1942-1945." *Forum Historiae*, 2011: 37-51.

²⁵ For example, see Otčenášová, Slávka. *Schválená minulosť:...*

²⁶ Hruboň, Anton. "K problematike ideológie slovenského národného socializmu."

Hetényi, Martin, and Peter Ivanič. "Poznámky k šíreniu kultu sv. Cyrila a Metoda v rokoch 1939 – 1945." *Život v Slovenskej republike: Slovenská republika 1939 – 1945 očami mladých historikov IX*. Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa, 2010. 336-344.

more scholarly contribution, there is an important fact that the state between the years 1939-1945 was the only official Slovak nation-state proceeding modern Slovak republic. This was then period when the idea of Slovak history was, for the first time, officially propagated and supported among the population. As a result, historical narratives imprinted during this period can have a long-term legacy. This legacy is further reinforced by the fact that it was during the era of the Second World War that Slovak history was fully institutionalized. This then allows me to see the origins of the many tropes and narrative ways used to represent the early medieval period in Slovakia.

When it comes to international research regarding nationalist historiography, this thesis is inspired by *Writing the Nation: National Historiographies and Making of Nation States in 19th and 20th Century* a series edited by Stefan Berger, Christoph Conrad, and Guy P. Marchal. This can be seen in the fact that concepts used in this work are derived from the articles published in this series. The difference between this series and my thesis is represented mainly by the fact that although I look at the development of national history, due to the specific context of my case it could be said that it is not solely about writing the Nation, but instead writing the State in the nation that did not have state tradition. Both the briefness of the period and the research focus on the problem of the Slovak State building then lead to the fact that this work puts greater focus on non-professional historical actors. Although these actors are also often included in the above-mentioned series, as Berger and Conrad write, the focus is on professional history writing²⁷.

²⁷ Berger, Stefan, and Christoph Conrad. *The Past as History: National Identity and Historical Consciousness in Modern Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Scope, Concepts and Sources

To answer the question of how the regime of the wartime Slovak Republic instrumentalized a representation of the early medieval history, there is a need to analyse sources published during the existence of the regime. As a result, these sources will cover a period from the declaration of the Slovak independence from March 1939 until the end of the State in 1945, published within the state's territory. In the case of exceptionally relevant resources, I want to include them if they fall into two categories. Firstly, I include sources which were written or published in the period from the declaration of the Slovak autonomy in 1938 until the declaration of independence. This exception is possible because in this period of autonomy, Hlinka's Slovak People's Party already controlled the Slovak Diet and it started with the building of its regime. Secondly, sources that were published after the end of the war, but which had been written in Slovakia during the war, and therefore during the existence of the State, are included. This is the case with František Bokeš's *History of Slovaks and Slovakia*. This synthesis of Slovak history was officially published in 1946 but it was written by Bokeš during 1944²⁸. Apart from this being a second academic synthesis of Slovak history, it was also written by a historian who was more independent from the regime than the author of the other existing synthesis. This will then allow me to contrast his account to more pro-regime works in order to highlight the differences.

One of the most important concepts for this work is the regime's concept of the master narrative that was used to legitimize its existence and policy. This master narrative is understood in the

²⁸ Stolárik, M. Mark. "The Painful Birth of Slovak Historiography in 20th Century."

sense as presented by Thijs Krijin under the term master-copy narrative²⁹. This means that the master narrative is a framework of important points which serves to unite various smaller and more partial local histories into one common thread. Any narrative that argues against or simply does not fit into this common framework is then understood as a counternarrative. For example, in the space of this thesis, an argument that Pribina's Principality of Nitra was a Slovak state would be understood as part of the master narrative while any work that would dispute this would be regarded as counternarrative.

As mentioned before, this thesis seeks to see how the Slovak State used a representation of the early medieval period in its legitimization. To restrict the possible pool of the sources as well as to properly define the research interest, representation of the early medieval period in this work is understood as a representation of the period since the arrival of Slavic people into the territory of contemporary Slovakia until the formation of the Kingdom of Hungary. More specifically, the focus will be on the representation of Pribina's Principality of Nitra as well as Great Moravia. This is because the representation of these two state-like historical entities provides the best possible sources of legitimization for the wartime Slovak Republic.

An important distinction that plays a role in this research is the distinctions between the concepts of the Great Moravian and the Cyril and Methodius traditions³⁰. These two concepts signify two different ways of interpretation in the Slovak historical narrative of the early medieval period. The Great Moravian tradition looks at the early medieval period in general,

²⁹ Thijs, Krijin. "The Metaphor of the Master: 'Narrative Hierarchy' in National Historical Cultures of Europe." In *The Contested Nation: Ethnicity, Class, Religion and Gender in National Histories*, by Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz, 60-75. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

³⁰ Vargová, Zuzana. "Veľkomoravská a Cyrilo-Methodská Tradícia v Tvorbe Štúrovcov." *Konštantínove Listy*, 2021: 123-130.

and Great Moravia in particular as a source of the Slovak state-building tradition. As a result, it tends to emphasise the wars and deeds of the various rulers of Great Moravia. The Cyril and Methodius tradition on the other hand is much closer tied to Christianity and it emphasises Slovak cultural development. This distinction is interesting due to the Slovak state's reliance on and legitimization of itself through Catholicism.

To fully explore how the Slovak State used a representation of the early medieval history it is necessary not to be restricted only to the writings of the academic historians. As such, this work will include as broad a range of historical actors as possible. Apart from the academic historians, it will include representations created by various politicians. As such, the main sources include two published syntheses of Slovak history as well as other academic articles. Furthermore, speeches given by important state officials such as Alexander Mach or Karol Mederly will be included. And finally, this work will also use main ideological texts of the regime.

Structure and Argument

This thesis is organised into five different parts, which include three main chapters together with an introduction and conclusion. The introduction, which you are reading right now, provides the definition of the topic as well as a thesis statement together with important concepts and definitions. More specifically, the introduction defines both the time scope as well as the geographical scope of the work. Furthermore, it defines what is understood under the representation of the early medieval history in this thesis. From concepts, the introduction brings in the understanding of the master narrative as well as the distinction between the Great Moravian and the Cyril and Methodius traditions.

The first chapter aims to provide the context to the use and development of historical narratives during the Second World War. As such it provides contexts for the historical development of the Slovak historical narrative regarding the early medieval period in general and Great Moravia

in particular. The subchapters are organized chronologically, and the point of division is 1918. This organization is used in order to highlight the drastically different environments between the Kingdom of Hungary and the First Czechoslovak Republic when it comes to Slovak nation-building.

The second chapter delves into academic narratives produced during the period researched. The most important part of the chapter is looking at the differences between two contemporary syntheses of Slovak history. The first-ever published synthesis was published by František Hrušovský, who was a member of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party as well as an MP of Slovak parliament, and who is often considered the court historian of the regime. This account will then be contrasted with the account given by František Bokeš, a historian without such direct ties to the regime and who drew heavily on the work of the first Slovak positivist historian Daniel Rapant, as well as by shorter article written by Rapant himself. This article is included to show the most direct continuation of pre-independence Slovak narrative.

The third chapter then looks at historical accounts that were aimed more at the public; namely accounts provided in ideological texts of the regime. These ideological texts are *On the Fundamentals of Slovak Statehood* and *Slovak National Socialism* by the chief ideologue of the conservative wing of the party, Štefan Polakovič. The other *Slovak National Socialism* was written by the ideologue of the competing radical wing of the party, Stanislav Mečiar. And finally, to provide a glimpse of the day-to-day use of these concepts in discourse, two speeches made by political representatives using historical argumentation will be included.

Finally, the conclusion will summarize the rest of the thesis. Mainly that, in spite of the Catholic trappings of the state, there existed a certain greater emphasis on Great Moravia as a source of Slovak statehood instead of the time of Christianisation or source of Slovak culture. This seems to imply that due to the foundation of the independent state there was a need to shift the Slovak historical narrative. From the narrative that defended regional and national uniqueness, this

shifted into the narrative of the state tradition. This then allows for the argument that during this period, certain regime aligned historians and other actors attempted to change the Slovak national narrative into the narrative of the state-building nation. They did it by the repeated focus on the Great Moravia legacy as a state-building legacy for the Slovak nation. Furthermore, this attempt was heavily involved in dialogue with the state-building narratives of the Czechs and Hungarians through the creation of the concept of the crown lands of Svätopluk as well as a certain insistence on the fact that supposed Slovak state tradition is the oldest tradition in Central Europe.

Great Moravia in Slovak history before 1939

Great Moravia as the Slovak Golden Age

The position of the Slovak nation-building can be considered both different and similar to other nations in the region of East-Central Europe. Its difference lies in the fact that in contrast to Poles, Czechs, or Hungarians, Slovaks did not have any late medieval state they could claim as their own to build their historical narrative. This led them to generally deemphasise historical arguments in the process of their nation-building³¹. Instead, the main thrust of their political and nation-building rhetoric lay in their focus on the existence and prevalence of the Slovak language. This allowed them to both proclaim their national specificity without problematizing their historical loyalty to the Kingdom of Hungary. Similarity, on the other hand, is in the fact that when they used historical rhetoric and constructed their national history, this national story comforted to tropes found in the national narratives of their neighbours as well as other non-Central European nations.

One of the most widespread and recognizable parts of the national historical narrative is the period of the Golden Age. Such myth of the Golden Age is not only important in the broader periodization of a national story, but it often helps to define other important aspects of the narrative³². For example, a description of such a period allows to identify protagonists of the national story, be it by telling stories of important heroes or by defining who exactly constitutes the nation in question, as well as antagonists and enemies of a given nation. Apart from providing definitions and periodization for a nation's historical narrative, a story of the Golden

³¹ Hudek, Adam. „Between Czech and Hungarians: Constructing Slovak National Identity from 19th Century to Present.“ *History Compass*, 2011: 257-268.

³² Thijs, Krijn. „The Metaphor of the Master: 'Narrative Hierarchy' in National Historical Cultures of Europe”.

Age can serve to both inspire pride in the nation as well as serve as a fable to warn before forces that originally led to the end of this Golden Age.

Like other East-Central European nations, Slovaks are no exception when it comes to the creation of their historical narratives. As such, the Slovak national building project, similar to the Czech or Hungarian ones, constructed its historical narrative encompassing important national milestones such as the period of the Golden Age. The most important difference between Slovaks and the above mentioned Czechs and Hungarians was the Slovaks' lack of an independent late medieval monarchical state tradition. This fact was one of the main reasons why Slovak nation building adopted the memory of 'available' Great Moravia to provide historical continuity and legitimacy to their nation-building project³³. The Slovak national narrative then identified Great Moravia, and especially Great Moravia under the rulership of Svätopluk, as its Golden Age.

This identification was especially important as it provided a way to compare Slovaks with Czechs and Hungarians. This importance stemmed from the fact that from its beginnings until 1939, the Slovak national narrative developed in reaction to and in relation to either the Hungarian historical narrative or Czech historical narrative³⁴.

As a result, the Slovak narrativization of the Great Moravia often served as a counter-narrative to either the Hungarian or the Czechoslovak master narrative. As a period of the Hungarian influence can be quite well differentiated from the period of the Czechoslovak master narrative by the formation of the first Czechoslovak Republic, this chapter will be split into two parts.

³³ Hudek, Adam. "Slovak historiography and constructing the Slovak national story up to 1948."

³⁴ Hudek, Adam. "Between Czech and Hungarians: Constructing Slovak National Identity from 19th Century to Present."

The first part will be tracking its evolution before the establishment of the First Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. The second will look at this narrative during the existence of the First Czechoslovak Republic from 1918 until 1938. This differentiation is important as before 1918 Slovak historical narrative evolved mainly as a counternarrative to official Hungarian history, then during the existence of the Czechoslovak Republic it evolved in the context of Czech and more importantly Czechoslovak historical narrative.

Apart from showing the long *durée* perspective of the development of the Slovak historical narrative, this chapter aims to demonstrate a sort of baseline of the Slovak representation of Great Moravia. More specifically, it seeks to establish the fact that before 1939, both before and after the foundation of Czechoslovakia, the narrative of Great Moravia as a source of the state-building tradition for Slovakia was much less prominent than in accounts given in the period between 1939 and 1945. This is caused by the fact that this narrative was focused much more on Great Moravia as either source of the cultural development of the Slovak people, or to create specific history different from the other nations surrounding ethnic Slovakia. In this case, this discourse can be taken as creating a specific ethnic and regional identity instead of a state-building one. This aim then radically changes with the foundation of the independent Slovakia, which needed historical legitimization.

Great Moravia in Slovak history before 1918

In the earliest accounts of history written in Hungary, the period of Great Moravia did not play a very important role³⁵. Great Moravia served only as an example of weak enemies subjugated by victorious Hungarians. What is more, in medieval and early modern chronicles written in Hungary, there is no direct connection between the inhabitants of Great Moravia and Slovaks. This original discontinuation between the inhabitants of Great Moravia and Slavs living in modern Slovakia can be also seen in the earliest accounts of history which try to include Slovaks in their narrative. In this type of historical narrative, Great Moravia is also portrayed as an enemy, mostly connected with the so-called ‘hospitality theory’³⁶. This theory stressed warm relationships between Slovaks and invading Hungarians. More specifically, it tried to subvert the Hungarian narrative of heroic conquest by giving the ancestors of modern Slovaks a role in the creation of the Kingdom of Hungary³⁷. In this narrative, Slovak ancestors merged voluntarily with the coming Hungarians, mostly in opposition to the oppressive rule of Great Moravia.

The main founder of this theory was 17th century Jesuit Samuel Timon³⁸. Through this narrative, he aimed to construct a harmonious beginning for the Kingdom of Hungary. To do this, he cast Great Moravia as external oppressive power. This oppression then led to the Slovak

³⁵ Hudek, “Slovak Historiography and Constructing the Slovak National Story up to 1948.”; Podolan, Peter. “Veľká Morava a Veľkomoravská tradícia u generácie Kollára a Šafárika.” *Český časopis Historický*, 2019: 59-93.

³⁶ Hudek, “Slovak historiography and constructing the Slovak national story up to 1948.”;

³⁷ Hudek, “Slovak historiography and constructing the Slovak national story up to 1948.”;

³⁸ Hudek, “Slovak historiography and constructing the Slovak national story up to 1948.”;

alliance with invading Hungarians against Moravians. After the destruction of Great Moravia, Slovak and Hungarian alliance resulted in the foundation of the Kingdom of Hungary.

As already mentioned, this narrative was meant to serve as a harmonious compromise between Hungarians and Slovaks, but it was never accepted by Hungarian historiography. As a result, Slovak national activists later rejected this theory. They instead constructed a narrative of the Slovak ‘civilizing mission’ toward Hungarians³⁹. Similarly, to many other minority Slavic discourses, Slovaks were responsible for civilizing nomadic Hungarians by teaching them agriculture and crafts, as well as converting them to Christianity. This narrative shift also allowed for a shift in the position of Great Moravia within the narration of Slovak history. In general, it moved from the position of being an external oppressive power to being the Golden Age of Slovak history⁴⁰, as this was the period in which there supposedly existed a powerful Slovak state with rich Christian culture.

One of the oldest and most archetypal accounts of Great Moravia as an important historical period for Slovaks comes from the start of the 19th century. These accounts that can be found in the works of Ján Hollý, Ján Kollár, and Pavol Jozef Šafárik, provided a base for most historical and artistic representation of Great Moravia within Slovak romantic nationalism as well as a wider context of various pan-Slavic narratives⁴¹. This comes from the fact that Kollár was one of the originators and a big advocate of cultural and linguistic pan-Slavism. As such, they greatly influenced Slovak representation of Great Moravia until the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Although all three of these narratives share certain similarities there

³⁹ Hudek, “Slovak historiography and constructing the Slovak national story up to 1948.”;

⁴⁰ Hudek, “Slovak historiography and constructing the Slovak national story up to 1948.”; Podolan, Peter. “Veľká Morava a Veľkomoravská tradícia...”

⁴¹ Podolan, Peter. “Veľká Morava a Veľkomoravská tradícia...”

are also differences between them. These differences stem from both the difference in confessions of authors (Hollý represented Catholics, while Kollár and Šafárik were Protestants) as well as the complexity and amount of work devoted to the topic⁴².

In general, Hollý's body of work providing examples of narrativizing Great Moravia is comprised of his epic poems, chiefly in his first poem *Svätopluk*⁴³. In these works, Hollý portrays Great Moravia as a Slovak kingdom and Svätopluk as a Slovak king. The poem is set during the war between Great Moravia and the Frankish Empire. Although in this work Hollý portrays Svätopluk's more treacherous acts from the historical chronicles (such as allying with Franks to defeat his predecessor, in this poem identified as his grandfather, Rastislav and then betraying them) he is still portrayed as a lawful king and heroic warrior. In his other works, Hollý tends to portray Svätopluk even better by bringing up his Christian piety as well as shying away from the description of his more treacherous acts. When it comes to geography, Hollý describes Great Moravia as being centred in what is today Slovakia and Moravia with the capital either in Nitra or Devín⁴⁴. Together with Hollý's rejection of Svätopluk's possible submission to Frankish king Carloman, this shows that Hollý portrays Great Moravia as a powerful kingdom with a powerful ruler inhabited by Slovaks. The cultural strength of the kingdom is then exemplified by the example of the Slovak civilizing mission toward Hungarians. As we can see, Hollý's account shows a representation of the Great Moravia as the first Slovak kingdom and so there exists an element of the state-building tradition in it. But despite this, his account focus lies on the glory of Svätopluk and the Slovak nation, not the Great Moravian

⁴² Podolan , Peter. "Veľká Morava a Veľkomoravská tradícia..."

⁴³ Podolan , Peter. "Veľká Morava a Veľkomoravská tradícia..."

⁴⁴ Podolan , Peter. "Veľká Morava a Veľkomoravská tradícia..."

state. Furthermore, he also exemplifies cultural development during this time instead of the state as an institution. Finally, in his account, you can see the influence of Timon as he argues that Hungary was a common project of Slovaks and Magyars. This shows that for Hollý, the national heritage of Great Moravia was more cultural instead of solely state centric. Showing that, similarly to other Slavic discourses, culture played a greater role than state-building traditions.

As already mentioned, accounts of Kollár and Šafárik broadly fit the same kind of narrative as Hollý's representation. More specifically, both portray Great Moravia as a powerful kingdom ruled by the powerful king Svätopluk representing the narrative of the lost golden age. The greatest difference between these accounts is the issue of identification of inhabitants of Great Moravia. Both offer a more complex identification of Great Moravia's inhabitants that links it not only with Slovaks but also with other Slavic nations. This could be caused by the fact that as Protestants, they had a much more direct connection to the Czech intellectual environment. This originated in the usage of biblical Czech as the religious language of choice among Slovak Protestants⁴⁵. Apart from this confessional difference, there is also the fact that both Kollár and Šafárik were advocates of certain forms of pan-Slavism and this position then influenced their portrayal of Great Moravia.

⁴⁵ As a result of this linguistic connection, Slovak Protestants in general had much closer ties to Czech lands. In general, Slovak Protestants rejected the first attempt at the official codification of the Slovak language. Instead, they only accepted the second attempt. This linguistic connection between Czech and Slovaks also became part of public discourse regarding the narrative of official Czechoslovak history during the First Republic. For example, the future Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia and Protestant Slovak Milan Hodža argued that the codification of the independent Slovak language was one of the greatest historical errors. See Hudek, Adam. "Between Czech and Hungarians: Constructing Slovak" or, "Slovak historiography and constructing the Slovak national story up to 1948.";

In contrast to Hollý, Kollár did not portray Moravia as a Slovak kingdom. Instead, according to his pan-Slavic ideals, he describes it as a kingdom unifying various Slavic peoples into one powerful empire that can resist foreign threats⁴⁶. Due to this narrative of Great Moravia as a unifying Slavic power, the story of the fall of Great Moravia becomes especially poignant to Kollár as in his eyes it exemplifies the greatest threat to Slavic peoples, namely their disunity⁴⁷. This then further reinforces Kollár's pan-Slavic message. Apart from this, Kollár also put great emphasis on Great Moravia's cultural importance and development.

Šafárik stands somewhere between Hollý and Kollár in his interpretation. But when analysed through his opinions regarding linguistic development, there is a certain closeness with Hollý, mainly in the question of inhabitants of Great Moravia. According to his work, Great Moravia was comprised of both Moravians and Slovaks⁴⁸. What is specific about his interpretation is his argument that at that time, before the foundation of the kingdom of Hungary, a linguistic border between Czech and Slovak forms of Slavic language was not the river Morava, which divides the territory of Slovakia and Morava. Instead, this border runs through the middle of the Morava region⁴⁹. As a result, although he considers Great Moravia as a kingdom inhabited by both Slovaks and Moravians, in his understanding, Moravians are linguistically Slovaks. Despite this complexity in the identity of inhabitants of Great Moravia, the rest of Šafárik's narrative aligns itself quite well with Hollý and Kollár. Great Moravia is portrayed as a powerful kingdom and

⁴⁶ Podolan , Peter. "Veľká Morava a Veľkomoravská tradícia..."

⁴⁷ Podolan , Peter. "Veľká Morava a Veľkomoravská tradícia..."

⁴⁸ Podolan , Peter. "Veľká Morava a Veľkomoravská tradícia..."

⁴⁹ Podolan , Peter. "Veľká Morava a Veľkomoravská tradícia..."

Svätopluk is portrayed as a powerful and heroic king⁵⁰. Similarly to the other two authors, there are also traces of Slovak civilizing mission and hospitality theory.

As can be seen in these accounts of the early 19th-century national activists, Great Moravia played a huge symbolic role in the Slovak historical narrative. This role, in contrast to previous centuries, was overwhelmingly positive. It is always portrayed as a powerful and culturally developed kingdom; what is more, it always in one way or another ‘belongs’ to Slovaks. What is important here is the role of Great Moravia, which is an independent state in this narrative. In all of this narrative, this fact plays a role, but instead of focusing on the fact of its independence, these activists focus much more on the power and cultural development within this kingdom.

In the middle of the 19th century, a new generation of Slovak intellectuals formed around politician, journalist, and writer Ľudovít Štúr. This group is often classified as the main representative of romanticism in Slovak literature. Štúr is also regarded as the main force behind the official codification of the Slovak language. In his work regarding Great Moravia, it is, quite surprisingly, possible to see a narrative close to interpretation espoused by Ján Hollý. More specifically, Protestant Štúr describes Great Moravia as a kingdom of Slovaks⁵¹, thus continuing the narrative represented by Catholic Hollý in the previous generation. The rest of Štúr’s account of the history of Great Moravia seems to be quite in line with an understanding of Great Moravia as a Golden Age of Slovaks. He argues that geographically Great Moravia was originally comprised of Moravia, Slovakia, and parts of Austria. Afterwards, during the reign

⁵⁰ Podolan, Peter. “Veľká Morava a Veľkomoravská tradícia...”

⁵¹ Vargová, Zuzana. „Veľkomoravská a Cyrilo-Methodská Tradícia”

of Svätopluk, Great Moravia was supposed to expand further into Pannonia, Poland, or Bohemia⁵².

Regarding the rulers of the Great Moravia, Štúr most highly praises Rastislav and then Svätopluk. One of the most clear-cut examples of Great Moravia as the Golden Age exists in a poem by Mikuláš Štefan Ferienčík. In his poem *Night in Nitra*⁵³, he creates continuity between the contemporary age of barbarism with heroic and splendid history during the age of Great Moravia in connection with the titular city of Nitra⁵⁴. Based on this, it can be argued that historical narratives regarding Great Moravia circulating in the time of Štúr's generation can be considered as a continuation of narratives existing in the previous generation. In this regard, we see a narrative of the Golden Age without too much emphasis on the independent nature of the state. In other words, it is still focused on a nation-forming aspect of Great Moravia representation instead of state tradition.

Even during the second half of the 19th century, while a lot of other nations started to write their positivist professional historiography, Slovak history remained a topic for amateur historians⁵⁵. This was caused by the fact that there was no university in the territory of today's Slovakia and thus there were no professionally trained historians among Slovak nationalists. One of the two well-known Slovak amateur historians active right before and during the

⁵² Vargová, Zuzana. „Veľkomoravská a Cyrilo-Methodská Tradícia”

⁵³ Noc v Nitre

⁵⁴ Vargová, Zuzana. „Veľkomoravská a Cyrilo-Methodská Tradícia”

⁵⁵ Stolárik, M. Mark. „The painful birth of Slovak historiography in 20th century. “

foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic was Július Botto⁵⁶. He was the author of one of the first attempts to synthesise Slovak history in his *Short History of Slovaks*⁵⁷.

In this synthesis, he narrativizes Great Moravia as an independent Slovak kingdom⁵⁸. Geographically he locates it in the contemporary areas of the Slovak settlement. He also describes it as a rich and powerful kingdom ruled by powerful monarchs titled grand princes or later kings⁵⁹. According to Botto, the rulers, similarly to the inhabitants, were ethnic Slovaks who ruled in accord with their people and whose power was constrained by democratic institutions. In his work, he also stresses civilization and cultural development brought by Saints Cyril and Methodius. This cultural development showed itself both in a great number of Slovak language schools as well as their conversion to Christianity⁶⁰. In the end, Great Moravia was destroyed by its German enemies who allied themselves with Hungarian invaders. For Botto, after this destruction of Great Moravia Slovak history ended in 1848. This was not caused purely by the end of the independent Slovak state. Instead, it was a result of Saint Stephen's adoption of feudalism which subjugated not only Slavic nationalities but Magyars themselves in such a manner that there was no possibility for national life in Hungary until 1848⁶¹.

This rather limited account of the narrativization of Great Moravia during the period before 1918 shows several important elements. Firstly, together with the development of Slovak nationalism, this account moved from 'Hungarian friendly form' towards an account focusing on Slovak national specificity. In practice, this meant a change from the portrayal of Great

⁵⁶ Other being Jozef Škultéty.

⁵⁷ Krátke Dejiny Slovákov

⁵⁸ Botto, Július. Krátke Dejiny Slovákov. 1914.

⁵⁹ Botto. Krátke Dejiny Slovákov

⁶⁰ Botto. Krátke Dejiny Slovákov

⁶¹ Botto. Krátke Dejiny Slovákov

Moravia as an enemy other, into the kingdom of Slovaks that was destroyed by invading Hungarians. After the creation of this link between Slovaks and Great Moravia, the period is uniformly portrayed as the Golden Age of the Slovak people. Great Moravia is shown to be a powerful and most importantly highly culturally developed state that lay the cultural foundations of Slovak people. What is interesting is that most of the focus within the narrative is not on the fact that Great Moravia was independent; instead, this narrative is focused on the power and culture providing a heroic Golden Age myth for the Slovak nation as an ethnic group. This also quite neatly fits into the specific aim of the Slovak nation-building that deemphasised historical arguments in favour of language-based ones.

Slovak History and Great Moravia in Czechoslovakia 1918-1938

The dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire meant a great turning point for the Slovak national building. It was the first time since the start of the Slovak nation-building project that Slovaks stopped being part of the Kingdom of Hungary; a position that deeply influenced both tactics and content of the Slovak national movement. Instead, Slovaks became one of the constituting parts of the Czechoslovak Republic. This turning point did not only lay in the fact that the Republic did not continue Hungarian policies towards Slovaks and that 1918 meant the end of the active rejection and suppression of the Slovak nationalism, but also that the new state brought several changes that positively supported the development of Slovak nationalism in general and the Slovak historical narrative in particular.

One of the important changes that supported the growth of Slovak nationalism in Czechoslovakia was the state idea itself. Since Slovaks moved from the position of being a minority nation into the position of one part of a titular nation of the state, Slovak nationalism moved from being marginal and, in a sense, anti-state to the position of conditionally being one of the pillars of the new state. This conditionality stemming from the fact that this Slovak national narrative still had to conform to the Czechoslovakist framework. This change showed

itself most prominently in the Slovak historical narrative. Since the state-building idea of official Czechoslovakism was deeply entwined with the historical narrative, Slovak historical narrative moved from the position of the counter-narrative into the position of the state-building narrative⁶². Another important change that happened because of the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic is a huge boom in Slovak language education. The state established school networks for both primary and secondary education in the Slovak language. Furthermore, it also established the first Slovak language university in the form of Comenius University in Bratislava. However, due to the lack of the educated Slovaks, teachers in these new institutions were often Czech. These schools then produced a great number of nationally conscious and educated Slovaks, creating big portion of middle-class Catholics. Such development would be unthinkable in the previous period.

Despite these positive developments for Slovaks, the relationship between Slovak nationalism and the Czechoslovak state, as well as between proponents of Slovak and Czechoslovak history, became very quickly strained and antagonistic. The main point of contention lies in the already mentioned conception of official Czechoslovakism. This conception argued for the political unity of the Czech and Slovaks to argue for Czechoslovakia as a unitary nation-state. This caused a lot of conflict between Czechs and Slovaks as most of the Czech elite agreed with the official position that claimed this unity was natural and historical of one nation, while Slovaks tended to assume it was just a pragmatic and political alliance between two different nations⁶³.

⁶² Hudek, Adam. „Between Czech and Hungarians...”

⁶³ Bakke, Elizabeth. „Czechoslovakism in Slovak history. “ In *Slovakia in History*, autor: Mikuláš Teich, Dušan Kováč a Martin D Brown, 247-269. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
Bakke, Elizabeth. „The Making of Czechoslovakism in the First Czechoslovak Republic.”

This situation was not helped by the ambiguousness of the term among its proponents. It could be understood that one Czechoslovak nation is comprised of two tribes of Czechs and Slovaks speaking dialects of one common language⁶⁴. This in essence ‘demoted’ Slovak and Czech national identity into regional identities within the common framework. On the other hand, it was often understood that Czechoslovak identity is a natural continuation of being Czech⁶⁵. In this understanding, Slovaks became just a part of the Czech nation. This meant that any differences between Czech and Slovaks were the result of the Hungarian influence, as such there existed a belief that once Slovaks would be away from this influence for long enough, they will be assimilated into ‘proper’ Czechs. It is no surprise then that a majority of the new Slovak elite tended to stand in the opposition to the narrative of the official Czechoslovakism⁶⁶. This attitude showed itself not only among elites but also in mass politics as autonomist Catholic conservatives of Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party became consistently the most electorally successful party in Slovakia.

The foundation of Czechoslovakia also marked a very important point of development in the construction of the Slovak historical narrative. Namely, Slovak history stopped being the sole domain of amateur historians as new professionally trained Slovak historians started to work⁶⁷. This development and slow institutionalisation of professional Slovak historiography combined with the importance of history in official Czechoslovakism led to the fact that political conflict between Slovak autonomists and Czechoslovak centralists showed itself in history as well. In

⁶⁴ Bakke, Elizabeth. „The Making of Czechoslovakism in the First Czechoslovak Republic.”

⁶⁵ Bakke, Elizabeth. „Czechoslovakism in Slovak history.”

⁶⁶ Bakke, Elizabeth. „Czechoslovakism in Slovak history.”

⁶⁷ Hudek, Adam. „Between Czech and Hungarians...”

the field of history, it took the form of a dilemma whether it is possible to write either Czechoslovak or Slovak history.

The Czechoslovak narrative was supported mostly by Czech professors, for example Václav Chaloupecký, at the Comenius University as well as some Slovaks, such as Branislav Varsík, whose adoption of this concept could be considered spurred more by pragmatism than actual agreement with it⁶⁸. This narrative was generally based on Czech history with Slovak history taken as a natural extension of it. Apart from ideological reasons, proponents of Czechoslovak history also preferred this conception of their opinion that writing Slovak history is not exactly possible. This was because most of the Czech professors as students of Goll and Pekař put great emphasis on the importance of the existence of a state of which history could be written⁶⁹. This could be done with the Czech state traditionally tied to the medieval kingdom of Bohemia, but it could not be done with independent Slovak history lacking this state tradition.

The most vocal critic of this Czechoslovakist conception of history among academic historians was Daniel Rapant⁷⁰. He is considered to be the founder of the Slovak positivist historiography as well as the first professional Slovak historian. One of his studies is part of the sources analysed in the next chapter of this thesis. When it came to writing national history, he was a

⁶⁸ One of the most prominent Slovak supporters of the conception of Czechoslovak history were Milan Hodža, later Czechoslovak Prime Minister, and mentioned Branislav Varsík, a historian who argued that Czechoslovak history should be constructed by combining Czech history with selected parts of Hungarian history to create a unified narrative. With the end of the first Czechoslovak Republic, Varsík abandoned this conception completely and started to write Slovak history. For example see Milan Ducháček, “Václav Chaloupecký a Daniel Rapant-trauma z blízkosti” or M. Mark Stolarík, „The Painful Birth of Slovak Historiography in 20th Century.“

⁶⁹ Hudek, Adam. „Slovenská historiografia a československé dejiny v rokoch 1918-1968 [Slovak historiography and Czechoslovak history in years 1918-1968].“ *Forum Historiae*, 2007: 49-62.

⁷⁰ An interesting fact is that when it comes to Rapant politics, he was not a supporter of parties of autonomist bloc such as Hlinka's People Party or Slovak national party. Instead, he had personal contacts with the Slovak wing of the Czechoslovak Agrarian party. See Milan Ducháček, “Václav Chaloupecký a Daniel Rapant- trauma z blízkosti“

strong advocate of the conception of independent Slovak history, arguing that instead of focusing on the history of the state, it should be written as the history of a self-conscious national group. His conception of Czechoslovak history was not the conception of the history of the Czechoslovak nation, instead, he argued that it should be the history of distancing and approaching two independent nations.

As we can see, in this politically historical debate between Czechoslovakism and Slovaks, the concept of state tradition played an important role. Because of this, the question of Great Moravia came to the forefront of the debate. Representation of Great Moravia was instrumentalized by proponents of Czechoslovakism. For them, Great Moravia was the first common state of Czechs and Slovaks⁷¹. As such it served as a historical antecedent of the Czechoslovak Republic as it was considered the first nation-state of a united Czechoslovak nation. This can be demonstrated very well by a quote from Czech historian Kamil Krofta. In his text *About Aims of Slovak Historiography* he wrote that

Here, at the very beginning of history [during the Great Moravian Period], there is a natural unity of nation and state, unity, which, unfortunately, was then violently destroyed, but in the history of both parted branches of our nation and their national subconscious, left deep traces.⁷²

In this narration it is clear what lacked in the previous Slovak presentation of Great Moravia, namely, Great Moravia's status as a state was no longer just part of some glorious past. Just another fact in its story, so to say. Instead, with Czech inspired emphasis on the state tradition the Great Moravian state is the source of national unity. A unity that, although broken during

⁷¹ Hudek, Adam. Slovenská historiografia a československé dejiny v rokoch 1918-1968

⁷² As cited in Hudek, Adam. „Slovenská historiografia a československé dejiny v rokoch 1918-1968. My translation

most of history, left traces that have been deep enough to provide a base for the symbolical re-foundation of this state. This narrativization of Great Moravia led to the instrumentalization of its image to support the legitimacy of the Czechoslovak state. One of such instrumentalizations was state support for the Cyril and Methodius tradition.

To counter this position, Slovak autonomists reacted in two ways. Firstly, they still argued that Great Moravia was not a Czechoslovak state but instead a Slovak state and tried to show that its centre was east of the Czech settled lands⁷³. Secondly, they shifted the emphasis of their own historical narrative from the period of Great Moravia to the period preceding it, more specifically to the period of the Principality of Nitra and its ruler Pribina⁷⁴. They argued that the Principality of Nitra was a true Slovak state comprising Slovak territory.

These two narratives, the Czechoslovakist narrative of Great Moravia and the autonomist narrative of the Principality of Nitra came to clash in 1930 during the 1100th anniversary of the consecration of the first Christian church in the territory of Slovakia as well as the whole of East-Central Europe. This consecration was supposed to happen during the reign and on the order of Pribina. As such the idea to celebrate this anniversary on a massive national scale came from the Slovak circles. The government only later joined in and took patronage over the celebration⁷⁵. In today's historiography, these celebrations are known for the fact that during their culmination in Nitra, Hlinka's party took control over them, and they became one of the biggest and most prominent pro-autonomist demonstrations during the interwar period. But for

⁷³ Hudek, Adam. *Slovenská historiografia a československé dejiny v rokoch 1918-1968*

⁷⁴ Principality centred on today's city of Nitra and its only known ruler. Pribina was later expelled from Nitra by Moravian prince Mojmir. The event that leads to the foundation of Great Moravia.

⁷⁵ Arpáš, Robert. „Prvky Cyrilo-Methodskej Tradície ako Súčasť Pribinovho odkazu? (Oslavy 1100. Výročia Kresťanstva v Československu).“ *Konštantínove Listy*, 2017: 233-240.

this thesis, a different aspect of this event is important, as this event shows how Slovak autonomists emphasized Pribina's Principality instead of Great Moravia in their historical narrative.

During the preparation of the celebration as well as during the events comprising the celebration both the government and the original proponents of the idea agreed that the most important aspect of the celebration is the idea of historical importance and presence of Christianity in the territory of Czechoslovakia⁷⁶. But how they decided to work with this legacy of Christianity differed. The Czechoslovak government tried to put the consecration of Nitra's church into the framework of the Saint Cyril and Methodius traditions. Through this they wanted to include this event into the history of Great Moravia and the narrative of Czechoslovak national history. However Slovak proponents had other ideas. Instead of putting it in the context of later developments, they stressed the importance of the event for Slovakia and tried to keep it in the pre-Moravian period context⁷⁷.

As can be seen despite the tradition of representing Great Moravia as a Slovak state, during the first Czechoslovak Republic, Slovak nationalists did not use it as a source of their state-building tradition. Instead, they focused on the pre-Moravian period as a source of their specificity as a national collective. This was caused by the Czechoslovak state's embrace of representation of Great Moravia as its historical antecedent. This antecedent, under the influence of Czech state-oriented historical tradition, provided historical legitimacy for the common state and the idea

⁷⁶ Arpáš, Robert. Prvky Cyrilo-Methodskej Tradície ako Súčasť Pribinovho odkazu? (Oslavy 1100. Výročia Kresťanstva v Československu).

⁷⁷ Arpáš, Robert. Prvky Cyrilo-Methodskej Tradície ako Súčasť Pribinovho odkazu? (Oslavy 1100. Výročia Kresťanstva v Československu).

of a common Czechoslovak nation. This then creates quite striking contrast when representatives of Hlinka's party, such as Alexander Mach, started to propagate Great Moravia as historical antecedent of the independent Slovak State.

Slovak State Tradition in Wartime Historiography

For Slovak historiography, the foundation of the wartime Slovak State meant further development. Apart from the change of the state's ideological framework, i. e. official support for writing *Slovak* history, the declaration of independence meant new material and institutional realities. First of all, following the foundation of the state, most Czech-born professors left Slovakia. This opened new career opportunities for younger Slovak historians, who generally studied during the interwar period at the former Comenius University, now named Slovak University. Apart from this, this period also saw the foundation of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and Arts as an institution that was supposed to be the driving force behind further Slovak cultural and scientific development⁷⁸.

Based on this context, it is no surprise that it was this period that saw the writing and publishing of the first syntheses of Slovak history written by professional historians⁷⁹. But these syntheses were not the sole product of the change of atmosphere within the Slovak academic historiography. Unsurprisingly, they are also shown to be closely intertwined with the political contexts of their creation. One of the ways to show this connection is to study the discourse of these historical works regarding Great Moravia and the importance of its state tradition to Slovaks. Because of this, this chapter focuses on four works of Slovak professional historiography written and/or published in the period between the years 1938-1945 to show the political implications of these works.

⁷⁸ Hudek, Adam. Vznik a vývoj Slovenskej akadémie vied a umení v rokoch 1942-1945

⁷⁹ Hudek, Adam. Najpolitickéjšia veda: Slovenská historiografia v rokoch 1948-1968

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, these four works are two syntheses and two shorter studies/lectures. Their authors are three of the most well-known historians of the period: Daniel Rapant, František Bokeš, and František Hrušovský. Hrušovský is the author of the two analysed texts. He wrote the first academic synthesis of Slovak history titled *Slovak History*⁸⁰ and is also the author of the printed lecture called *Slovakia in History of Central Europe*⁸¹. His position is represented by these two texts based on two main reasons. Firstly, because he was the most prominent historian supporting the regime, to the point he is often called its ‘court historian’, he represents the main official narrative of the state. Secondly, although both texts were published in 1939, the lecture was delivered and published during the period of autonomy, while his synthesis was published after the declaration of independence. This allows me to illustrate a shift in narrativization of the history within the camp of regime supporters.

Both Bokeš and Rapant, on the other hand, differ in their politics from Hrušovský. Although Rapant himself was, as the founder of Slovak positivist historiography, one of the most prominent voices pushing for independent Slovak history, he was not closely connected to either of the autonomist Slovak parties of the interwar period. Bokeš then is often regarded as an outright opponent of the independent Slovak regime⁸². Based on this, the inclusion of their work in this thesis is used to illustrate Slovak narrative more distant to the regime and the changes within it, as well as to show continuation with certain pre-independence historical narratives.

⁸⁰ Slovenské Dejiny

⁸¹ Slovensko v Dejínach Strednej Európy

⁸² Hudek, Adam. Najpolitickjšia veda: Slovenská historiografia v rokoch 1948-1968

When it comes to the structure of this chapter, it is organised around analyses of these four works. These analyses are ordered chronologically from works published in 1939 to works published in 1946. This chronological order is important because, as will be shown in the question of Slovak state-tradition stemming from references to Great Moravia, it shows how this question changed throughout time and how it differed. More specifically, this chapter aims to show that the narrativization of Great Moravia as a source of the state tradition in Slovak history was a pragmatic decision taken by Hrušovský to legitimize the new independent Slovak state.

Hrušovský, Autonomy and Slovakia in Central Europe

The first analysed text is Hrušovský's work titled *Slovakia in History of Central Europe*⁸³. Although it tries to give a synthetic overview of Slovak history, this text is one of the two shorter ones analysed in this chapter. This is because it is not a synthesis in the form of the book; instead, it is an adapted lecture that Hrušovský gave. What is contextually essential for the analysis of this lecture is where it took place, which also involves the audience for this lecture, as well as the dates of this lecture and its subsequent publishing. These facts are important as they allow me to argue that the historical narrative given within this lecture was an integral part of the contemporary autonomist discourse, and not some form of anomaly within the movement.

⁸³ Hrušovský, František. Slovensko v Strednej Európe. Turčiansky Sv. Martin: Matica Slovenská, 1939.

Firstly, this lecture was given in front of the general assembly of a local chapter of Matica Slovenská⁸⁴. Matica Slovenská⁸⁵ is a Slovak cultural foundation that was founded to develop the Slovak language and culture in 1863. The Hungarian government shut it down in 1875. This organisation was re-founded in 1918 during the establishment of Czechoslovakia. During the interwar period, Matica became the intellectual centre of Slovak nationalists arguing for autonomy, and it was often in conflict with another intellectual centre of intellectual life in Slovakia, Comenius University⁸⁶.

Another important factor is where the lecture happened. This is because it happened in Turčiansky Svätý Martin⁸⁷. This town was the original historical seat of Matica Slovenská, and the centre of the Slovak National Party. This made Martin the cultural and political centre of Slovak nationalism in the 19th century. These two points show that this lecture was given in an environment that was more than friendly to the ideas and goals of Slovak nationalism as it was part of a meeting of Slovak nationalists in the historical centre of Slovak nationalism. This implies that Hrušovský as a supporter of Matica could speak openly, and therefore his lecture would represent the mainstream discourse among Slovak nationalists at that time.

Another important contextual point for this text is also the time when it was delivered. According to the information given in the published version, this lecture was given on 29 April 1938, and it was published in 1939. What is more, this lecture was supposed to be adapted and tweaked before publishing, which is shown by the text referring to 'revolutionary events that

⁸⁴ Miestny odbor Matice Slovenskej in Slovak. Hrušovský, František. Slovensko v Strednej Európe.

⁸⁵ Similar names have other nationalist cultural foundations among other Slavic groups. For example, Matica Srpska (Serbian Matica) or Matica Česká (Czech Matica), both of which preceded Matica Slovenská.

⁸⁶ Hudek, Adam. "Vznik a vývoj Slovenskej akadémie vied a umení v rokoch 1942-1945"

⁸⁷ Contemporary Martin

happened on 6 October 1938. This date was the date of the establishment of Slovak political autonomy. This, together with the lack of mention of the declaration of independence means that the final version of it was compiled during the period of Slovak autonomy. As such, it can be understood as an example of a mainstream discourse of Slovak nationalists who just achieved their long-time goal of political autonomy.

The text itself is divided into several parts. The first two parts talk about the geography of Slovakia as well as its political history, and the rest focuses more on the cultural development of the territory. The author argues that geography is important as it provides a ‘stage’ in which history is performed. The ‘stage’ is, according to him, an unchangeable and permanent fixture of Slovak history. He then argues that there are two main important facts stemming from Slovak geography that influenced its history. Firstly, it is the geography of Slovakia as a territory which led to a division of Slovakia into three broad regions. This is because these regions are based on two river basins (Danube for Western Slovakia, Tisza for Eastern Slovakia) and the central mountainous region dividing these two (Central Slovakia). But the fact that is much more important for his narrative of history is the location of Slovakia as such in wider Central European geography. He positions Slovakia as an important point of various crossroads, both in a sense of a meeting point of important trade routes, as well as in the sense of being a borderland territory. And this notion of Slovakia as a special space shaped by this position at the crossroads of Europe is one of the main motifs of his argument.

One of the best ways to show how Hrušovský emphasises the idea of border and crossroads in his lecture is his treatment of the existence of Great Moravia. According to him, the position of Slovak territory on the ‘eastern edge’ of the Germanic world and ‘western edge’ of the Slavic world explains why the first recognised Slavic states in history developed in this territory. This was caused by the fact that there was a need for a bulwark against Germanic expansion, and so the Slavs living in this territory had to centralise power and create states much sooner than

others. This he sees as one of the reasons for the creation of both Pribina's Principality of Nitra, Great Moravia, as well as preceding Samo's Empire. In his treatment of Great Moravia, he does not stray from the main points of the Slovak narrative regarding it. He considers the territory of Slovakia as a centre of Great Moravia, which was a 'Slavic great power'⁸⁸, and that this period is the 'glorious chapter of Slovak history'. When it comes to the fall of Great Moravia, he again uses his concept of crossroads to explain its fall. According to him it came due to Moravia's position on the crossroads, a position which allowed it to be the target of the unified Hungarian-German attack⁸⁹. According to him, this is a tragedy, but the fall of the state did not mean the end of the Slovak nation and what is more, Great Moravia created conditions that created a base for the future's specificity of Slovak territory.

These conditions emerged because the territory of contemporary Slovakia, as the former central territory of Great Moravia, was on a much a higher level of both cultural and administrative development than the rest of Hungary. This then showed itself in the importance of Slovak territory within the newly established kingdom, for example, in the form of it being the traditional territory of the Principality of Nitra that was granted as an appanage to the members of the Árpád dynasty. Later this continued in territory controlled by nobleman Matthias Csák⁹⁰ or by its later history connected with Bohemia's Hussite movement or its history as the main territory of Royal Hungary after the start of Habsburg rule. The case of Matthias Csák is very

⁸⁸Hrušovský, František. Slovensko v Strednej Európe.

⁸⁹ Here it is important to point out that in Slovak Hrušovský uses the terms Maďari and Nemci. Names that would probably not be used in modern historiography as they are tied to modern nation-states.

⁹⁰ In Slovakia colloquially known as Lord of the river Váh and Tatras. I. e. of Slovakia as Váh and Tatras are traditional symbolic markers of Slovak territory.

interesting in showing this historical specificity of Slovak territory as, according to Hrušovský, ‘specificity of territory displayed itself in the specificity of this individual’.

Furthermore, this work also displays traces of interwar autonomist focus on Pribina’s Principality instead of Great Moravia. Pribina’s Principality is represented as the first state formation of Slovaks and, historically also of the West Slavs. Although Hrušovský uses the term state to describe it, it is not only way of its description, and he does not emphasise this nature of statehood when referring to it. Furthermore, Hrušovský focuses on the importance of Pribina for the Christianization of Slovak territory. He does this by arguing that Cyril and Methodius only deepened Christianity within the already Christianised territory. For him, this is also important as he argues that Pribina’s action provided foundations on which Slovak allegiance to the Western cultural sphere was built, arguing that Cyril and Methodius Slavic worship was only a moment within Slovak history. Furthermore, a preference for Pribina’s tradition over Great Moravia can be seen in the different representations of Pribina’s sons Kocel’ and Svätopluk. While Kocel’ is portrayed as a wise ruler helping the spread of Christianity, Svätopluk is portrayed more problematically as a powerful but also unchristian ruler coming to conflicts with Methodius.

As can be shown in this text, Hrušovský does not put a big emphasis on Great Moravia as the source of Slovak state tradition; instead, he focuses on the representation as source of the administrative and institutional development that was crucial for the development of Slovak specificity. Furthermore, he also shows somehow greater sympathy for Pribina’s Principality representing discourse popular among autonomists in the interwar period. What is even more important, he talks about inheritors of Great Moravia statehood, but these inheritors are not Slovaks. Instead, he identifies them as medieval Bohemia and Hungary. Again, this suggests that idea of the state tradition was not important for Slovak nationalist discourse. At this time

(before the declaration of independence), it instead focused much more on the idea of Slovak specificity used as a way of arguing for autonomy but not independence.

Hrušovský and his *History of Slovaks* after Independence

After the declaration of the Slovak independence, there is a slight but important shift within Hrušovský's narrative. This shift lies in the fact that it does not only focus on the Great Moravia as a source of the specificity of the Slovak nation and its territory but also puts a much greater focus on the idea of pre-existing Slovak statehood. Although his post-independence narrative keeps many aspects of his narrative from the previous text, such as narrativizing Slovakia as the place at the crossroads of Europe or stressing the importance of Christianity in Slovak development, this shifting focus can be seen from the first pages of the *History of Slovaks*⁹¹. This is because right in the short introduction of the book, Hrušovský writes about 'building and reinforcing renewed Slovak state'. This clearly shows that the pre-existing Slovak statehood became important at the time of the book's publishing.

Hrušovský *History of Slovaks* is an important milestone in the development of Slovak historiography. This is because it is the first-ever published synthesis of Slovak history that was written by an academically trained historian⁹². As a result, its publication can be understood not only in the context of the foundation of the new Slovak state but also in the context of the historiographical debate about the feasibility of Slovak history. The book itself was published in 1939 by Matica Slovenská; this makes the published information seem to be the same as those of *Slovakia in Central Europe*. But despite this, there is an important difference between

⁹¹ Hrušovský, František. Slovenské dejiny [Slovak History]. Martin: Matica Slovenská, 1939.

⁹² Hudek, Adam. Najpolitickéjšia veda: Slovenská historiografia v rokoch 1948-1968

the circumstances in which these two texts were published. As the introduction of this book shows, its reference to the new state happened after 14 March 1939, which means after the formal declaration of independence. The event significantly changed the political situation within the country.

As already mentioned, the book starts with a short introduction that narrativizes the reasons for publishing the book. In this short paragraph, Hrušovský argues that the Slovak nation ‘after a long millennium starts to build conditions of its new life in the new free state’. Apart from further narrativizing this context of the new statehood, Hrušovský also says that he wants to ‘give this book predominantly to the hands of the young Slovak generation which is conscious of its great task and historical responsibility to enter new Slovak life...’. Based on this, it is easy to see that the writing and publishing of this book were not only about propagating Slovak history and increasing the general historical knowledge of the Slovak population. Instead, Hrušovský shows that one of his main aims was to be a part of the building of the new state and its national consciousness.

Before getting to actual historical narration, Hrušovský devotes the first two chapters to more general matters. Namely to explain what he considers Slovak history and to delineate the geographical scope of Slovakia. In this part, there is an obvious continuation of his previous work as he identifies the same geographical factors in *Slovakia in Central Europe*. Furthermore, he again works with the idea of Slovakia being at the crossroads of Europe, a fact that supposedly had a big impact on Slovak history. Afterwards, he shifts to a historical narrative which keeps the similar framework as his previous text but with the greater depth, thanks to the different lengths of the texts.

Despite this continuation, as was already mentioned, there exist important and obvious differences. This difference lies in the usage of the word state. While in his previous text, Hrušovský referred to Great Moravia as a ‘great power’ or to Pribina’s Principality as a

‘political formation’, the narrative of the *History of Slovaks* refers to these as ‘states’. This idea of pre-existing statehood is projected even further back into history as even the Samo’s Empire of the early 7th century, previously described as an ‘empire’, is described as the ‘first Slavic state along the middle Danube’. This shows a direct shift and new emphasis on the idea of the pre-existing Slovak statehood that did not exist in Hrušovský’s lecture delivered before and prepared to be published during the Slovak attempts to achieve autonomy within the Czechoslovak Republic. As the given aim of the text is to support the new Slovak statehood, it is easy to argue that Hrušovský’s change in narrative comes from the attempt to create historical legitimization for the new state.

Another interesting shift that seems to exist in Hrušovský’s narrative is a shift to the greater emphasis on the Slovak nation. While in *Slovakia in Central Europe* was the main interest historical development of Slovakia as a territory with its specificity, in *History of Slovaks*, there is a greater focus on Slovaks as a nation that arrived in the territory of Slovakia fully formed. The best way to represent it is to focus on the difference in the description of the Samo’s Empire. As already mentioned in the former text, it is mentioned as an empire along the middle Danube, but Hrušovský does not emphasise any special connection of it with Slovakia or Slovaks. Instead, he identifies Pribina’s Principality as the first political formation in the territory of Slovakia. In *History of Slovaks*, on the other hand, he treats the story of the Samo’s Empire as evidence that (Slovaks) right in the first century of their life had to defend their homeland at this dangerous crossroad of Europe against numerical superiority of their neighbours from both sides. As can be seen, there is a much greater emphasis on the national existence than on territorial specificity.

There is a much greater emphasis on the idea of pre-existing Slovak statehood in Hrušovský’s work published after the Slovak declaration of independence. But even despite this emphasis, in chapters that deal directly with the early medieval history in Slovakia, Hrušovský stays away

from creating a direct historical continuity between the early medieval period and the newly independent state. He even points out that both medieval Bohemia and Hungary became the heirs of certain aspects of Great Moravia. The much more direct connection between these two historical periods comes only on the second to last page of both the book and the chapter that is devoted to the formation of the new independent Slovak Republic. Here Hrušovský directly writes that ‘Slovak Republic, renewed state of wise Pribina and powerful Svätopluk, is the result of a thousand-year-old historical development’. This shows that in this narrative, Pribina’s Principality and Great Moravia are not supposed to be only individual instances of the Slovak states but direct antecedents of the wartime Slovak State, upon which part of the legitimacy of this state relies.

Daniel Rapant and his Mystery of Pribyna’s Church in Nitra

With the move from works of František Hrušovský to text written by Daniel Rapant, we move from the outright supporter of Hlinka’s party and Slovak wartime regime to a different kind of Slovak nationalist narrative. In terms of politics, Rapant was personally connected to the leadership of Slovak Agrarians, such as the former Czechoslovak prime-minister Milan Hodža, rather than having any open contact with Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party⁹³. Furthermore, there is also an issue of religion; while Hlinka’s party was openly Catholic, Rapant was born in the traditional Protestant town of Holíč. Protestantism within the town was tied to local Slovak nationalist thinking to such an extreme that there has been a small scandal when the daughter of a local teacher and member of the Slovak National Party married a Catholic Czech historian named Václav Chaloupecký, a person who would later become Rapant’s academic colleague

⁹³ Ducháček, Milan. Václav Chaloupecký a Daniel Rapant- trauma z blízkosti

and rival at Comenius University⁹⁴. This meant that the declaration of Slovak independence probably meant a boost for both Rapant's career as well as his academic theories. Despite this he never took any official position within the regime's government in contrast to Hrušovský, who was a member of Slovak parliament.

The sample text used in this chapter is Rapant's study called *Pribyna's Church in Nitra*⁹⁵. The main aim of this article is to provide a possible explanation of the origin and reason for building this church. As could be seen around the conflict surrounding its millennial anniversary, described in the previous chapter, the church is an important part of the Slovak historical narrative. The study was published in 1942, three years after the declaration of independence. Another important difference is that this study was not published by Matica Slovenská. Instead, it was published in a cultural and societal review magazine called *Elán*. The tradition of this magazine stretched back to the First Czechoslovak Republic and tried to put Slovak issues into a more general context.

Before the closer reading of the article, it is necessary to explain the existing differences in spelling between the name of the article and the name that has been used in the rest of this thesis. More specifically, the difference between contemporary and Rapant's spelling of Pribyna. Both names refer to the same historical figure, but the spelling 'Pribina' is the spelling that is the accepted spelling in modern Slovak. The spelling 'Pribyna', on the other hand, is Rapant's own choice which he depends on in his work by arguing that the name's etymology stretches to the verb 'pribývať'⁹⁶ and thus it should keep the spelling coming from this origin.

⁹⁴ Ducháček, Milan. Václav Chaloupecký a Daniel Rapant- trauma z blízkosti

⁹⁵ Rapant, Daniel. *Pribynov Nitriansky Kostolík*. Bratislava: Universum, 1942.

⁹⁶ The best approximate translation would be *to increase* or *to expand*.

As already mentioned, in the article itself, Rapant tries to explain the origin and reason for the building of the titular church. This question is interesting to him because, based on the most accepted chronology, at the time of the church's consecration, Pribina was not yet baptised. Because of this, most of the explanations recounted by Rapant are connected to the existence of some unknown minority of Christians within Pribina's territory or to some sort of diplomatic decision aimed at creating treaties with Franks. Rapant rejects this explanation on the grounds of their implausibility. Instead, he argues that the origin of the church has to be in Pribina's marriage with a Bavarian noblewoman with relations to the bishop Adalram of Salzburg, who consecrated the church. He explains this by both seemingly close contacts of Pribina to Adalram as well as by the name of Pribina's son. He argues that the name of this son, in Slovak called Kocel', comes from Germanic Chozil or Chezil.

When it comes to historical narrative and framework, Rapant's work is openly nationalistic. He argues that it is necessary to understand Pribina and Mojmir as 'representatives and those who culminate centralisation national efforts in two main parts of the later Great Moravia empire'. In this understanding, Mojmir is the unifier of the 'Moravian-Slovak tribes' while Pribina is the 'winner over Slovak tribal chieftains in the narrower sense'. This then shows that Rapant largely follows the nationalistic framework of narrativization of early medieval history. The original inhabitants of both Nitra and Great Moravia were Slovaks and what is more, even his geography of the Slovak settlement is the continuation of previous nationalistic narratives. More specifically, he identifies tribes living on the western side of Morava River (what is today's Moravia region in the Czech Republic) as Slovak. This Slovak national narrative is then further reinforced by the description of the conflict between Mojmir and Pribina in terms of ideological conflict between 'national-pagan reaction' against 'Germanophylic and Christianity leaning Pribina'.

When it comes to the actualisation of this history, Rapant, despite his long-term project of creating Slovak history, does not continue Hrušovský's narration concerned with the state. In his whole article, there is not a single representation mentioned of political units as states. Instead, he uses the term 'empire' for Great Moravia and 'principality' for Pribina's domain. What is interesting is that despite not trying to create state tradition, Rapant in his framing directly compares this Slovak national narrative with the national narratives of other Central European nations. More specifically, he compares the conflict between Mojmir and Pribina directly to the conflict in the story of the Czech Saint Wenceslaus, in which the pro-Frankish and pro-Christian ruler is defeated by his, in Rapant's words, 'national-pagan' opponent. Furthermore, he tries to position Slovaks as the oldest nation in the Central European region. He does so by creating concept of a noblewomen tradition starting with the nameless Pribina's wife and continuing with later Dúbravka or Gisela. He defines this tradition as noblewomen who 'stood at the origins of Christianity in the lands of their husbands'. These lands are Poland for Dúbravka and Hungary for Gisela. Apart from this framing that shows the Great Moravian, and thus Slovak, as the antecedent of national stories of other Central European countries, Rapant also narrativizes stories in which the ideas of Christianity are unstoppable. This is because even though Mojmir defeats Pribina, his realm has to capitulate to Christianity in the form of Rastislav's ascension, and Pribina's ideas are depicted as the foundation of the later mission of Saint Cyril and Methodius. In this, one can see that even during the war, Rapant continues with his previous project of writing Slovak history without the need of a Slovak state. This probably stems from both his relative distance to the regime as well as his historicist

training under Josef Pekař⁹⁷. This means that he comes from the tradition that largely rejects actualization of history⁹⁸.

Bokeš' History of Slovaks and Slovakia as in Transition from Slovakia to Renewed Czechoslovakia

Bokeš' *History of Slovaks and Slovakia from Ancient Times to Liberation*⁹⁹ represents a specific case within the scope of this thesis. This is caused by the fact that the book was published only in 1946, a year after the end of the regime of wartime independent Slovakia. As will be seen during the analysis of Bokeš's narrations, this political context deeply influenced how he told the story of Slovak history. Despite this, this work was included in this thesis as most of it was written during the existence of the independent state, more specifically between 1944 and 1945. Although it might have been reworked before its publication, the author claims the above-mentioned dates. Furthermore, this would still be written in the aftermath of the Slovak National Uprising. This would mean that the societal atmosphere would not imply long-term viability of Tiso's regime. This then means that this writing can be considered as an example of transitional historical narration between the narration of independent Slovakia and renewed Czechoslovakia.

The book was published by the Slovak Academy of Sciences and Arts¹⁰⁰, an organisation whose history constitutes an important context for this piece of writing. SAVU was founded in 1942 on the basis of Šafárik's Learned Society. The society was founded in the interwar period by

⁹⁷ Ducháček, Milan. Václav Chaloupecký a Daniel Rapant- trauma z blízkosti

⁹⁸ Good example for this approach would be Pekař/Masaryk debate regarding the meaning of Czech history.

⁹⁹ Bokes, Frantisek. *Dejiny Slovenska a Slovákov od najstarších čias po oslobodenie*. Bratislava: Slovenská akadémia vied a umení, 1946.

¹⁰⁰ Slovak: Slovenská Akadémia Vied a Umení. Slovak abbreviation: SAVU.

professors at Comenius University to facilitate cooperation across departments¹⁰¹. During its existence, the society came into conflict with Matica Slovenská as they competed to be pre-eminent centres of knowledge production in interwar Slovakia. This conflict was also helped by the national conflict as Matica openly supported Slovak nationalism while the Society had many Czech-born members¹⁰². Even after the expulsion of the Czech members, the relationship between the continuation of the Society in the form of SAVU and the Matica foundation remained tense. This means that Bokeš's book was published in a less nationalistic and regime supporting institution.

The personal position of Bokeš is also interesting. Although convinced Slovak, as can be seen from his writing of Slovak history, he is considered an opponent of the Slovak state¹⁰³. This can be seen in the fact that his career continued after the end of the war as well as in the book itself. Furthermore, he was, similarly to Hrušovský a pupil of Rapant. But the relationship between his and Rapant's narrative is more obvious than in Hrušovský's case. This might be because it is often argued that a great deal of his narrative is taken directly from Rapant lecture notes. This fact then led to the accusation of plagiarism against Bokeš by various other historians¹⁰⁴. As a result, it is possible to treat Bokeš's work as a continuation of both non-People's party-aligned Slovak nationalist narrative as well as, in a certain sense more direct continuation of Rapant's thinking.

¹⁰¹ Hudek, Adam. Vznik a vývoj Slovenskej akadémie vied a umení v rokoch 1942-1945

¹⁰² Even the name of the society itself can be understood as a political statement. Šafárik was a Slovak born poet and linguist who wrote most of his work in Czech. Furthermore, he was one of the first proponents of pan-Slavism and advocates of the form of Czechoslovak unity.

¹⁰³ Hudek, Adam. Najpolitickjšia veda: Slovenská historiografia v rokoch 1948-1968

¹⁰⁴Stolárik, M. Mark. „The Painful Birth of Slovak Historiography in 20th Century.“

In the introduction, Bokeš recounts the time when he was writing the book as well as the reason for his publishing. Here he argues that one of the reasons for the dissolution of the First Czechoslovak Republic was the lack of knowledge of both Czechs and Slovaks about Slovak history; the lack he aims to fix with this book to support the newly re-established Czechoslovakia. In this we can see that, although the author himself says that it was written during the last year of independence, he seeks to reinforce new Czechoslovakia by fixing the lack of knowledge of Slovak history that, according to him, caused the dissolution of the previous state.

In the narrative devoted to the early medieval period in Slovakia, Bokeš sticks to the framework provided by Rapant in his study. He argues that the Slavs who settled on both sides of the river Morava should be considered Slovak. He then further divides them into Moravian Slovaks living west of the river and Slovaks proper living in the east. He also cites the conclusion of the Rapant's study as one of the two possibilities for an explanation of the consecration of Pribina's church. Finally, he also includes Rapant's description of Pribina being Germanophile and pro-Christian while Mojmir is described as more independent and pagan.

But despite these similarities with Rapant, there is also a clear influence of Hrušovský. Although with much less focus, Bokeš works with the idea of statehood. This is shown in his comments about the early inclusion of Moravians¹⁰⁵ into Frankish chronicles as well as the early existence of Pribina's principality by commenting that Slovaks have shown a 'sense for statehood' even before Czechs. Furthermore, he uses the term state to describe Great Moravia, even though he does not put as much emphasis on this fact as Hrušovský. This seems to imply

¹⁰⁵ Who are, in his understanding, Slovaks.

that there is a direct influence of the idea that Slovak statehood has its tradition but without emphasis shown in *History of Slovaks*, probably caused by different historical circumstances and without the need to create legitimacy for the state. Furthermore, in this argument that Slovaks had a ‘sense for statehood’ earlier than Czechs he puts Slovaks at the start of the Central European history in a similar way in which Rapant does.

Finally, the thing that stands apart in Bokeš’s account of history from both Rapant and Hrušovský is a strong sense of pan-Slavism. Bokeš argues that Slovakia historically served as one of the bulwarks of German expansion towards the east and that it should serve as it again within Czechoslovakia. This pan-Slavic thinking shows itself also in the treatment of Pribina and Svätopluk. While both Rapant and Hrušovský consider Pribina to be a wise ruler and praise him for the start of Christianization, Bokeš, although praising him for Christianisation, accuses him of finalizing the creation of the wedge between the West and South Slavs by establishing his rule in Pannonia with the support of the Franks. This thinking then continues in Bokeš’s evaluation of Svätopluk as well. While Hrušovský was quick to point out that despite his power, Svätopluk was ‘unchristian’ in his behaviour and that this brought him to conflict with Methodius, Bokeš emphasises his power and historical accusation of any impropriety are described as false accusations caused by Svätopluk’s success in containing ‘German’ expansion. Furthermore, Bokeš goes further in showing the historical importance of Great Moravia, and thus Slovaks, for the region of Central Europe. He does this by arguing that not only Bohemia and Hungary are the heirs of Great Moravian institutions, but that also Poland profited from Great Moravian existence, thus putting Slovaks at the beginning of all the other states in the region.

Conclusion

As can be seen from this overview of historical writing of Slovak nationalists between 1938 and 1945, the idea of some Slovak state traditions was far from guaranteed. This occurred even

in the writing of historians closely tied to the autonomist movement and the subsequent independent regime, such as František Hrušovský. In his pre-independence lecture, there is a clear emphasis on the argument of Slovak regional and national specificity. But this discourse never ventures directly into arguing that Slovaks had or that their history demands an independent state. Instead, the whole lecture is comprised of support for self-rule.

This position quite radically shifts after the declaration of independence. In his synthesis, Hrušovský repeatedly works and emphasises the concept of the state. More significantly, he projects this state tradition even before the existence of Pribina's Principality of Great Moravia to the first half of the 7th century by identifying Samo's Empire as the first state. This emphasis on the nature of early medieval Slavic political formations as states is further reinforced in Hrušovský's language regarding the newly formed Slovak Republic. He repeatedly writes that this republic is a re-foundation or, in a sense, continuation of these early medieval states. Because this synthesis was published very shortly, it is necessary to see the reason for this shift in rhetoric as originating in the need to legitimise the newly independent state so soon after the previous attainment of self-rule, the main goal of the autonomists' movement for the whole duration of the interwar period. This can be understood in European tradition of writing history as a form of legitimization of the existence of the nation state.

It is possible to see that this idea of state continuation has not spread rapidly among Slovak historians. The most important of them, Daniel Rapant does not work with the concept of state at all, even though his study was published in 1942 and was directly citing Hrušovský's work and at least partially dealt with the topic of the foundation of Great Moravia. But to claim that this concept did not spread at all would also be wrong, as seen in Bokeš's book. Despite him being an opponent of the regime and continuing the work of Rapant, he still describes Great Moravia as a state and, much more importantly, argues that Slovaks had a 'sense of statehood' long before Czechs. This quite prominently implies that Slovaks and statehood tradition are

much more deeply connected than just claiming that there existed some kind of Slovak state long ago in the glorious past, as was common before the war. In this one can see the effects of the Slovak experience of independent statehood that influenced not only the people supporting the regime but also the people who were more distant to it, such as Bokeš.

Finally, there are also commonalities among all pieces of writing. More specifically, it is an attempt in narrations to posit the event of Pribina's reign and Great Moravia as important not only in the context of Slovak history but also in the history of the wider region. Rapant does this by casting the nameless wife of Pribina as first in the tradition of Central European noblewomen instrumental in the Christianisation of their husbands' domains or portraying conflict leading to the foundation of Great Moravia as a sort of antecedent to conflict in the legend of Saint Wenceslaus. Bokeš and Hrušovský then point out the importance of the period of Great Moravia and its institution as an origin that helped the establishment of medieval kingdoms of Bohemia, Hungary and, in Bokeš's case, also Poland, which shaped the history of the region in the following centuries, and which were claimed as the historical antecedent of neighbouring countries.

When we talk about commonalities between texts it is also important to talk about the overall historical narrative. This is because although all three authors had different positions, the main points of their narratives were strikingly similar. In other words, the framework of their story was the same, only the focus and some concepts changed. This was probably caused by the fact that both Bokeš and Hrušovský were students of Rapant, and thus it was probably hard for them to leave the framework established by him. Furthermore, as mentioned, Rapant disliked anachronistic readings of history and so it can be assumed that he created his narrative in as much an apolitical way as possible. As a result, his students then could use this narrative without changing anything major. But not to overstate my case, there are also certain differences between Rapant's style of historiography and historiography of his students. While Rapant

writes a quite traditional historical narrative of important historical personalities such as Pribina and his wife, both Hrušovský and Bokeš use certain aspects closer to social history, such as geography. More specifically, Hrušovský's focus on Slovaks as a national group shaped by their environment is similar to volksgeschichte approach existing among radical conservatives in Germany¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰⁶ Haar, Ingo, and Michael Fahlbusch. *German Scholars and Ethnic Cleansing, 1919-1945*. Berghahn Books, 2007.

Svätopluk's Heritage between Blood and Tradition

As already mentioned in the introduction, the declaration of the Slovak independence meant a tectonic shift within Slovak politics. This was not only because all the Slovak politicians stopped being representatives of Slovakia as a territorially autonomous unit within the wider Czechoslovak Republic and became representatives of the newly independent Slovak State. Apart from the practical issue of needing to administer and govern an independent state, Slovak political representation also faced an ideological issue. Namely, they had to quickly create a coherent political programme for the independent state that would legitimize it and its form of government.

This critical issue was caused by one of the main specificities of Slovak national politics in previous eras. Namely, as shown in one of the previous chapters, Slovak national politics did not aim at the creation of an independent state. Instead, they tended to demand autonomous or federal positions within the larger state structure. This was especially true for the nationalist Slovak political representation during the interwar period. The whole political programme of the so-called autonomist block was based on, as can be seen from their name, attaining the autonomous or federative position for Slovakia within the Czechoslovak state. And although there existed certain calls for national independence, these appeared only during the time after the Munich Agreement that led to the establishment of the autonomous Slovak land¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰⁷ Arpáš, R. (2019). Slovenská autonomistická mládež proti Československej jednote. *Historický časopis*, 157-171.

As a result, there did not exist any ready-made political and ideological conception of the independent Slovak State in the spring of 1939. This lack of a clear political conception can also be also seen in a subsequent power struggle within Hlinka's party between Jozef Tiso and Vojtech Tuka. Tiso as President and leader of the 'moderate' or 'clerical' wing of the party tried establishing a statehood that would be ideologically less dependent on Nazi Germany while the radical wing around Prime Minister Tuka and the Hlinka Guard sought the creation of the system very closely inspired by it. This struggle culminated in 1940 before and during the Salzburg negotiation. During these negotiations, the Germans created a new balance of power within the Slovak government. They expelled some of the prominent clerical aligned representatives such as the minister Ferdinand Ďurčanský in favour of radicals to tie Slovak foreign policy ever closer to Germany. Nevertheless, Germans did not demand the complete expulsion of conservatives as, for example, Tiso and a lot of his allies remained in office. This then caused that intra-party ideological struggle to continue after these negotiations as well.

This chapter aims to examine the uses of narrativization of early medieval texts within the ideological and political discourse during the period. To do this, it is divided into three main parts. The first part will look at cases of the use of this rhetoric in political speeches. As this part is not as central to my thesis as the analysis of ideological texts, the number of used cases will be rather limited. Namely, I will look at speeches made during the session of the Slovak parliament discussing the new constitution in 1939 and then also provide the position of radicals on the speech made by Alexander Mach in 1940. The first speech is a speech introducing the new Slovak constitution and as such it can be considered as paradigmatic for the state. The second speech was chosen due to the importance of Mach within the Slovak politics in general, and in the radical wing of the party in particular. Furthermore, Mach's speech also allows to see a radical position during the early period of the regime.

In the next two parts of the chapter, I will look at the ideological texts of the regime. These three texts were authored by Štefan Polakovič and Stanislav Mečiar. The first text, written by Polakovič, is titled *On the Fundamentals of Slovak Statehood* and was published in 1939. The two other texts are both titled *Slovak National Socialism* and were created by Polakovič and Mečiar respectively. As both conceptions of Slovak national socialism have been published as a direct result of the Salzburg Conference, and their authors were members of opposite factions within the struggle, they will serve to show differences in the approaches to the early medieval history between the radical and clerical wings. Polakovič's texts are considered paradigmatic due to his proximity to Tiso and his position within the official Propaganda Office. Furthermore, as he survived until the fall of state socialism in 1989 and then tried to influence Slovak discourse, it can be argued that his work and his ideological conception are the most lasting official conception of the state. Mečiar's text, on the other hand, is included to represent intra-party discussion between conservatives and radicals as well as due to its nature as being a response to Polakovič's conception.

Appeal to Svätopluk in Parliament and War

One of the best demonstrations of the lack of a coherent political programme for Slovak independence is a parliamentary discussion about its declaration on 14 March 1939. During this quite short session the only two speakers were the Slovak Prime Minister Karol Sidor and Jozef Tiso. Both of their speeches were quite a dry description of their actions during the preceding crisis days of March. Sidor describes his experiences as the Prime Minister of Slovakia in the

aftermath of the so-called Homola's Coup¹⁰⁸. Tiso then follows with his description of his visit to Berlin and his talks with von Ribbentrop and Hitler. After a short pause the parliament then moves to declare independence¹⁰⁹. What is important about this session is the fact that there are no references to an ancient Slovak statehood or similar claims. Instead, both speeches are simple descriptions of current political situations demanding such a decision. This shows a lack of an ideological programme during the declaration of independence. Simply, based on this session, it is easy to argue that independence was a pragmatic choice caused by the political situation, not the culmination of some ideological or long-term political struggle.

Despite this pragmatic beginning, the first references to Slovak history started to appear very shortly after the declaration of independence. A good example is a speech made by Karol Mederly, the Chair of the Constitutional Committee of the parliament during the introduction of the new constitution for the Slovak State during the session on 21 July 1939. In the introduction of his speech, he exclaims the importance and nobility of 'putting the base stone into the building of the Slovak state'¹¹⁰. Afterwards, he compares Slovak statehood to a 'linden tree'¹¹¹, which started to 'bud promisingly during the time of Rastislav' but it was destroyed under a 'torrent of raw, uncultured power'. Despite this 'desire of the Slovak people for a Slovak life' survived and led to the fact that the 'linden tree budded again' and 'Slovak state from thousand years ago was resurrected in our contemporary Slovak State'. In this speech, Mederly creates a historical continuity between the statehood of Great Moravia and wartime Slovakia.

¹⁰⁸ This was an attempt of Czech military commander of Slovakia to declare martial law and seize power from the government of Slovak country.

¹⁰⁹ Úterý 14. března 1939. (n.d.). Retrieved from Poslanecká Sněmovna České Republiky: Digitální repozitář: <https://www.psp.cz/eknih/1939ssr/stenprot/001schuz/s001001.htm>

¹¹⁰ Úterý 14. března 1939.

¹¹¹ The linden tree is also a traditional tree representing Slavic peoples

What is more, he argues that between these two instances of Slovak statehood there existed a desire for it that was carried by the Slovak people.

The second speech is from 27 March 1940 and was made by Alexander Mach, Minister of Propaganda and the supreme commander of the paramilitary Hlinka Guard and was titled *The Law of Blood*¹¹². The speech was the commemoration of those who died in the so-called ‘Little War’¹¹³. The realization was that ‘blood of martyrs, the blood of heroes is the greatest power in the world!’¹¹⁴. According to Mach, this spilt blood and its power caused the transformation of the Slovak nation itself. It transformed the Slovak nation from the nation of doves into a heroic and military nation.

But this supposed transformation constitutes only one aspect of the symbolic importance of the blood in Mach’s speech. Another symbolic use of blood is the titular *Law of Blood*. In Mach’s speech the blood that allowed transformation, liberation and redemption of the nation also binds one to follow the footsteps of their ancestors with whom they are linked by blood. In a very interesting way, Mach calls on this inherited duty when he describes the relationship between Slovaks and Germans. He argues that God decreed the friendship between these two nations and creates direct historic links from Arnulf¹¹⁵ to Hitler, and from Pribina to Slovak President Tiso. He does so without direct reference to statehood or tradition, instead, he focuses on the idea of the blood that carries such links across generations.

¹¹²Mach, Šaňo. “Zákon Krvi.” In *Slovenská otázka v 20 storočí*, by Rudolf Chmel, 291-295. Bratislava: Kalligram, 1997.

¹¹³ The Little War was a military conflict between the Kingdom of Hungary and at-the-time newly declared Slovak State.

¹¹⁴ Mach. “Zákon Krvi.” p. 291.

¹¹⁵ Probably Arnulf of Carinthia who during his rule in Bavaria and East Francia lead several conflicts, but also signed alliance and peace treaties with the king of the Great Moravia, Svätopluk.

In this, one can see Mach's instrumentalization of history not only to legitimize the Slovak government but in a certain way to negotiate a symbolic relationship between Slovakia and Germany. He does so by his reference to Arnulf who both lost to and defeated 'Slovak' Svätopluk. This reference symbolically elevates Slovaks into a more equal position to Germans. Furthermore, it is also interesting to compare this speech to Mederly's speech. Compared to him, Mach does not use the concept of previous Slovak statehood at all. Instead, he focuses on blood relations with famous ancestors that create spiritual law binding people. Although both speeches were given in different circumstances and therefore cannot be directly compared, their comparison implies distinctions along the lines coming from reading of Mečiar's and Polakovič's *Slovak National Socialism*. Namely that Mederly, who was one of the founders of the party and was a long-term party expert on constitutional matters and therefore probably closer to the conservative wing, put much greater emphasis on the idea of the pre-existing state tradition than radical Mach.

Polakovič and On the Fundamentals of the Slovak Statehood

In this sub-chapter, I will introduce Štefan Polakovič, the main ideologue of the wartime Slovak State and afterwards look at his first ideological text *On the Fundamentals of the Slovak Statehood*¹¹⁶. Due to him being the most prominent ideologue of the regime as well as the author of the two texts that comprise the bulk of the analysis, his introduction will be more detailed than that of other figures discussed in this thesis. This is done primarily to show his certain

¹¹⁶ Polakovič, Š. (1939). K Základom Slovenského Štátu: Filozofické Eseje. Turčiansky Sv. Martin: Matica Slovenská.

intellectual distance from the radical and more Nazi oriented circles represented by the text by Stanislav Mečiar.

Polakovič finished his secondary education in Trnava and then continued his studies in Rome. During his studies there he encountered the philosophical thinking of Maurice Blondel¹¹⁷. Afterwards, the work of Maurice Blondel was a great influence on his thinking. This made Polakovič an exception among Slovak Catholic conservatives, as most of them were influenced by neo-Thomist doctrines of the Catholic Church¹¹⁸. During the War, Polakovič attached himself to the clerical-conservative wing of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party. Soon after, thanks to his relationship with President Jozef Tiso and his position as an official at the Slovak Propaganda Office, he became one of the chief ideologues of the regime. Right after the declaration of independence, in 1939, he published his *On the Fundamentals of the Slovak Statehood*. Afterwards, he edited collections of various texts written by Tiso to create a coherent ideological base for the moderate wing of the party as well as for the regime.

Apart from his work as a propagandist and ideologue during WW2, Polakovič also worked as a professor of philosophy at Comenius University in Bratislava. He also founded the first Slovak journal devoted to philosophy and organized the philosophical department of the Matica Slovenská foundation¹¹⁹. Most of his philosophical writing from that period was devoted to the

¹¹⁷ Štefan Polakovič. "Slovak National Socialism." In *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe 1770–1945, Vol. IV.: Anti-modernism: Radical Revisions of Collective Identity*, edited by Diana Mishkova, Marius Turda and Balász Trencsényi, translated by Pavol Lukáč, 370-378. Budapest: Central University Press, 2014.

¹¹⁸ Štefan Polakovič. "Slovak National Socialism."; Anton Hruboň. „Slovenský národný socializmus v koncepciách Štefana Polakoviča a Stanislava Mečiara.“ *Slovensko v rokoch neslobody 1938 - 1989 II. Osobnosti známe - neznáme. Zborník z vedeckej konferencie Banská Bystrica 22. - 23. mája 2012*. Bratislava: Ústav pameti Národa, 2012. 20-34.

¹¹⁹ Anton Hruboň. „Slovenský národný socializmus v koncepciách Štefana Polakoviča a Stanislava Mečiara.“

translation and introduction of Blondel's philosophy in Slovakia. After the war, he emigrated to Argentina where he continued to teach philosophy. Furthermore, he expanded on his Blondel inspired study of a nation as well as wrote history books sympathetic to Tiso and the regime of the independent Slovak State. During the 90s, he tried to take part in debates about historical memory in Slovakia, but his ideological thinking did not manage to take hold in politics. This was caused by the fact that he was too radically anti-communist for nationalists who often started as members of the Communist Party while the Christian Democratic Movement instead took their inspiration from various Thomist thinkers such as Ladislav Hanus¹²⁰.

In *On the Fundamentals of the Slovak Statehood*, Polakovič, as already mentioned, tries to work out an ideological framework for the new Slovak State. He does so because, as he argues, even the richest and most stable state can fail if it does not have a healthy ideological and moral base. What is more, the ideology of the state must come from the natural right. To prove it he draws upon the example of the first Czechoslovak Republic which was ideologically incoherent. This was partially caused by the liberal pluralistic tradition Polakovič describes by Masaryk's 'irresponsible' quote that 'democracy is discussion' and more prominently by the fact that the ideal of Czechoslovakism was artificial and against the natural existence of the two separate nations. This then caused the 'kingdom (meaning the Czechoslovak Republic) to be divided against itself'. Apart from his criticism of the previous regime, Polakovič also engages in not exactly veiled criticism of his ideological opponents from the radical wing who would argue for a closer following of the German ideological model. He criticises those arguing for foreign ideologies as there is a need for state ideology to be tied to the history and tradition of the nation

¹²⁰ Štefan Polakovič. "Slovak National Socialism."

for it to be natural. Polakovič then names this ideological project Christian totalitarianism which most prominently stands upon Christian tradition and the authoritarian state.

Polakovič's use of the early medieval references is interesting due to its location within the text. This is because within the main body of the text, he does not use explicit references to the Great Moravia or Pribina, but at the same time it is not possible to say that he ignores this kind of rhetoric. This is because the short introduction of the text is heavily built upon such references. This then means that readers have such ideas in their heads while reading subsequent chapters of the main text. As a result, it is possible to say that although such historical references do not carry significant weight within the practical part of Polakovič's argument, they provide the framework in which this argument is supposed to be read.

He opens his introduction with the sentences that have been already quoted at the very beginning of this work:

And yet it dawned...

Above the lands, where once the kingdom of the great Slovak King Svätopluk flourished in full glory, the Slovak flag freely and honourably waves as a state symbol of the full sovereignty of the Slovak nation...

This opening shows that for Polakovič, Slovaks and inhabitants of the Great Moravia are the same people sharing the same land. Furthermore, the quote about dawn implies that this nation has suffered without the existence of 'their' state. Although this reference does not yet create a state-centric continuity between the two political units, it does create a symbolic national connection between them. The implication of the state-centric continuity comes just a few lines later when Polakovič says that the 'Slovak word again fill itself by state's honour'. This then creates a narrative in which there existed a previous Slovak state. He then continues in this spirit by saying that '(the Slovak nation) is renewing its old statehood'. Furthermore, Polakovič also claims that this statehood is 'the oldest in Central Europe'. In this way, he shows that he creates

a narrative, like Rapant and Bokes, in which Slovaks can claim precedence within the Central European space.

What is interesting is that, even despite this rhetoric of statehood renewal, Polakovič does not directly name Great Moravia. Instead, when he comes closest to naming the ancient state that he refers to is the quote in which he says that

If anytime, then now it befits to power and massiveness of the Slovak genius to show itself to the whole world in its masculinity and creativity, which showed itself in an unseen way during the reign of immortal Svätopluk

This quote explicitly shows that Polakovič considers Great Moravia as a source of the statehood that is being renewed by the modern Slovak State. Even though it does not touch upon the exact argument of this thesis, Polakovič's identification of the Slovak nation as especially masculine also seems interesting as it is not the image that would be the traditional way of portraying the Slovak nation. For example, a 19th-century poet and member of Štúr's circle Janko Kráľ represented the Slovak nation as a cursed virgin that needed to be rescued.

Finally, another striking quote from this introduction is Polakovič's comparison of this 'resurrected' Slovak statehood to the 'new flower of the old Slovak root'. This way of speaking is quite similar to the speech made by another important pro-regime intellectual Mederly when he was introducing the Slovak constitution to the parliament. He too used floral comparison when he talks about Slovak statehood and nation as a linden tree. This implies that although Polakovič was influenced by his studies abroad, he still shared a certain similar way of thinking to other members of the conservative wing of the party.

Polakovič, very similarly to both Hrušovský and Mederly, emphasises that the new Slovak State is nothing revolutionary. Instead, all of them try to create a certain sense of continuity and historical legitimacy. For them, the Slovak nation is a carrier of the state-building tradition coming from Great Moravia. This tradition is not only Slovak, but also older than other state

traditions within Central Europe. In this way, they create state legitimacy that not only supports their newly founded state but, at the same time, in a certain way, it supersedes the legitimacy of both the Kingdom of Hungary and Czechoslovakia over the Slovak territory by pointing out that their state tradition is the oldest state tradition within the region.

Two Slovak National Socialisms

Apart from changing the political balance of the power within the regime, the Salzburg Conference also meant an ideological shift within Slovakia. This was because Slovak politicians started to officially declare their intention to create a National Socialist regime. In this, it is possible to see how the increased influence of the radicals whose aim of being as closely tied to Germany as possible was not only political but also ideological, as can be seen from Polakovič's veiled critique of them. But similarly to the political outcome of the negotiation, this shift did not mean the complete defeat of the conservative wing of the party. Instead, the ideological struggle changed to comply with the new state policy. This meant that the main goal of the struggle was to define what Slovak national socialism meant¹²¹. In this, party conservatives tried to regain the initiative by publishing their conception authored by Polakovič before the radicals. The radical conception, authored by Mečiar, then needs to be read as a reaction to this conservative initiative.

In many ways, Polakovič's *Slovak National Socialism*¹²² is just a continuation of his previous ideas concealed by language closer to Nazi ideology. This distinction can be best seen in Polakovič's conception of the nation. According to his previous writings in *On the Fundamentals*

¹²¹ Hruboň, A. (2014). Slovenský národný socializmus v koncepciách Štefana Polakoviča a Stanislava Mečiara. Slovensko v rokoch neslobody 1938-1989 (s. 20-34). Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa.

¹²² Polakovič, Š. (1941). Slovenský národný socializmus (Ideové poznámky). Bratislava.

of the Slovak Statehood, a nation was a community based on the spiritual bond created through tradition and culture. In *Slovak National Socialism*, he adds, probably under the influence of the German discourse, that there is also a certain importance for the biological component within the nation. But instead of focusing on this biological component, he argues that this biological kinship is important only in the very early history of the nation when the nation still exists as a small tribe of related families. Afterwards, as the tribe grows into a nation, it creates common culture and exchanges the biological bond of blood for the spiritual bond. This then means that once even the biological member of one nation accepts the culture of the other nation, they permanently become part of the new national community. To illustrate this he names several examples, most prominently, an example of many Slovaks who accepted the Hungarian language and culture and became Hungarians. Through this, we can see that although Polakovič accepts certain frameworks imposed on him by the German example (such as the name of National Socialism, or the biological base of the nation), he at the same time subverts them and tries to continue with his previous ideological project as much as possible.

Another important continuation of Polakovič's previous work can be found in his treatment of the historical representation of Great Moravia as a way of legitimizing the wartime Slovak statehood. Similarly, as in his previous ideological book, he continues with the narrative that the Slovak State is a historically legitimated refoundation of Great Moravia. What is more, he moves such legitimization from the introduction into the body of the text and summarizes it under the concept of Svätopluk's crown. This concept plays quite a prominent role in his text, so prominent in fact that the whole last chapter of the book is devoted to it.

Polakovič in this concept uses in a mirror capacity to the Hungarian idea of the crown of St. Stephen and the Czech idea of the crown of St. Wenceslaus. In this comparison, he explicitly spells out that one of the main reasons for using this way of legitimization is to secure Slovakia in relation to its neighbours and to prove that Slovaks have certain historical rights. He argues

that the fact that Slovak tradition is the tradition of Svätopluk's crown means that no other nation can historically claim it. This fact is for him further reinforced by the supposed age of this Slovak state tradition. As he claims that Slovak tradition is the oldest, no other nation can claim Slovak territory, as even though they might have ruled over it, it was never rightfully theirs.

Apart from this usage of the concept to secure Slovak territory, Polakovič also uses it to create certain symbolical symmetry between Slovaks on the one side, and Czechs and Hungarians on the other. This symmetry, apart from the idea of the legitimacy given by the historical 'crown', comes from the crown's name. To be more specific, a direct translation of the name 'Svätopluk' is a combination of the words for 'sacred' and 'regiment'. Furthermore, the Slovak word for sacred, 'svätý', is the same as the Slovak word for saint. In this way, Polakovič does not only equalize Slovaks by the fact that they have their own historical crown, but he also conceptually and symbolically implies that their crown is also the crown of a 'saint' in a certain sense and thus, further symbolically reinforcing the status of Slovaks as equal to their neighbours.

Polakovič's crown represents several aspects. Firstly, it is the 'geographical' aspect. As mentioned above, it represents the Slovak claim on their territory. This claim is supposed to come from the fact that Slovaks were the first people who claimed this territory. Furthermore, it is because Slovaks created a culture in this territory and finally, that Slovaks suffered for it. Secondly, it is the 'state-right' aspect. This aspect shows that Great Moravia was a purely Slovak state and although it encompassed Poles and Czechs as well, they were just conquered tribes for whom Svätopluk was an enemy. This moment he uses to argue against the Czechoslovakist image of Great Moravia as the common state of Czechs and Slovaks by claiming that 'Every interpretation that does not want to see in Svätopluk's kingdom a purely Slovak state is violence committed upon historical reality and pure fantasy'.

The ‘political’ aspect of the crown represents the need for national unity. In this part, Polakovič works with the legend about the Three Twigs of Svätopluk. He argues that this legend representing a need for unity in face of enemies should not only be understood as a lesson for Svätopluk’s three sons, but also for all Slovaks and their relation to their state. The ‘moral’ aspect represents Polakovič’s possible aspiration of an independent Slovak state. In a way projecting the Golden Age as a thing to strive for, with the major difference of course. While Svätopluk’s Golden Age included the conquest of other regions, the Slovak State’s moral duty is to instead build up and develop Slovak culture. Finally, the Svätopluk’s crown also has an ‘ideological’ aspect. This aspect is represented by its complementarity with Cyril and Methodius tradition and therefore with Christianity. Here, Polakovič most explicitly shows his understanding of Great Moravia as legitimation for the modern state. He argues that

naturally, we see in the contemporary Slovak State the renewed state of Svätopluk, in the contemporary President and leader of the nation the rightful heir of king Svätopluk, that the contemporary army is for us the renewed Svätopluk’s regiments, and that the contemporary generation is the continuation of Svätopluk’s generation in organic development...

Finally, a very intriguing fact about Polakovič’s concept of this crown is his reasoning for its name. He explicitly tries to merge the tradition of Pribina and Svätopluk by arguing that Pribina’s beginning of the development ‘naturally’ culminated in Svätopluk. And again, he stresses the historicity and ancient origins of this Slovak development compared to other Central European nations. He reinforces his point by comparing the relationship between Svätopluk and Pribina in Slovak history to the relationship between Augustus and Romulus in Italian history or Wenceslaus and Bořivoj in the Czech case.

Probably due to the nature of Polakovič’s conception as only an adjusted continuation of his previous conception of Christian totalitarianism, the radical wing of the party was not content with it. As a response, radicals around paramilitary Hlinka Guard decided to publish its own version of the new state ideology. By authoring this conception, much closer to the German

version of national socialism, the radicals tasked one of the prominent radical journalist and ideologues Stanislav Mečiar.

Mečiar was a journalist and literary critic who acquired his PhD in the history of literature at Comenius University¹²³. During his professional career, he worked mainly in Matica Slovenská. Before the war, he was one of the several polonophilic Slovak Catholic intellectuals and absolved several study trips in Poland¹²⁴. During the war, he continued his work in Matica and became part of Tuka's radical wing of the party. In this wing he served a similar function as Polakovič among the conservatives, namely, he became one of the most prominent propagandists and ideologues. As mentioned before, his *Slovak National Socialism*¹²⁵ needs to be understood in the context of an intra-party ideological struggle. As such it can be seen as a reaction to Polakovič's conception.

From the start of the text, it can be seen that Mečiar much more closely adheres to a Nazi ideology. One of the best ways to show the profound difference between this conception and Polakovič's conception is to look at Mečiar's definition of the nation. In contrast to Polakovič, Mečiar stresses the biological connection between the members of the nation. For him, all Slovaks are tied together by their race and their blood, and thus there exists no possibility for Slovaks to stop being Slovak. As we can see then, his conception of nation is much more organic and essentialist than Polakovič's focus on spirituality.

¹²³ Matula, P. (2020). Stanislav Mečiar a jeho polonofilstvo na pozadí archívnych dokumentov. Slovenská Literatúra, 46-57.

¹²⁴ Matula, P. (2020). Stanislav Mečiar a jeho polonofilstvo na pozadí archívnych dokumentov.

¹²⁵ Mečiar, S. (1942). Slovenský národný socializmus (Výklad základných zásad). Turčiansky Sv. Martin.

Furthermore, for Mečiar the nation ‘stands above all communities, spiritual movements and streams, even above the state’. For him this is caused by the fact that while all these things can change and develop, the nation stays the same. Furthermore, according to him ‘no borders, no artificial and unnatural obstacle can divide national commonwealth’. This clearly shows that Mečiar put a much greater focus on the Slovak nation instead of the Slovak state and statehood and as a result it says quite a lot about his treatment of the state tradition within his text.

In stark contrast to Polakovič, state tradition and representation of the early medieval history are completely marginal in Mečiar’s works. He mentions them in only one sentence when he says ‘Race and blood that united our ancestors before 1000 years, created Slovak statehood and gave great rulers to the nation: Pribina, Kocel, Mojmir, and Svätopluk. In this sentence, we can see that Mečiar stays within the Slovak historical narrative. Namely that Pribina’s Principality and Great Moravia are Slovak and, what is more, they are examples of Slovak statehood. Where he diverges is his absolute lack of usage of their representation in the legitimization of the Slovak State. They are not the source of historical legitimacy, instead, they are just examples of the important acts committed by the Slovak nation. This precedence of the biological nation over the historical tradition is in the fact that these states worked only if their rulers followed Slovak race and blood as their ‘moving power’. As a result, we can see that for Mečiar and the radical wing at large historical tradition did not play a role in the legitimization of the state. instead, the state was subordinated to the nation and the existence of the nation was enough to legitimize it.

Conclusion

Based on this distinction it is possible to see the greatest difference in usage of history between conservatives and radicals. For radicals some sort of state tradition as the source of state legitimacy is marginal, for conservatives it is one of their central points. This can be seen in the difference between the two versions of Slovak National Socialism: while Polakovič devotes the

whole chapter to explaining and building this tradition, Mečiar only mentions it as an example that serves to underscore the importance of the biological nation. This differentiation can be further seen between Mederly and Mach as well. Mederly argues much more directly for state rights tradition upon which the new state is built. For Mach, the main importance does not lie in the history of statehood, instead, it lies in the biological and spiritual connection provided by shared and spilt Slovak blood. This differentiation is also why I decided to use the term conservatives for Tiso's faction. In literature, they are also known as clericals or moderates, but in the context of this thesis the term 'conservatives' quite well describes their position towards history and statehood. More specifically, they in many ways follow nationalists of the 19th century who tried to provide historical legitimation for their independent state. This contrasts with radicals who instead focus on the racial notion of shared blood and national uniqueness coming from this biological connection to legitimize their state project.

This distinction has also connection with another point of difference between radicals and conservatives within the party. Namely, their approach to the historical time. Conservatives such as Polakovič operate with a specifically historical time. The state is a result of the tradition and certain previous historical developments. Because of this, it is possible to renew the old state by founding it again. This allows them to claim primacy as the oldest nation within Central Europe, as well as to construct a chronological narrative from Svätopluk to modernity with its beginnings, culminations, and low points. Radicals, on the other hand, seems to function with much more ahistorical time. For example, in Mach's speech early medieval and modern political figures are folded into one in order to create an eternal and timeless spiritual connection between the Germans and Slovaks. Traces of this can be also found in Mečiar, as his concept of nation united by common blood does not seem to be historical. In his narrative, this blood unites a nation in the same way it did in the 10th or 20th century.

It is possible to further draw differences between the two wings of the party by putting their ideological texts into wider Czechoslovak context by comparing them to Czech thinkers. For example, conservative conception seems to be closer to integral Catholic positions of Jaroslav Durych. For example, both Durych and Polakovič consider nation as a spiritual community¹²⁶. Dialogue between these Czech and Slovak radical Catholic thinkers can also be seen in the fact that Durych in his *The Mission of the Czech State* directly refers to the Czech state as lands of St. Wenceslaus and to the inclusion of Slovakia into Czechoslovak (in his understanding Czech) state as ‘acquiring the lands of the former Hungarian Crown’¹²⁷. This way of narrating history fits well into Polakovič’s conception of the crowns and provides reason for his focus on the antiquity of Svätopluk’s crown of Slovaks.

Radicals such as Mach or Mečiar, on the other hand, seems to be much closer to the tradition of ideologues and propagandists actively serving Germans during the period of Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. A good example of this is Emanuel Vajtauer. Both Slovak radicals and Vajtauer use radical organic conceptions of the national unity based on blood¹²⁸. But this transfer from German Nazi ideology is not the only point of similarity. Both Mach and Vajtauer operate with Svätopluk as a source of historical friendship between Germans and their

¹²⁶ Durych, J. (2014). The mission of the Czech State. In D. Mishkova, M. Turda, & B. Trencsényi (Ed.), Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe 1770–1945, Vol. IV.: Anti-modernism: Radical Revisions of Collective Identity (s. 182-190). Budapest: Central European University press.

¹²⁷ Durych, J. (2014). The Mission of the Czech State.

¹²⁸ Vajtauer, E. (2014). Czech Myth. In D. Mishkova, M. Turda, & B. Trencsényi (Ed.), Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe 1770–1945, Vol. IV.: Anti-modernism: Radical Revisions of Collective Identity. Budapest: Central European University press.

respective nations¹²⁹. Friendship in their conception then became essential for their nations' prosperity.

¹²⁹ Čermák, J. 2018. "České dějiny pohledem aktivistického novináře Emanuela Vajtauera." MA thesis. Univesity of Olomouc.

Conclusion: Ľudák's Appeal to Svätopluk and its Continuation

As can be seen from the preceding chapters, the narrative of Great Moravia played a role in Slovak nation-building for a long time. Since the 19th century, Slovak national activists considered Great Moravia to be the Golden Age of the Slovak nation. This helped to discern Slovak national narrative from the national narratives of other neighbouring nations and provided Slovak activists with a way to defend the historical existence of the Slovak nation. As such, a reference to this early medieval state became the major trope within Slovak nationalism.

But to treat this reference as something stable and unchanging would not be correct. Representation of Great Moravia changed as the context and aims of the Slovak national movement changed. The image of Great Moravia as the Slovak Golden Age was only one of the possible ways in which Slovak nationalists represented it. But even when this image of the Golden Age somehow stabilised and became a fixture of the Slovak story, it developed further. This thesis aims to describe one of such developments.

More specifically, the second chapter of this thesis shows that with the declaration of the Slovak independence in 1939, a new way of narrativizing early medieval history emerged. Regime-aligned historian Hrušovský changed his narrative of the period to emphasise the nature of the early medieval political units associated with Slovak historical narratives as states. He did this by changing the conceptual vocabulary he used to describe this political formation. During his lecture *Slovakia in the History of Central Europe*, published during the period of Slovak autonomy, he does not refer to either Pribina's Principality or Great Moravia as states. Instead, he uses terms such as 'political formation' or 'great power'. This conceptual vocabulary changes in his book *History of Slovaks*, published in the same year, 1939, but after the declaration of independence.

In this text, which stated the aim is to help reinforce Slovak statehood, Hrušovský very explicitly tries to create a connection between the early medieval and modern periods. Firstly, he does this by explicitly talking about wartime Slovakia in the context of renewal and re-foundation of Slovak statehood. By this, he makes an implicit claim that Slovak statehood existed before, and the legitimacy of the modern state lies in the renewal of this historical fact. The change in his conceptual vocabulary furthermore reinforces this argument. He no longer uses vague terms as he used in his lecture; instead, he directly describes both Pribina's Principality and Great Moravia as 'states'. What is more, in his text, he repeatedly stresses this word to emphasise the connection between the early medieval and wartime period. To further reinforce this picture, Hrušovský employs the trope of one thousand years of Slovak oppression to see the Slovak nation's need for independent statehood.

The instrumental nature of this shift in narrative is easily seen when one considers Hrušovský's work in comparison with the work of other historians during this period. In this thesis, I used examples of the 'father of Slovak professional historiography' Daniel Rapant and the author of the second professional synthesis of the Slovak history František Bokeš. Rapant in his study regarding the church allegedly built by Pribina (or in his case Pribyna), does not use the term state at all. In this one, we can see the continuation of his pre-war work of writing Slovak history in the context of the Czechoslovak Republic. This continuation is further reinforced by the fact that he writes a quite traditional political history of personalities in contrast to his two younger colleagues. In his case, he argues that the reason for the construction and consecration of the church was Pribina's Frankish wife. Bokeš's and Hrušovský's work, on the other hand, is more influenced by, at the time, a much more modern *volksgeschichte* approach.

When it comes to Bokeš's work, the comparison with Hrušovský is a bit more complicated. This is caused by the fact that Bokeš was much more willing to engage in the legitimisation of the current political situation through history than strictly historicist Rapant. The self-professed

aim of Bokeš's book, published right after the war, but written during the last few years of it, is to illuminate Slovak history, as lack of historical knowledge was one of the causes of the failure of pre-war Czechoslovakia. In this, we can see an explicit rejection of Hrušovský's work's aims to legitimise independent Slovak statehood. But despite this explicit rejection, there is a certain connection between the works of these two historians. This connection lies in the fact that Bokeš explicitly engages with the question of statehood when writing his history of the early medieval period. He does so more implicitly than Hrušovský. Instead of emphasising the statehood of early medieval political formations, he argues that Slovaks showed a 'sense of statehood' before any other Central European nation. Based on this, it is possible to argue that despite its short existence, wartime Slovak independence caused a shift in the discourse regarding the narrativization of early medieval history of Slovaks as even opponents of the independent state, such as Bokeš, engaged with the question of pre-existing independent statehood. Furthermore, in putting Slovaks as the oldest nation within Central Europe, Bokeš continues narrativizations that both Rapant and Hrušovský share.

When it comes to ideological and political texts written during the existence of the independent state, a question of instrumentalization of Great Moravia as the legitimisation of the modern state project is highly dependent on the faction of the author of the given text. Due to the political and ideological struggle between the conservatives and radicals within the regime, there are two different sets of discourses. For example, radicals in their discourse create a connection between Great Moravia and the wartime state, but they do not use the concept of state tradition. Instead, they focus on the biological connection of the shared blood to create ahistorical unity between the two periods. On the other hand, conservative ideologues more actively engage with the concept of the state tradition to create historical legitimacy. This is best explored in Štefan Polakovič's *Slovak National Socialism*, in which he works with the conception of the crown of Svätopluk as a historical legitimisation of the independent statehood.

Furthermore, in this concept of crown of Svätopluk, it is possible to see a direct attempt to mirror the historical narratives of Czechs and Hungarians, which the author also acknowledges through the direct comparisons.

As a result of this analysis, this thesis then argues that the Slovak historical narrative of the early medieval period shifted during the Second World War. Although this shift was not universal, regime-generated discourse tried to legitimise itself through the narrativization of the early medieval period. This discourse did so by creating a statehood tradition stretching back to the period of the early Middle Ages. This allowed the regime to claim that the new Slovak State was not just the result of the German expansionist policies but instead a historically anchored entity. In more practical terms, this showed itself in the argument that the Slovak State was not founded, only renewed.

Although it is outside of the scope of this thesis, the question of the Slovak statehood tradition and narrativization of the early medieval period is interesting also within the context of the contemporary Slovak Republic. Officially, the Slovak Republic is not a continuation of the wartime Slovak State. Instead, it is one of the successor states of Czechoslovakia. But despite this, it is possible to see a certain continuation. For example, the most prominent and noticeable example of this continuation is the part of the preamble of the Slovak constitution. In this preamble, there is an explicit reference to the ‘historical heritage of the Great Moravia’¹³⁰. In this, it is possible to see that the contemporary Slovak Republic at least implicitly follows

¹³⁰ Ústava SR. (n.d.). Retrieved from prezident.sk: <https://www.prezident.sk/upload-files/20522.pdf>

precedence set by the Slovak State ideologues by tying its legitimacy to the historical state tradition of Great Moravia.

But this implicit continuation of the wartime narrative is not the only type of discourse about the early medieval period within the Slovak context. Two other discourses could be defined as liberal deconstruction and certain commercializing discourse. An example of this liberal-oriented deconstruction would be publications such as *Our Slovak Myths*¹³¹, in which authors try to deconstruct both the idea of the continuity between Great Moravia and contemporary Slovakia and also the notion of Great Moravia being Slovak. By this, proponents of this discourse try to create a more complex and more modern historical understanding of Slovakia. But probably the most prominent representation of the early medieval period would be various forms of monetization of the issue. Only from the context of the town of Nitra, references to the early medieval period and especially Pribina were used for advertisement for a sushi restaurant, as the main idea of the festival of historical fencing and re-enactment, or in case of a local re-enactment group, the decision of using Pribina as the group's mascot. This can be then understood as de-politicization of the narrative of the early medieval period and, in cases of the regions such as Nitra, or Bojná, as a form of regionalization of the national discourse.

¹³¹ Mannová, E., Eduard, K., & Eva, K. (2013). *Mýty naše slovenské*. Bratislava: Premedia.

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