SVÄTOPLUK IN CZECH AND CZECH-WRITTEN HISTORIOGRAPHY. A FEW CRITICAL REMARKS PART ONE: UP TO THE 1960s

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Abstract: HOMZA, Martin. *Svätopluk in Czech and Czech-written Historiography. A Few Critical Remarks. Part one: Up to the 1960s.* In the 19th-21st centuries, Czech historiography has set the main themes and trends in the research of Svätopluk. This article analyses in detail the first part of the development arc the interpretation of Svätopluk – from his glorification to his downgrading – has undergone within this Central European school of history in the period under review. The vast scope of this subject made it necessary to divide the article into several shorter periods. Among the initial and underlying themes included in the interpretation of Svätopluk up to 1918 is his legitimist perception as the predecessor of the later Bohemian kings, as well as understanding Svätopluk's kingdom as the archetype of the Habsburg monarchy. With the development of Czech political thought around 1914 – 1918, Svätopluk was perceived as the unifier of the Czechs and Moravians and eventually, with the establishment of the first Czechoslovak Republic, of the Slovaks as well. The traditional Czech anti-papal stance has logically resulted in Czech historians failing to pay the necessary attention to the Roman dimension of Svätopluk's politics. Likewise, scholarly perspectives often fall short in emphasising his prevailing pro-Empire policy. Up to the 1960s – with few exceptions (Václav Novotný and František Graus) – Czech historiography focused in just certain issues and topics connected with the person and reign of Svätopluk. In the same spirit, it is obvious that the Czech interpretation of the first of the Moymirids aimed at meeting the current political demands of the Czech elites.

Key words: *Svätopluk I, Bořivoj, St. Methodius, Cosmas of Prague, (Pseudo)Christian, tradition, interpretation, legitimism, Central Europe, papacy, rex Sclavorum*

When at the turn of the 9th and 10th centuries, Frankish chronicler Regino of Prüm assessed the circumstances following the death of Svätopluk, king of the Moravian Slavs, he could not have imagined the magnitude of the historiographical conundrum his account of the short and unfortunate reign of Svätopluk I's sons and the following invasions of the Hungarians who "shattered everything from the ground up" would eventually create (Prumensis Reginoni Abbatis 1890, 143).

The extinction of the male line of the central Moymirid dynasty together with the decimation and expulsion of the Moravian political and ecclesiastical elites disrupted the development of the memory of Great Moravia, as Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus would call the most successful political project of the Danube Slavs half a century after its demise. Ever since, the fundamental question that has begged asking is who the history of the 9th-century Moravian Slavs actually belongs to and how it is to be approached. The lack of "memory bearers" and of any "memory" evolution of Great Moravia – and Svätopluk I as its most important ruler – has had interesting and long-lasting consequences, indeed.

The generally accepted consensus is that – from a broader perspective – the history of Great Moravia forms part of the history of Central Europe. It also constitutes an integral part of the first attempt by the elites of the Occident and the papacy to create a universal European Christian Empire (*Imperium Christianum*) ruled by the Carolingians. In fact, the history of Great Moravia has not been a hard nut to crack just recently. It has been a source of trouble since the late 11th century when – in the background of two universalist powers fighting one another: the papacy and the empire – the new Central European dynasties started writing their own dynastic deeds or *gesta*. These narratives aimed at justifying the historical rights and power the relevant lineages had so far managed to obtain. In order to do so, of course, these new dynasties needed to deal with the fact that they were not the first political structures to claim power over the relevant people and territories. In the case of the Přemyslids, they needed to come to terms with the preserved memory of the Moymirids and their foremost representative, Svätopluk I the Great.

This article aims to look at how Czech and Moravian historiography – especially written in Czech – has come to terms with this issue over the last 200 years or so. Due to its limited scope, it cannot be an encyclopaedic register of all those researchers who have approached this topic but, rather, a general exploration of the issue. The vastness of the topic has made it necessary to divide the paper into two parts. The first one focuses preferentially on historians who have studied this topic from the mid 19th up to the late 20th century.

At the outset, it is necessary to point out that I am not the first scholar to attempt a similar task. Lubomíra Havlíková, (Havlíková 2015, 66-70) for example, has already published an article with a related focus which, however, has a rather enumerative character. In his monograph, German historian Stefan Albrecht approached a similar topic – although not strictly focused on Svätopluk – in more detail (Albrecht 2003). His work, however, only covers a selected sample of researchers and constitutes a rather simple overview of scholars and institutions that have dealt with this theme. Other historians such as Dušan Třeštík (1985, 273-301) as well as – more recently – David Kalhous (2016, 71-91) and Robert Antonín (2014, 123-141) have invested more profound thoughts on the place Great Moravia occupies in Czech history.

Before embarking on this intricate journey, let me begin with a few historical and geographic factors that to some extent determined the earliest history of Bohemia in relation to Moravia. The present-day Czech Republic consists of two main – one might say dominant – river systems: the basins of the Elbe and the Morava. These territories are separated by the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands. However, no clear border line existed for a long time. It just ran "through the middle of the forest" and would only consolidate gradually over the 12th-14th centuries (Třeštík 1999, 142). Just to get an idea, Czech archaeologist Ivo Štefan calculated that the journey from Mikulčice to Prague through the forests of the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands would take 9-14 days on foot and 4-7 days on horseback (Štefan 2019, 155-156). The third and considerably smaller river system in today's Czechia is formed by the tributaries of the Oder.

This division gave origin to three distinct regions that in the Middle Ages formed the kingdom that has been historically known as the Czech Lands or the Lands of the Czech Crown, namely Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. Flowing into the North See, the Elbe sets Bohemia in the wider historical framework of Polabia – the Elbe valley – and, therefore, in the orbit of German history, whereas the Odra rather takes Silesia into the Polish sphere of influence. A tributary of the Danube, the Morava refers mainly to the Mediterranean culture which is naturally associated with the *Orbis Romanus*. It took numerous whimsical circumstances to merge these three regions together into a unit in a historical process that was far from being as straightforward as it might seem today. Creating a historical construction that would encompass the complexity of this process has been, is and shall remain a demanding task. Connecting these perhaps related though still rather different regions and their peoples constitutes a major ideological challenge, indeed. And the creation of

Czecho-Slovakia in 1918 just made an already bad situation even worse. In fact, to justify the creation of this new country, its creators referred precisely to the Great Moravian Empire in which they saw the first common "polity" of Czechs, Moravians and Slovaks and, therefore, the historical predecessor of Czecho-Slovakia.

Before moving on to the first authors and their concepts, let us have a look at the different sources of Czech provenance that determined the basic scheme Czech scholarly literature used to approach Svätopluk in the Middle Ages. Those familiar with this topic know very well that Czech history in the early middle ages and, therefore, Czech history in general have been interpreted in line with the notions defined by the author of the first Czech dynastic *gesta,* the very first Czech chronicler, Cosmas of Prague. With Solomonic wisdom, Cosmas settled the conundrum Moravia and its king Svätopluk represented by having the first Czech prince, Bořivoj, receive baptism from the hands of St. Methodius at the court of king Svätopluk of Moravia. With a simple literary juxtaposition, Cosmas connected two historical events in one and the same year of 894, namely the baptism of the first Czech prince Bořivoj and the legend that has Svätopluk leaving his active life in Nitra and becoming a monk (Cosmae Pragensis 1923, 32). In other words, the Czechs and their first baptised prince appear on the European history stage at the moment the last notable Moymirid, i.e. Svätopluk, leaves the scene. It is also important to mention that according to the political imagination of Cosmas, the eastern border of the Czech realm reached as far east as the Hron River.

Today, every reasonable reader understands that Cosmas of Prague concealed more of the history of Moravia than he actually disclosed. In the second half of the 12th century, another chronicler, (Pseudo-)Christian, came up with a new way to justify the annexation of Moravia to Bohemia in his *Life and Martyrdom of St. Wenceslas and His Grandmother, St. Ludmila,* in which Svätopluk appears as well. Perhaps the most disputed author of the Czech Middle Ages connected the history of the Přemyslids and the Czech people with the earlier history of the Moymirids of Moravia in a similar way to Cosmas of Prague, namely by having Bořivoj baptised at the court of Svätopluk by St. Methodius himself. Before being baptized, however, Bořivoj had to go through a series of "rituals" intended to prepare him to accept his new religion. In the end, with the sentence "*Thou shall become the master of your masters,*" St. Methodius is said to have – *de facto* – given Prague the right to rule over Moravia (Legenda Christiani 1978, 20). Whether this construction corresponds to the second half of the 10th century – in line with those who want to see Christian as an authentic source – or originated later – as their opponents claim – is bound to be a never-ending debate. For my part, I firmly believe that (Pseudo-)Christian and his chronicle appeared at a later time. One of the reasons for this is precisely the new formulation of the legitimisation theory intended to justify the rule of Prague over Moravia. Although in theory it could have been relevant at the end of the 10th century, the sophisticated form the author who calls himself Christian uses to present it rather points to the late 11th or early 12th century, i.e. to the time when the Přemyslids of Prague needed to assert their power at the expense of the lords of Moravia. In order to prevent Svätopluk from becoming an ideological and political tool of the Moravians, (Pseudo)Christian introduced – for the very first time – the *black Legend of Svätopluk* (Homza 2014, 48-141).

At this point it is necessary to say that the dichotomy of views on Svätopluk I in Czech historiography continues to this day. However, this has not always been the case. In the Middle Ages, Svätopluk was more often than not looked at rather positively. This had to do with the more detailed and elaborated fables that gradually shaped the formula the Czechs would eventually use to legitimize their rights over Moravia and the origin of the power of the Czech crown. This process gradually crystallized into the Czech hagiography works of the 13th and 14th centuries (Graus 1963b, 289-305; Havlik 1976, 13-28) before being codified into a stable norm by the chroniclers of

the times of Emperor Charles IV. To solve the problem of the relationship between Moravia and Bohemia, they came up with historicising constructions able to overweigh any particular concept of Moravian history and, in fact, made it almost impossible for any form of Moravian history to get conceptualized later on. From a Moravian point of view King Svätopluk of Moravia thus became a key figure in the Czech historical and legal narrative of the late Middle Ages. Of course, this would not have been possible without archbishop St. Methodius. But that is a different kettle of fish.

The fable of Svätopluk became known in Latin as *translatio regni*, namely as the transfer of Svätopluk's Kingdom of Moravia or of Svätopluk's crown over to the Czech kingdom. It was most precisely formulated by the imperial and royal chronicler Přibík Pulkava of Radenín and his contemporary, Chronicler Dalimil (Spěváček 1979, 271-72; Vadrna 2014, 230-79). Their definition of the sovereignty of Prague not only over Moravia but also over Silesia and, therefore, over Poland as well – and even over Western Rus' – *de jure* and *de facto* remained in force until the demise of the Czech Kingdom in 1918.

As it is clear from the above, trying to conceptualize Czech, Moravian and even Silesian history into a single unit, especially when taking into account that the relationship of Moravia and Bohemia had for centuries been just some kind of "improvisation" – as Dušan Třeštík aptly described it in one of his essays (1999, 147) – has never been an easy task. On similar older attempts oriented to assert the Přemyslids' claims to the Hungarian throne in the time of Wenceslas II and his son Wenceslas III, as King Ladislav V of Hungary (Bláhová 1993, 165-75). Moreover, the major problem of conceptualizing the inception of Czech history so that it would include Moravia – and Svätopluk with it – is made even more complicated by the fact that Cosmas of Prague has Svätopluk I working and dying in the ancient Slovak city of Nitra. For this takes the Svätopluk issue beyond the historical boundaries of the Czech Lands.

No wonder then that leading intellectuals of the Czech Kingdom never seemed to know how exactly they were supposed to interpret the figure of King Svätopluk of Moravia and his significance in the earliest stage of the history of the Czechs. Before the outset of Czech critical historiography, history was written in the contemporary spirit, i.e. mainly by adding more and more storylines and more and more secondary fables.

This paper does not aim to describe the different layers that form the *Legend of Svätopluk* or interpret the related tales. This does not mean, however, that they were not of great significance at the time they originated. For similar reasons, neither does it take a closer look at the way Czech history perceived Svätopluk in the period between Humanism and the Enlightenment. Likewise, the image of Svätopluk I presented by the fathers of Czech critical history, Gelasius Dobner († 1790) and Josef Dobrovský († 1829) – who wrote mainly in German and Latin –has been left out as well. I have also opted to omit the many particular Moravian attempts to approach Svätopluk in the framework of the Baroque efforts to create a distinct history of Moravia (Pillingová 2014, 183-331). For reasons of space, I cannot include the attempts by two authors writing mostly in German, the Moravian local historian Beda František Dudík († 1890) (1860, 195-286) and Bertold Bretholz († 1936) (1893,30-63) to create a distinctive Moravian history in the second half of the 19th century. As a matter of fact, they would deserve to be studied in detail in a separate essay. Yet another historical interpretation of Svätopluk that has not been looked at in this article is that of philologist, historian, and ethnographer Pavol Jozef Šafárik († 1861) who was of Slovak origin (Podolan 2014, 407-421). Although his work was also published in Czech, its general Slavic context gives it a completely different character.

The first modern attempt to conceptualize Svätopluk within Czech history was made by František Palacký († 1876). Perhaps the most famous Czech historian of all time, Palacký came from Moravia and studied in Slovakia – Trenčín and Bratislava – as well, two factors that had some

influence in his work. Palacký's first synthesis of Czech history was originally published in German in 1836. However, a revised edition of the *History of the Czech Nation in Bohemia and Moravia* also appeared in Czech in the revolutionary year of 1848. (Palacký 1848, 150). The theses Palacký defined concerning 9th-century history and Svätopluk I especially, became a kind of (non)binding canon for many – not only – Czech historians for a long time. It even constitutes the starting work that determined the way Czech history is perceived up to the present day. In fact, Palacký's vision of Czech history is characterized by the fact that – perhaps too boldly for his time – it includes the history of the Moravians as well (Havlíková 2015, 66-70). Before the Slovaks were also included in it, though. This concept of history, of course, had some consequences, especially for the further development of the Czech and Moravian nations. It was precisely František Palacký who managed to bridge the visible dichotomy of Czech and Moravian history – containing well nurtured Czech and Moravian patriotism – with the model of a single history of the Czech nation composed of Czechs and Moravians. In order to grant historical support to this opinion, Palacký had Svätopluk marry the sister of the Bohemian prince Bořivoj in 871 adding the following words: "*...ever after they would join their arms with the Moravians against their common foes.*" As a matter of fact, Svätopluk marrying a Bohemian princess is nothing but Palacký's conjecture lacking any support whatsoever in any of the many existing sources.

As Palacký's perception of Svätopluk I to some extent suited that of Slovak historiography, he also influenced the direction historiography in Slovakia and in Slovak would take. In fact, when interpreting the figure of Svätopluk I of the Moymirids, the first modern compiler of Czech history admitted – albeit just as a hypothesis – that Svätopluk began his career in Nitra. In his work, Palacký not only raised Svätopluk above all Great Moravian rulers, but also made him a role model and the predecessor of all the Přemyslids. This way, he continued the letter and spirit of the Czech medieval and Humanistic historiography which – as has already been pointed out – derived the inception of the Czech Kingdom from the royal crown of Svätopluk. Until his death, Palacký remained a royalist, i.e. he never crossed the boundaries of Czech historical legitimism, whose basis had precisely been – for centuries – the mentioned thesis about the transfer of the kingdom (*translatio regni*) from Moravia to Bohemia. He had many reasons to do so. One of them was the fact that this interpretation suited his political stance on the ideal Austro-Slavistic arrangement of the Austrian Empire.[1] This is one of the good reasons why he recognized Svätopluk I as a king. His protestant religious affiliation, however, did not allow Palacký to pay the necessary attention to Svätopluk's papal policy.

In the multinational Habsburg commonwealth of the late 19th and early 20th century, Czech historiography – just like all of the surrounding national historiographies – persistently strove for a distinctive interpretation of its own national history. A priority in this respect was to find a historical explanation to legitimize the Czech political rights over Moravia. Being part of the Habsburg Monarchy, Moravia not only enjoyed the special status of a Margraviate but also some distinct elements of Moravian national awareness. Therefore, Svätopluk I of Moravia was one of its cornerstones.

Another Moravian scholar who – after Palacký – also contributed to overcoming this divergent tendency of Moravia was Václav Novotný († 1932). In fact, Novotný is now considered to be one of the top authorities of Czech medieval studies. Unlike Palacký, he was a professional historian and worked for many years as a professor of Czech history at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague. He was among the most prominent pupils Jaroslav Goll († 1929) – the founder of Czech historical positivism and rector of the Czech part of Charles University – ever had. Novotný's talent

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[1]   For criticism of Palacký's concept, see Třeštík 1999, passim.

became clearly visible in 1913 when the first volume of his *Czech History* was published in Prague (Novotný 1913).

In this work, Novotný paid quite a lot of attention to Svätopluk. His reflections on Great Moravia (Novotný 1913, 287), however, do not rest on sound historical foundations but rather on the claim by Czech philologist František Pastrnek († 1940), according to which – linguistically – Slovaks, Moravians and Czechs have "*always formed one nation.*" Novotny's concept of Czech history, therefore, comprised not only Moravia but Slovakia as well, namely its western part which up to some extent fitted into the Czech-speaking area. Like Palacký, Novotný also intensively searched for evidence that would serve to historically and legally justify the connection between Czechs and Moravians. Leaving aside Palacký's argument that Svätopluk wedded a Bohemian princess, Novotný rather emphasized the baptism of the first Bohemian prince Bořivoj, which both Cosmas of Prague and (Pseudo)Christian set at the court of Svätopluk I (Novotný 1913, 337-422). At this point it is necessary to point out once again that this "historical" event is still called into question. Undisputed, however, is Novotný's assertion that four years before his death, Svätopluk got legal authorisation to annex Bohemia from the East Frankish King Arnulf of Carinthia. Novotný saw the territory of 9th-century Slovakia or of the Nitra Principality as Svätopluk I's domain (*regnum*). He did not specify its borders, though. As generally known, Nitra is not *explicitly* mentioned as the seat of Svätopluk in any source. However, this was generally accepted until Novotny's time mainly built on historical tradition whose core was the *Nitra Legend of Svätopluk* as rendered by Cosmas of Prague. Novotný used historical deduction to sort out Svätopluk I's life and work in Nitra. Wiching or Viching was Svätopluk's man. The fact that Pope John VIII obliged Svätopluk's request and ordained Wiching bishop of the Holy Church of Nitra means that Nitra must have been Svätopluk's seat.[2]

Novotný paid more attention to Svätopluk I's relations to the structures of the restored Roman Empire and the Roman Papacy than Palacký had before him. This is one of his greatest contributions, indeed. Moreover, Novotný constantly emphasized Svätopluk's pragmatic approach towards both political and cultural epicentres of the Christian Occident in Europe. In his analysis of Pope Stefan V's letter to Svätopluk I from 885 – known as *Quia te zelo fidei* – Novotný acknowledged Svätopluk's royal title without any further thorough comments (Novotný 1913, 396). Likewise, when studying Svätopluk's relationship to Saint Methodius and to his disciples – headed by Saint Gorazd – Novotný's approach was, again, rather realistic. In his opinion, for the sake of the unity of the newly established archdiocese – the ideological foundation securing the further existence of his realm – Svätopluk had no choice but to green-light the expulsion of the disciples of St. Methodius from Great Moravia. Interestingly, though, Novotný did not draw any further consequences from this otherwise inspiring idea. For instance, the fact that the supporters of the Latin rite were victorious at the court of Svätopluk I was a decisive factor in making the Western Slavs part of the Western Latin cultural orbit.

Novotný's sober positivism introduced the historical figure of Svätopluk I into 20th-century Czech written historiography. When doing so, Novotný did not leave out any of the essential

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[2]   To refresh Novotný's argument, let us describe it once more. A letter written in the year 900 by the Bavarian bishops complaining about the originally Swabian Benedictine monk Wiching, who had a close relationship with Svätopluk I, reads: "Your predecessor (Pope John VIII) consecrated Viching as a bishop at the request of Svätopluk..." In the previous bull *Industrae tuae* addressed to Svätopluk by Pope John VIII, it says: "We also ordained that priest named Viching whom you sent us (Svätopluk I to Pope John VIII) as the elected bishop of the Holy Church of Nitra..." ("Antecessor vester, Zuentibaldo duce impetrante, Vvichinqum consecravit episcopum" (Marsina 1974, no. 39, pag. 33) and "Ipsum quoque presbiterum nomine Uuichinus, quem nobis direxisti, electum episcopum consecravimus sanctae ecclesiae Nitrensis" (Marsina 1974, no. 30, pag. 24).

features of the historical figure of Svätopluk I. Of course, he did not pay the necessary attention to everything. For example, he completely failed to analyze the tradition of Svätopluk, i.e. the transformation of the historical Svätopluk into a literary figure. Since he actually saw the inhabitants of Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia as one nation, it was he who laid the foundations for the later "Czechoslovak" or – to be exact – the Czech interpretation of Svätopluk which can still be perceived among historians writing in Czech practically to this day.[3]

Just a few of medievalists are aware of the consequences the efforts to defend the authenticity of the Old Bohemian, in Latin written *Life and Martyrdom of St. Wenceslas and His Grandmother, St. Ludmila* (hereafter *Christian's Legend*) had for the development of the perception of the earliest Czech history and of Great Moravia and, consequently, of Svätopluk as well. (Dobrovský 1807).[4] As a matter of fact, if (Pseudo)Christian and his legend were to actually date back to the 10th century, Czech medieval historiography – which started, like all the neighboring ones, with its dynastic *gesta* in the first decades of the 12th century – would have in them an "ace" that would secure the Czechs an over 100-year head start in Central Europe and among all of the Slavs. The problem is that there is nothing to support their authenticity. Among other things, precisely due to the fact that it was (Pseudo)Christian who laid the foundations of the *black legend of Svätopluk* in Czech literary tradition. The dark image of Svätopluk as a power-hungry and cruel half-pagan who was to blame for getting rid of his God-fearing uncle and bringing himself and Moravia under the curse of Saint Methodius simply does not correspond to the 10th century. For if that had been the case, how could have four members of this family be named after Svätopluk in the 11th and 12th centuries?

A native of the Czech town of Trutnov, Josef Pekař († 1937) was another of Jaroslav Goll's influential students and worked as a professor of Austrian history at the University of Prague. At the beginning of the 20th century, in his work *The Oldest Czech Chronicle,* Pekař brought (Pseudo)Christian's legend back among the "authentic" Czech sources from the 10th century (Pekař 1906, passim).

Nevertheless, Pekař's prolific work is moderate and balanced. So is his high-school textbook *The History of our Empire...* (*Dějiny naší říše...*). Being published on 9 April 1914, i.e. before WWI, this textbook remarkably survived the last years of the monarchy, the First Czecho-Slovak Republic, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia during WWII, and even the first post-war years. Although it is not a scholarly work, its influence cannot be undermined. As a matter of fact, this work shaped whole generations of Czech humanities scholars. Pekař devoted roughly three pages of his textbook to Great Moravia, properly putting it in connection with the Carolingian expansion. In it, Pekař's description of Svätopluk is similar to (Pseudo)Christian's, i.e. a bellicose ruler, a "*harsh warrior and voluptuous man*" who – in religious matters – was subject to the Frankish and Wallachian, i.e. Italian, clergy. Pekař has Svätopluk ruling Nitra and even gives him the merit of inviting and receiving the Byzantine theologians and missionaries Saints Constantine the Philosopher and his brother Methodius. In his opinion, Svätopluk's rule was defined by his

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[3] If he were to admit that the Czechs, the Moravians and the Nitrians – the Slovaks, are after all only three, albeit very close entities (early medieval gentes), he would have to say that Svätopluk, with the help of his Nitra background, which he does not seem to have completely abandoned, gained his position as the central ruler of the Moymirids in Moravia itself and thanks to the political weight of both these united political units, he negotiated a peace with the Franks, on the basis of which he then began his famous expansion. Its culmination was the *de facto* annexation of Bohemia and the legal recognition of this act by the East Franconian king Arnulf at the meeting in Omutesperch in 890. However, Václav Novotný was miles away from such an interpretation.

[4] Josef Dobrovský evaluated *The Legend of the so-called Christian*, or rather (Pseudo)Christian, with good reason, as a later forgery.

military successes and dispute with St. Methodius which – in accord with (Pseudo)Christian – Pekař claims to have led to St. Methodius cursing Wiching and Svätopluk. Contemporary sources, however, do not mention anything like this. On the contrary, the contemporary work *Life of St. Methodius* mostly speaks highly of Svätopluk. Although Pekař failed to assign any dignitary title to Svätopluk, following the spirit of medieval Czech legendry, he not only had Bořivoj, but also his wife St. Ludmila, baptised by St. Methodius at Svätopluk's court. According to Pekař, Svätopluk conquered Bohemia, and the Czechs – led by Prince Oldřich – subjugated Moravia after the death of the Polish king Boleslav I the Brave in 1025. Curiously, this history textbook does not mention Svätopluk's inclination towards the Roman Curia, something you would expect when taking into account the rest of works by Pekař, in which he processes historical issues with a positivist, realist and legitimist approach (Pekař 1914, 19-22).

Some elements of this legitimist approach which implicitly derives the Czech royal crown from the Moravian crown of King Svätopluk on the basis of an older medieval tradition can also be found in the work of Rudolf Urbánek († 1962). A native of Slané, near Kladno, this historian was also one of Goll's disciples. From among Urbánek's works closest to the topic in question, let us take a closer look at his 1915 study *On the Czech Royal Legendry* (*K české pověsti královské*). The article is remarkable in several respects. Above all, it constitutes the first ever history work written in Czech to pay attention to the significant role the *Legend of Svätopluk* has played in the concept of Czech history. Although Urbánek's education would make you expect him to use a positivist historical method for his work, he clearly declared that he approached the development of Svätopluk's memory traces in the specific literary genre of royal legendry in the Czech popular and scholarly environment. In short, he left aside historical facts and made use of literary fiction. Although he does not explicitly declares this, his work clearly shows that in his research, Urbánek is more of a literary historian. At the outset, Urbánek defined the *Legend of Svätopluk* to be the starting point of this legendry and, therefore, fundamental for earlier Czech literary tradition. In the Czech historical narrative, Urbánek correctly derived this legend from Cosmas' rendering and his version of the *Nitra Legend of Svätopluk*. He did not give it the "Nitra" attribute, though. Urbánek made this legend part of the Czech tradition with the following words: "*The oldest ruler Czech people have preserved in their memory, hoping for his return, was Svätopluk.*" A few lines later, however, Urbánek says that the tradition of the *Legend of Svätopluk* has its roots in Moravia and adds that the wording we know today is a considerably reduced version of the original. Urbánek was also the first one to go one step further and study the way this tradition eventually developed in Czech literature. When doing so, he aptly made use of sources of both hagiographic and secular (chronicle) character. Urbánek also adequately elaborated on the different morphological elements of the overall image of the *Legend of Svätopluk* in the Czech literary tradition.

Subsequently, however, Urbánek goes back to Cosmas' account of Svätopluk known today as *Sicut vulgo dicitur*, i.e. to its lowbrow part, and exactly defined its millenarianist essence: "*So then the people believed that Svätopluk had not died* [...] *but was hiding somewhere and would be back again*." Today, this could also be described as the oldest archetype of *rex otiosus*, i.e. the gone (absent) king who shall get back to his people in due time, i.e. at the most appropriate, most difficult moment to become their *rex visibilis*, i.e. the visible king. Like many later researchers writing in Czech, Urbánek completely missed the more practical dimension of the entire *Nitra Legend of Svätopluk* which – I firmly believe – is its highbrow part, known as *Sed revera*, i.e. "as it really happened." Above all, the political program of the Arpáds of Nitra aimed at unifying Nitra and Pannonia, i.e. the original kingdom of Svätopluk. In other words, it was the ideological rationale behind the unification of Cis- and Trans-Danubia.

Rudolf Urbánek also put the folk part of the *Nitra Legend of Svätopluk* in connection with another Moravian legend, namely that of King Ječmínek (Barleyman, form Ječmen = barley).

According to Urbánek, the core of this legend was also the historical figure of Svätopluk (Urbánek 1915, 1-9) This association would certainly deserve some research of its own. For now, however, let me just bring up one of the stories of Svätopluk in the oldest writings of the Kingdom of Hungary. In it, Svätopluk drowns in the Danube after losing the battle with the Old Hungarian hordes, i.e. at the moment the new ruler, Árpád, takes over Pannonia (Homza 2014, from 136). In this respect, the etymology of the personal proper name of this alleged first ruler of Pannonia after Svätopluk, namely Arpád, is worthy of attention. Curiously the name Arpád derives from the Magyar word *árpa* meaning "barley." Therefore, Arpád would be an equivalent to Ječmínek (Barleyman).

Rudolf Urbánek was one of those who did not accept Christian or his work to date back to the 10th century. With this text, too, he remained outside the dominant line of 20th-century Czech historiography. In terms of its thought structure, this work reminds of those Czech historians who recognized the natural monarchist development in Czech history. The establishment of Czecho-Slovakia on 28th or 30th October 1918, however, diametrically changed the political order of the Czech lands. A project of the victorious allies, Czecho-Slovakia was created as a republic. Inevitably then, Palacký, Pekař, but also Urbánek's traditional and legitimist understanding of Svätopluk as a monarch and a predecessor of the Přemyslids, the Luxembourgs and the Habsburgs on the Czech throne, lost its updating value. In terms of religion, moreover, the new republic presented itself as a secular state with a rather ambivalent approach to the Roman Curia. Being a monarch who derived his authority from the See of Saint Peter in Rome and who submitted himself and his people to the patronage of the Holy See, Svätopluk was no longer a suitable historical figure for the new Czecho-Slovak Republic to identify with. In addition, whereas this new polity took a negative stand towards Germany, Svätopluk I led a largely conciliatory policy with the East Frankish Empire. The new government in Prague did not try to disguise its Czech-centralist intentions that would eventually lead to Moravia losing its centuries-old political identity. Svätopluk I as a ruler who expanded from Nitra to Moravia and from Moravia to Bohemia – and whose sovereign right over the Bohemian Principality was recognised by Arnulf of Carinthia, the king of East Francia in 890 – could no longer be used for any significant historical purposes. It was a lot easier to thematise Svätopluk I at the summit of his glory, when his power comprised the Moravians, Czechs, as well as the Slovaks and the Ruthenians. In him, politicians could see a historical and legal precedent justifying the very existence of the new republic. As a matter of fact, Svätopluk's attempt to unify the Slavs – *Regnum Sclavorum* – went beyond this 20th-century concept of Czecho-Slovakia.

The aforementioned list of paradoxes and potential "landmines" clearly shows that a full-fledged and objective approach to Svätopluk in the first Czecho-Slovakia became an even bigger problem for Czech-written historiography than it had been in the past. After the admirable achievements of Novotný, this difficulty would eventually lead to the image of Svätopluk I being repeatedly simplified and reduced in Czech historiography as well as to numerous attempts to replace him with his more pro-Slavic and pro-Cyrilo-Methodian uncle Rastislav.

Now, let me break down these tendencies found in the wide span of interpretations of Svätopluk and illustrate them on different specific cases. Perhaps the historian who contributed the most to introducing these views of Svätopluk into the contemporary discourse of medieval literature in Czech was Václav Chaloupecký († 1951). Another native of Eastern Bohemia, Chaloupecký was a pupil of Josef Pekař and did not hide his admiration for František Palacký. He lacked Václav Novotný's criticism, though (Ducháček 2014, passim). Besides Bohemia, Václav Chaloupecký also worked as a professor at the newly created Department of State – i.e. Czechoslovak – History at Comenius University in Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia, where he spent over 15 years (1922-1938) of his life. He never stopped looking at the history of the Slovaks from a Czech perspective, though. Among other things, this showed in his underestimation of the meaning Nitra and the Principality of Nitra had in the career of Svätopluk I.

Like Novotný, Chaloupecký also tried to approach the question of Svätopluk's life and work in Nitra methodologically. Instead, however, he strengthened Novotný's "linguistic" notion of the unity of the Czechs, Moravians and Slovaks, with another "ethnographic" concept. The problem was that a large part of the population of today's Slovakia, especially in its central and eastern parts – not to mention those who after the disintegration of the Kingdom of Hungary remained in the territory of today's Hungary – did not fit such a concept. As a matter of fact, the inhabitants of those areas show no linguistic nor ethnographic closeness with the Moravians, let alone with the Czechs. It did not take Chaloupecký long to find a way out of this nuisance, though. He just needed to specify his original "ethnographic" thesis a bit closer. In his update, Slovaks – who in his own words belonged "*to the group of Czech tribes*" – inhabited only the western part of Slovakia while the rest of the territory remained uninhabited. For this reason, Chaloupecký also had the borders of Nitra – which he otherwise recognized as the core of Svätopluk's dominium (*regnum*) – to reach as far east as the Hron river. He even supported this claim using a "historical" reason. After all, Cosmas of Prague had also defined the borders of Svätopluk's kingdom at the Hron river. Chaloupecký forgot, however, that Cosmas was referring to the eastern borders of the political influence the Czech princes had at the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries, not about the limits of the expansion of the Czech tribe or of the Principality of Nitra.

Chaloupecký summarized these and other ideas in his work *Ancient Slovakia* (*Staré Slovensko*). It was published in 1923, that is a remarkably short time after the creation of the 1st Czecho-Slovak Republic. Although the scholarly qualities of this publication are indisputable, these are obscured by the fact that its main ideological objective was to defend the current political dominance of the Czechs in the area east of the Morava river by purposefully interpreting historical facts. Chaloupecký's work also aimed to present historical reasons that would support Czecho-Slovakia's southern border with Hungary – due to the lack of historical borders between Slovakia and Hungary – a goal he actually managed to achieve. Unfortunately, this present-day border began to be automatically identified with the border of Svätopluk's dominion (*regnum*) in 869.[5]

The present paper cannot deal with all the details of this book which caused stormy reactions in Slovakia when it appeared. As for the topic in question, the ironic tone Chaloupecký uses to describe the beginnings of the tradition of Svätopluk among Slovaks at the very beginning of his work appears rather puzzling. As a matter of fact, Chaloupecký does not present his opinion on Svätopluk plainly and directly. Instead, in a subtle and cunning way he contextualises a quote by Matej Markovič, a Slovak Lutheran, from 1745, that reads: "*And so it happened that those petty Slovaks finally got their hands on a Slovak king in a Slovak Country.*" (Chaloupecký 1923, 10-11).

Whatever he might have meant by it, it is clear that following the contemporary line of Czech historiography, Chaloupecký recognized Svätopluk's royal title but tried to diminish its significance. For that reason, he did not call the most important of the Moymirids by the title Pope Stefan V uses in his letter to Svätopluk *Quia te zelo fidei*, namely "King of the Slavs," but prefers to refer to him as *Svatopluk, King of Moravia* (*Svatopluk, Král moravský*). That is the very headline he gave one of this articles from 1934. In fact, that article reveals rather clearly that Chaloupecký is projecting the political and economic situation of the new republic – ruled by the Czechs – back into the 9th century, rather than trying to reconstruct the historical Svätopluk (Chaloupecký 1934, 61-68).

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[5] Due to the fact that the present-day Slovakia and Hungary formed an indivisible entity at least since the end of the 11th century, naturally there was no precisely established historical border. However, there was at least some vague geographical notion of it. In his work, Václav Chaloupecký argued in favor of the territorial delimitation of the Slovak territory (land), especially against Hungary's post-Trianon historical revisionism and sentimentalism.

These intentions are even more visible in his 1936 paper *The Great Moravian Empire* (*Říše Velkomoravská*). As the article is basically a list of all of Chaloupecký's supporting ideological theses he introduced into historiography, it has no footnotes. In it, however, Chaloupecký writes that the Moravian rulers united "*all the lands and tribes of our* [Czech] *nation into a significant polity*." Saints Constantine and Methodius, then: "*gave this first national polity its distinct cultural content...*" He then sees the Great Moravian idea of "*the renaissance of the Great Moravian tradition in the Czechoslovak spirit*" revitalized in the politics of Czech rulers Přemysl Otakar II and Charles IV. Moreover, Chaloupecký gives all the merits of the mission of Cyril and Methodius to Prince Rastislav and – in line with (Pseudo)Christian – has the treacherous and devious Svätopluk opposing it and ultimately causing its demise. In spite of being a "supporter" of the authenticity of the *Legend of (Pseudo)Christian*, Chaloupecký did not fail to see positive attributes in Svätopluk. He acknowledged his military talent and fairly accurately captured his balancing act in the politics of the Empire. He also recognised Svätopluk's Nitra origin and royal title. Predictably, however, he failed to pay any attention to the papal context of Svätopluk's policy. As a matter of fact, the real contribution of the analysed articles is the fact that in them, Chaloupecký unveiled the potential purposeful use Svätopluk could be made of in the new political conditions (Chaloupecký 1936, 18-24).

After the mid-1930s, the predominantly pro-empire dimension of Svätopluk's policy was in conflict with the anti-German policy of the first Czecho-Slovak Republic, a contradiction that proved to be difficult to bridge. As a result, those who would like to have the Great Moravian Empire as the first common polity of Czechs and Slovaks – just like Chaloupecký – tried to compensate this by overstating the meaning of Svätopluk's uncle, Rastislav, mainly in connection with the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition. This resulted in the historiographical – and still generally accepted – stereotype that sees in Prince Rastislav and St. Methodius the righteous and bright figures as opposed to the dark, albeit temporarily successful Svätopluk. It was the latter who ultimately caused the first common polity of Czechs (+ Moravians) and Slovaks to collapse. Further Czech research would show to what extent this stereotype originated in the image (Pseudo)Christian created of Svätopluk.

The first Czech researcher of Great Moravia and Svätopluk who was able to identify and describe this stereotype was František Graus, († 1989), a historian of German-Jewish origin and a native of Brno, the former capital of Moravia. Graus is not a member of Jaroslav Goll's "school" although he also worked as the head of the Department of Czechoslovak History in Prague. At the very beginning of his ideological metamorphosis (Wihoda 2009, 251-261; 2024, 101-114) Graus was a radical Marxist-Stalinist who rejected the traditional Czech positivist historical school around Goll. Its final point is a work dealing with the origin and genesis of the West Slavic nations and the role tradition plays in it: *Die Nationenbildung der Westslawen im Mittelalter.* (Graus 1980). František Graus was one of the first historians writing in Czech who tried to break free from the "Cosmas hoop" of looking at the earliest history of the Czechs. Instead, he tried to create his own revolutionary "non-Cosmas" interpretation based on a Marxist approach. As for his prolific production, Graus undoubtedly remains one of the most influential Czech and European medievalists of the 20th century. In many respects, this initially inveterate Marxist and structurally oriented medievalist was ahead of his time. He can also be said to have shaped the thinking of the following generation of Czech historians. Take Dušan Třeštík, for instance, a notable historian we will be dealing with in the next part of this article. In fact, Graus also left an indelible mark in Slovakia, especially when it comes to researching social and economic history, especially in the work of Matúš Kučera († 2022). After the 1968 occupation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, Graus lectured at different universities abroad, e.g. in Basel, Switzerland. Throughout his professional career, Graus gradually abandoned his Marxist perspective of history, a process

that took place around the first third of the 1960s. At that time, he also began to reflect on and publish articles about the role of tradition in the development of historical communities.

Graus first dealt with Svätopluk I in his 1960 article entitled *Rex-Dux Moravie* in which he studied the evolution of the terms *rex* and *dux* in the history of Great Moravia. In this connection, he said that the prestige of Svätopluk I as a ruler grew in direct proportion to the rise in power of his dominium. This growth in power and fame reflected in the fact that Svätopluk's original domestic title took a semantic shift, namely from "prince" to "king." (Graus 1960, 181-190). In fact, this argumentation fit a later one, which was preferred in Polish (Labuda 1962, 65-68) and Slovak historiographies by, for example, Richard Marsina: "*in the papal written documents, the rank title of Svätopluk had an increasing tendency*" (Marsina 2012, 117).

Graus also dealt with Svätopluk in several other works (for instance *L'empire de Grande Moravie, sa situation dans L'Europe de L'epoque et sa structure itérieure*, 1963a) but his article *The Great Moravian Empire in the Czech Medieval Tradition* (*Velkomoravská říše v české středověké tradici*) remains unsurpassed to this day (Graus 1963b, 289-305). In it, Graus brought up the question of historical tradition, which had been taboo in Marxist historiography until then. He studied the continuity and discontinuity of the memory of Great Moravia in Czech medieval literature. At the very beginning of his paper, Graus presented a rather radical thesis according to which the medieval Czech literary tradition did not derive directly from the earlier Moravian ecclesiastical and political tradition which, in his opinion, had disappeared with the very collapse of Moravia. To support this view, Graus first used examples from the ecclesiastical sphere and, later on, justified this conscious negation of an ancient tradition with the logical idea that the Bishopric of Prague, founded in 973, had no interest to build on the earlier Moravian-Pannonian Archbishopric. The discontinuity of the secular and ecclesiastical power between the old Great Moravian and the new Czech elites is still today – with good reason – the mainstay in the Czech approach to the Great Moravian heritage.

In his article, Graus devoted a relatively large space to the tradition of Svätopluk (page 298 on). I need to disagree with his claim that this tradition became part of the Czech medieval literary tradition since (Pseudo)Christian and his *Legend of Saint Wenceslas and his grandmother Saint Ludmila* for the mere fact that Graus was one of those who have this legend dating back to the 10th century. On the other hand, however, I must agree with his assertion that it was (Pseudo)Christian who generated the traditional and still valid Czech schizophrenia when looking at Svätopluk, i.e. the two completely contradictory Czech accounts of this ruler. One of them tells about the dark Svätopluk and his conflict with his pious uncle – who remains unnamed – and, later on, with Saint Methodius as well, which led to the curse of Methodius over Moravia. The second one, conversely, describes Svätopluk as a devout ruler who received the first Czech prince Bořivoj to be baptised by St. Methodius at his court. I also agree with Graus that this duality led the supporters of (Pseudo)Christian to eventually generate two and even three different literary figures of Svätopluk. In fact, the literary contamination that merges two or three different Svätopluks – Svätopluk I, his son Svätopluk II and the godson of Svätopluk I, Zwentibold of Susteren, the last king of Lotharingia – into one and the same person or intermixes their stories, still needs to be studied separately.

Following the generally accepted order in which the earliest medieval works of Czech provenance originated – according to which (Pseudo)Christian is supposed to have written before Cosmas of Prague – Graus further drew attention to two other different concepts of Svätopluk he identified in the first Czech chronicler. At the same time, however, he added that the issue here is a dichotomy "*although of a somewhat different nature.*" He meant the contrast between the worldly (royal) and spiritual (monastic) life of Svätopluk in the Zobor monastery. In this respect, Graus built directly on Rudolf Urbánek's theses and – like him – in Cosmas' story he not

only identified Cosmas' own account but also another earlier narrative he described as a distinct *Legend of Svätopluk*. What Cosmas did was to adapt this distinct legend to the needs of his time. Like Urbánek, Graus did not identify its Nitra origin, though. Graus was also the first to divide Cosmas' narrative – in a methodologically adequate way – into two sections: Its popular and its scholarly parts. In his opinion, the scholarly one was *Cosmas' own Legend of Svätopluk*.

In connection with the study of Svätopluk in Czech medievalist historiography, Graus can also be attributed another first place. Footnote number 84 of the analysed work (1963b) draws the attention of researchers: "*As a certain point of interest, let me point out that Svätopluk was also worshiped as a saint in a monastery.*" Although this topic had often been dealt with in baroque historiography and art – as I have highlighted in another article (Homza 2020, 7-25) – it was forgotten in the positivistic Czech history of Goll's school. Yet one more first place František Graus occupies concerns the fact that he identified and defined the morphology of Cosmas' narrative about Svätopluk. True, he did not call every spade a spade but he was right to include the *Legend of Svätopluk* by Cosmas among the mainstream medieval European heroic narrative of the type *Chanson de geste*.

Finally, footnote 45 of the same paper presents another remarkable consideration on the political particularism of Moravia whose ideological symbol – according to Graus – could also be the personal name Svätopluk, which could be found especially among the Moravian Přemyslids. This issue will be dealt with elsewhere, though.

František Graus' extraordinary and multifaceted influence on contemporary Czech medieval studies is undeniable. In spite of the fact that he came from Moravia and not from the Czech environment, his view of Great Moravia and, thus, also his interpretation of Svätopluk, were never tainted by any kind of Moravian partiality. His works in Czech from the second half of the 1960s are characterized by the complexity of their concept. By accurately placing the topic of Svätopluk in the overall context of the late Carolingian period, Graus took it out of the traditional Czech perception limited by the vision of Cosmas of Prague. At the same time, however, by questioning the independence of the historical Great Moravia from the empire, he also took it out of the updating statist framework that justified the creation and existence of the contemporary Czecho-Slovakia. This way, Graus gradually began to take Czech history back into the framework of the East Frankish Empire and its political successors, i.e. back into Pekař's earlier concept, too. And this is precisely the line Dušan Třeštík would eventually build on, as we are about to see in the next part of this article.

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