

## **A Cultural History of Catholic Nationalism in Slovakia, 1985-1993**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is about the construction of a nationalised public Catholic culture in Slovakia from 1985 to 1993. At the core of this culture was the assumption that the Catholic Church had always been an integral part of the Slovak nation, her past, her present and her future. The thesis seeks to answer the question of who created this culture during the 1980s and 1990s and how and why they did so. To answer these questions this thesis adopts a cultural approach and explores how this culture was created utilising the concepts of collective memory, symbols and events as its main analytical tools. The data for this analysis include, but are not restricted to, materials produced in relation to various commemorative events and pilgrimages, especially those related to the leading national Catholic symbols: the National Patroness Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows and Saints Cyril and Methodius. The thesis argues that this culture was deliberately constructed from the point of view of many actors. Before 1989 these included the official Catholic hierarchy, underground Catholic Church communities, the pope and nationalist Communists. After 1989 these actors continued to construct this culture even as their positions of power changed. Most notably, underground Catholics became part of current ecclesiastical and political elite, and communist nationalists dissociated themselves from the Communist Party but retained their position within the cultural and political elite. The thesis consists of three chapters. The first chapter looks at how the nationalised public Catholic culture started in the mid-1980s with underground Catholic communities that focused on culture and grassroots mobilisation. The second chapter looks at how the nationalist Communists and the official church hierarchy became involved in construction of parts of this culture and how their involvement resonated with the underground Catholic communities. Chapter Three examines how this culture continued to develop in the early 1990s in a new political context, and how it contributed to a broader cultural legitimisation of Slovak independence.

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## INTRODUCTION

5 July 1991: Thousands of people gather in a city in southern Slovakia for a ‘national’ pilgrimage. The occasion is the feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius. The location was Nitra, the site of the oldest diocese on Slovak lands.<sup>1</sup> The pilgrimage was the first of its kind since 1948, when the ruling Communist Party launched a campaign to dismantle the nationalised public Catholic culture; pilgrimages were just one victim of a broader effort to selectively de-nationalise and privatise religion.<sup>2</sup>

Before the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia gained a monopoly on power in 1948, Cyril and Methodius—the 9th-century Christian missionaries and linguists who became national saints—figured at the centre of nationalised official culture, which celebrated the Slovak nation as a historical nation with a distinctive culture, and therefore entitled to cultural and political autonomy. Nitra itself was placed at the centre of a distinctly Slovak nationalist and Slovak Catholic interpretation of national history. According to such narratives, it was Nitra which first saw Christianity introduced on Slovak soil, and it was there that the first state to formally preside over Slovak territory, the chiefdom of Prince Pribina, was established.<sup>3</sup> These nationalists also believed that Nitra was the centre of Great Moravia and that Slovaks were the first Slavic nation to be Christianised (the faith brought by Cyril and Methodius in the 9th century). According to the Slovak nationalists from the pre-Communist era, this reading of Slovak history entitled Slovaks to political and cultural autonomy.

In 1991, the Catholic Church hierarchy seemed to be returning to these narratives. During the first post-Socialist ‘national pilgrimage’ to Nitra, Ján Chryzostom Korec, Cardinal of Nitra diocese and the leading figure of the post-Socialist Church in Slovakia, announced that Slovakia had a ‘right to a life on its own.’<sup>4</sup> This statement came as Czech and Slovak representatives had, for over a year, been in discussions concerning the proposed reform of the federal constitution,

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Ako Solúnski bratia,’ *Katolícke Noviny*, 21 July 1991, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Juraj Zajonc, ‘Prečo je Nitra staroslávne mesto,’ in E. Krekovič, E. Krekovičová, E. Mannová (eds.), *Mýty naše Slovenské*, (Bratislava, 2005), pp. 139-50.

<sup>3</sup> Imrich Kružliak, *Cyriľometodský Kult u Slovákov, Dlhá cesta k slovenskej cirkevnej provincii* (Prešov, 2003); Martin Hetényi, Peter Ivanič, ‘Poznámky k šíreniu kultu sv. Cyrila a Metoda v rokoch 1939-1945 na príklade mesta Nitra’, in P. Sokolovič (ed.), *Život v Slovenskej republike, Slovenská Republika 1939-1945 Očami mladých historikov IX*, (Bratislava, 2010), pp. 336-344; Zajonc, ‘Prečo je Nitra’, pp. 139-50.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Ako Solunski bratia,’ 3.

with the aim of making the federation functional in its new democratic context. Cardinal Korec, however, was clearly not interested in supporting the federative arrangement. His words anticipated growing support on the part of the Slovak hierarchy for the break-up of the Czechoslovak common state. During the three years between the fall of state socialism in 1989 and the eventual break-up of Czechoslovakia in 1993, Cardinal Korec and other leading members of the Slovak episcopate increasingly warmed to those nationalists who saw Czecho-Slovak negotiations as useless or even illegitimate, and who wanted to determine Slovakia's future unilaterally.

The Slovak episcopate, then, began to shift focus: turning away from discussions of the Czechoslovak or Slovak constitution. Instead, they utilised nationalised Catholic culture in support of this nationalist cause. Such repertoires of nationalised public Catholic culture would in turn come to play a major role for Slovak nationalists in their campaign for independence. When the Slovak National Assembly declared independence and enacted a Slovak constitution on 1 January 1993, the hierarchy of the Slovak Church as well as Catholic elites, heralded in the new state. Segments of this nationalised public Catholic culture would then continue to play an important role in maintaining national autonomy, national unity, and national identity in Slovakia, a process in which a variety of nationalist forces, within as well as outside the Church, had since come to be involved.

For scholars who study the role of the Catholic Church in post-Socialist Slovak society and specifically in post-Soviet renditions of nationalism, this behaviour of the Catholic Church hierarchy during the break-up of Czechoslovakia signified that the Catholic Church in Slovakia had emerged after 1989 as the de-facto 'national Church.' It had, they contend, after over forty years of societal marginalisation, finally regained its status as a church dominant not only numerically, but also as one of the leading symbols of national autonomy, national unity, and national identity.

Some scholars saw this mobilisation of Catholic culture as the revival of Catholicism as the nationalist and political force it had been throughout the pre-Communist era in the country. Assuming that the Catholic Church in Slovakia has been 'tied to the nation historically...the leadership of the Church grants rhetorical and institutional support to political and cultural institutions dedicated to the national inspirations,' political scientists describe the various ways in which the Catholic

Church had played this role of a 'national Church' in post-Socialist Slovakia.<sup>5</sup> According to Slovak sociologist Miroslav Tížik, after the establishment of the independent Slovakia, 'Christianisation of the state' began, manifest in the change of public symbols and public collective memory of the state from 'ideologically neutral' to closely associated with Christianity.<sup>6</sup> In a study on Church-state relations in Slovakia, political scientists Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu observe that 'the dominant Roman Catholic Church behaves and is treated as *de-facto* national Church.'<sup>7</sup> Indeed, some scholars go as far as calling Slovakia a 'Roman Catholic state.'<sup>8</sup>

In understanding the historical roots of the post-Communist position of the Church in this way, these scholars in fact follow a Catholic nationalist narrative which has been created in the process of the nationalisation of the Catholic Church and in an effort to establish the Church as a legitimate part of the Slovak nation.<sup>9</sup> These narratives portray those Catholics who supported national emancipation as representative of the Catholic Church, and the Catholic Church itself as an institution which offered unwavering support for Slovak national emancipatory struggles and vitally supported preservation of Slovak national identity. According to these narratives, as a result of suppression during the Communist era (1948-1989), the Catholic Church was relegated to the background of social and political life, although after its re-emergence post-1989, it played a vital role in the recreation of Slovak nationalised culture and identity.

These studies are somewhat lacking not only in their understanding of the the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Slovak nation as having developed linearly; this is a neat and tidy teleological story, but it leaves out an important part of

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<sup>5</sup> Timothy A. Byrnes, *Transnational Catholicism in Post-communist Europe* (Lanham and Oxford, 2001), p. 65; Sabrina Petra Ramet, 'The Re-emergence of Slovakia', *Nationalities Papers* 22(1994), 99-117; Frans Hoppenbrouwers, 'Nationalist Tendencies in the Slovak Roman Catholic Church,' *Religion in Eastern Europe* 18(1998): 24-45.

<sup>6</sup> Miroslav Tížik, *Náboženstvo vo verejnom živote na Slovensku, Zápasy o ideový charakter štátu a spoločnosti* (Bratislava, 2011), p. 202.

<sup>7</sup> Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu, 'Slovakia' in L. Stan and L. Turcescu (ed.), *Church, State, and Democracy in Expanding Europe*, (Oxford, 2013), p. 164.

<sup>8</sup> Milan Reban, 'The Catholic Church in the Post-1989 Czech Republic and Slovakia', in S P. Ramet (ed.), *Religion and Politics in Post-Socialist Central and Southeastern Europe, Challenges since 1989*, (London, 2014), pp. 57-8.

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. Milan S. Ďurica, *Dejiny Slovenska a Slovákov* (Bratislava, 1995); Emília Hrabovec, *Slovensko a Svätá stolica 1918-1927 vo svetle vatikánskych prameňov* (Bratislava, 2012); Kružliak, *Cyrlometodský Kult u Slovákov*; Róbert Letz, *Sedembolestná Panna Mária v Slovenských Dejiniach* (Bratislava, 2014); Peter Mulik (ed.), *Katolícka Cirkev a Slováci, Usilie Slovákov o Samostatnu Cirkevnu provinciu, Zborník referatov z odborneho seminara 20 rokov samostatnej slovenskej cirkevnej provincie* (Bratislava, 1998); Štefan Vargaš, *Cyrlometodské Dedičstvo, v náboženskom, národnom a kultúrnom živote Slovákov* (Bratislava, 1991).

the picture. On the most general level, these studies are right in assuming that there was a powerful nationalised culture before the onset of the Communist regime and that the Communist state sought to de-nationalise and privatise this public Catholic culture. However, in assuming only a story of Catholic persecution and marginalisation during the Communist era, they oversimplify the manner in which a nationalised public Catholic culture emerged in Slovakia— a story that begins before the collapse of Communist rule. This thesis aims to examine the development of this culture in the period between 1985 and 1993.

In the most general sense, by ‘a nationalised public Catholic culture’ I mean those discourses and practices which present the Catholic Church as an integral part of the national legacy. This thesis focuses on those parts of this nationalised culture which are related to popular Catholic devotions, especially those featuring Our Lady of Seven Sorrows (Slovakia’s national patroness) and Saints Cyril and Methodius. Despite this focus on popular devotions, I use the term ‘public’ nationalised public Catholic culture (as opposed to ‘popular’) to suggest that both before and after 1989, this nationalised culture was constructed not only at grassroots level, but also by various elite groups: by Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

The creation of a nationalised public Catholic culture in Slovakia was a long and protracted process related to and dependent on a number of political cultural and social developments, the most crucial of which was Slovak nation-building and the Slovakisation (both institutional and cultural) of the Catholic Church on the territory of what is now Slovakia. Indeed, the Catholic nationalist narrative of the aforementioned studies is itself a product of this process of the nationalisation of Catholic culture. I will describe this process in a greater detail later in this introduction; for now, suffice it to say that the beginnings of the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture date to the first Czechoslovak Republic. At the centre of this culture were two symbols: the National Patroness ‘Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows’ and to an even greater extent, Saints Cyril and Methodius.<sup>10</sup> Catholics mobilised these symbols and the histories related to them as a counterstance to the official culture which was being promoted by progressive Czechoslovak elites.<sup>11</sup> The main symbolic figure for these progressive elites was Jan Hus, a Czech Catholic priest who in the 15th

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<sup>10</sup> James Mace Ward, *Priest, Politician, Collaborator, Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia* (Ithaca and London, 2013), p. 92.

<sup>11</sup> James Ramon Felak, “*At the Price of the Republic,*” *Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party, 1929-1938* (Pittsburgh and London), pp. 21-22.

century attempted to reform the Church, but was met with refusal and eventually executed as a heretic. Initially, it was the Slovak hierarchy and Catholic nationalist elites playing the central role in this process. Many of these elites were connected to the populist Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (HSL'S), led by and named after the priest-politician, Andrej Hlinka. Hlinka's Slovak People's Party actively took up the effort to reinterpret Cyril and Methodius as symbols of Slovak Catholicism and Slovak autonomy despite what the progressive Czechoslovak official culture had to say about them, and the party regularly organised celebrations of the saints throughout Slovakia, at which they were discussed as such.<sup>12</sup> It was these elites who cast local Catholic symbols as national Catholic symbols and imagined the Church as part of the Slovak nation and its history.

Under the wartime Slovak Republic (1939-1945), the major role in the construction of nationalised culture was played by the Slovak People's Party, now renamed the Hlinka's Slovak Peoples' Party (HSL'S). It abolished the multiparty system, usurped all political power and gained almost full control of the public sphere. The Slovak state was a Nazi satellite and its leaders willingly followed in Germany's footsteps in crushing democracy and violating human rights, including deportating over 40,000 of its Jews to concentration camps. (The deportations were halted at one point and a significant portion survived but most of them were deported in the later months of the war.)<sup>13</sup> At this time, the state also legitimised its existence by the mobilisation of public Catholic culture; the state sought to forge its idea of the Slovak nation as historical and the current state as the culmination of the historical development of the nation. The Church hierarchy, clergy, and laity for the most part assisted in the development of this state-sponsored nationalised culture.<sup>14</sup> The expansive network of national pilgrimages and commemorations were also widely represented in the press<sup>15</sup> during this period, and the nationalised public Catholic culture was most fully integrated with the official nationalised culture in terms of the overlap of symbols, histories, and events. This culture, especially those parts which were actively supported by the state, lost some of their standing when the wartime

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<sup>12</sup> Ward, *Priest, Politician, Collaborator*, p. 93.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 229-35, 243-45, 262-4, 250-1.

<sup>14</sup> Yeshayahu Jelinek, *The Parish Republic: Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, 1939-1945* (New York and London, 1976), pp. 108-112; Hetényi, Ivanič, 'Poznámky k šíreniu kultu sv. Cyrila a Metoda', pp. 336-344; Ivan A. Petranský, 'Katolícka Cirkev v období prvej Slovenskej Republiky', in M. Lacko (ed.), *Slovenská republika očami mladých historikov, 1939-1945, Vol. I.*, (Trnava, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> Hetényi, Ivanič, 'Poznámky k šíreniu kultu', pp. 336-344; Vargaš, *Cyriľmetodské Dedičstvo*, pp. 94-6.

Slovak Republic met its demise in 1945, but the contribution that HSL'S had already made towards the construction of nationalised culture would continue to shape the development of this culture long after the war.

After the short-lived second Czechoslovak Republic (1945-1948) collapsed, Communists gained a monopoly of power. The Communist Party dismantled the nationalised public Catholic culture through the de-nationalisation of the collective memories and symbols, that is, through their privatisation and localisation, and in turn, their no longer being represented by nation-wide events, in the press, or taught in schools or universities. Even smaller aspects of faith, such as rituals, were likewise confined to localities, or were privatised within the home. Perhaps counterintuitively, this de-nationalisation was also backed by many believers, who did not wish to associate their church with a regime they considered illegitimate and anti-religious.<sup>16</sup> All of this will be described in greater detail later in this introduction as well as in chapter one.

Even during the later stages of the Communist regime, the Catholic Church as such was never officially recognised as a creator of the real socialist culture. Catholics and Catholicism were supposed to remain 'pure.' Collective public activities of the Church were confined to liturgies within the Church: pilgrimages were allowed, but the official authorities made sure that these pilgrimages did not acquire nation-wide prominence nor contribute to broader conceptualisations of the Slovak nation. From the 1960s onward, Socialist culture increasingly embraced the idea of the Slovak nation. Yet the Catholic Church remained excluded. Local priests remained the only creators of this restricted Catholic culture as the Church was fully subordinated to the Communist party in both ideology and practice. Symbols which had hitherto (in the pre-Communist era) meant unity between nation and the Church were now reduced to symbols of local value; other symbols, such as that of Cyril and Methodius, were 'international'—they no longer carried any particular meaning for

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<sup>16</sup> Vladimír Jukl, Interview with the author, 7 January 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia; Ján Ch. Korec, Interview with the author, 17 August 2012, Nitra, Slovakia; František Mikloško, interview with the author, 13 July 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia; Juraj Chovan Rehák, Interview with the author, 14 April 2015, Hubová, Slovakia; Ján Sokol, Interview with the author, 29 May 2012, Trnava, Slovakia; Jozef Šulavík, Interview with the author, Bratislava 13 July 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia; František Tondra, Interview with the author, 11 November 2011, Spišská Kapitula, Slovakia; Alojz Tkáč, Interview with the author, 12 November 2011, Košice, Slovakia; Jozef Vlkoš, sr., Interview with the author, 14 July 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.

Slovak national identity or its connection with Christianity. Now instead they symbolised Slavic brotherhood and the fact that Slavic cultures had already been quite highly materially and culturally developed at early stages. The only arena in which Catholic figures and events received mention was insofar as they were actively involved in national emancipation.

This situation began to change from the early 1980s—a phenomenon that has been excluded from many histories of the Church. Leading Slovak scholars seemed to have assumed that because the state prevented and disabled the continuation of the nationalised culture which resembled that of the pre-1948 era, no nationalised public Catholic culture was constructed during Communism.<sup>17</sup> One of the main claims of my thesis is that although the official authorities continued to limit and suppress some aspects of religious life, the early 1980s – almost a decade before the collapse of Communism-- saw the gradual rise of a powerful nationalised public Catholic culture constructed from the viewpoint of various actors, including the official authorities.

The most powerful expression of the re-emerged nationalised culture was an increased demand for popular devotions. For instance, the number of pilgrims to the national shrine in Šaštín grew steadily from an estimated 30,000 in 1985 to 40,000–50,000 in 1986, 60,000 in 1987, and 60,000–70,000 in 1988.<sup>18</sup> Yet this was not merely a bottom-up phenomenon. By the middle of the decade, leading figures within the Communist state apparatus recognised the power of the new Catholic culture and sought to make it a national one—even if their main aim was the legitimisation of their own rule. It was this nationalised public Catholic culture, created under late Communism by both oppositionists and the state, which continued to expand and thrive after 1989.

My thesis seeks to excavate this long-ignored phenomenon of late Communist Catholicism and its links to the development of a Slovak nationalised culture. I will address the who, why, and how of this culture's rise as well as the influence it had on the movement for independence in the early 1990s. I argue that this nationalised public Catholic culture which presented the Catholic Church as an integral part of

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<sup>17</sup> See e.g. Letz, *Sedembolestná.*; Milan S. Ďurica, *Slováci a Sedembolestná* (Bratislava, 2008); *Naša Národná Svätýňa v Šaštíne* (Trnava, 1990), pp. 30-35; Ernest Macák, *Naša Sedembolestná Matka* (Bratislava, 2004).

<sup>18</sup> 'Šaštínsky Príhovor Otca Biskupa Gábriša', *Náboženstvo a Súčasnosť*, 5 (1984), 8. 'Pútno slávnosti na Slovensku v r. 1986,' 17–19; 'Šaštín—September 1987,' *NaS* 5(1987), p. 11; 'Šaštín—'88,' *Katolícky mesačník*, 5(1988), 1. LIBRI PROHIBITI (henceforth LP).

nation was deliberately constructed as the complex handiwork of many actors. More specifically, the process of creating this Catholic (sometimes ethno-) nationalised culture commenced in the mid-1980s with underground Catholic communities which focused on culture and mobilisation. Nationalist Communists made parts of this culture mainstream in the late 1980s as they realised the potential of this Catholic culture to maintain their own power. Thus when the regime collapsed in 1989, the public culture of Catholicism had been firmly embedded in official as well as underground culture. This public Catholic culture continued to develop in the early 1990s in a new political context and became a vitally important instrument for those Slovak nationalists who successfully fought for Slovak independence. Although many Catholic leaders did not want outright independence (many of them supported less ambitious project of greater political autonomy for Slovakia within Czechoslovakia), the nationalised public Catholic culture nevertheless contributed to a broader cultural legitimisation of Slovak independence. This culture provided those Slovak and Catholic nationalists who wanted independence with the cultural tools to do so. However, this use of public Catholic culture in politics made it a point of contestation even until the present day.

My introduction consists of five parts. The first part reviews the literature on religion and nationalism, and nationalised public Catholic cultures during late Socialism and early post-Socialism. The second part introduces my methodology and presents the concepts that will be used to explore the construction of a nationalised public Catholic culture in Slovakia. In the third part, I will give a brief overview of the development of this nationalised culture before the onset of Communism. The fourth part looks at the data and sources used in my thesis. The fifth section surveys my chapters.

## **1. Catholicism and Nationalised Culture in the Current Scholarship**

By studying the construction of a nationalised public Catholic culture which developed during late-Ssocialism and in early post-Socialism, this thesis seeks to fill a gap in scholarship on religion and nationalism during this time. Scholars of nationalism and religion in Central and Eastern Europe typically consider the 1980s and 1990s as the period which saw the gradual rise and, after the fall of the

Communist regimes, the full 'resurgence' of nationalism variously related to religion.<sup>19</sup> Studies of post-Communist nationalism generally treat the 1980s as the period when nationalisms, whether official or unofficial, were gradually taking root, only to blossom fully after 1989.<sup>20</sup> The dynamics of the emergence of religion and religious nationalism as described by current scholarship is similar: the 1980s saw the revival of public religion and paved the way for its central political and cultural role after 1989.<sup>21</sup> The year 1989 is then seen as a watershed that saw the public resurgence of assertive and often anti-modern religion,<sup>22</sup> as the watershed after which non-Communist nationalisms swarmed into the public sphere.<sup>23</sup> Although there are several studies about religion and nationalism and about nationalism before 1989 specifically, the studies of post-1989 religious nationalism have so far paid little attention to how these nationalisms are connected and studied together as part of one story.<sup>24</sup> Scholars of religious nationalism typically tell stories of emergence, or the return of pre-Communist nationalisms triggered by the return of political freedom, often venting frustration accumulated over the years of repression.<sup>25</sup> Yet the examination of nationalised public Catholic culture in Slovakia suggests that although 1989 was certainly important in making the public space available to non-Communist cultures, these cultures began to emerge publically already in the late 1980s. If we

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<sup>19</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?: Religious Nationalism confronts the Secular State (Comparative Studies in Religion and Society)* (Berkeley, 1994); Hank Johnston, 'Religio-Nationalist Subcultures under the Communists: Comparisons from the Baltics, Transcaucasia and Ukraine,' *International Studies in the Sociology of Religion*, 54(Autumn, 1993), 237-255.

<sup>20</sup> See Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed, Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe*, (Cambridge, 1996);-- *Ethnicity without Groups* (New Haven, 2004); Anthony, D, Smith, 'The Resurgence of nationalism? Myth and memory in the renewal of nations', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 47(1996), 575-98; Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation, Democracy, nationalism, and myth in Post-Communist Europe* (Princeton, 1998); Taras Kuzio, 'Nationalising States' or nation-building? A Critical Review of the theoretical literature and empirical evidence', *Nations and Nationalism* 7(2001).

<sup>21</sup> Janusz L. Mucha and Maciej K. Zaba, 'Religious Revival or Political Substitution: Roman Catholic Movements after World War II,' in B. Misztal and A. Shupe (eds.), *Religion and Politics in comparative perspective: revival of religious fundamentalism in East and West*, (Westport, CT, 1992); Hank Johnston, 'Religious Nationalism: Six Propositions from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union,' in B. Misztal and A. Shupe (eds.), *Religion and Politics in comparative perspective: revival of religious fundamentalism in East and West*, (Westport, CT, 1992).

<sup>22</sup> See Porter-Szücs, 'Introduction', pp. 26-7.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Carpenter, 'Slovakia and the Triumph of Nationalist Populism' in *Communist and Postcommunist Studies*, 2(1997), 205-220; Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation*.

<sup>24</sup> Pedro Ramet (ed.), *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and Eastern European Politics* (Durham and London, 1989). Juergensmeyer, *Religious Nationalism confronts the Secular State*. Brian Porter-Szücs, *Faith and Fatherland* (New York, NY, 2011), pp. 360- 90; Genevieve Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz, Nationalism and Religion in Post-communist Poland*, (Chicago and London, 2006)

<sup>25</sup> Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?* Johnston, 'Religio-Nationalist Subcultures', 237-255.

want to understand the post-Socialist dynamics of public cultures, we need to return to their roots in the 1980s.

In Slovak historiography, there are virtually no accounts of the development of nationalised public Catholic or more generally Catholic cultures after 1948. There are two reasons for this. First, this state of the field owes to a more general lack of interest in studying the culture and the approaches of cultural history to the study of nationalism and religion in Slovak historiography.<sup>26</sup> Accounts of Catholic nationalism and popular nationalised cultures before the Communist takeover typically focus on political Catholic nationalism as embodied by the Slovak People's Party. The Catholic Church and the cultural construction of a 'national Church' are mentioned only insofar as it is related to this leading political force in the first Czechoslovak Republic and wartime Slovak Republic.<sup>27</sup> Second, the Slovak historiography of the Church under Communism is essentially a field of political history of the Communist era in Czechoslovakia. This historiography has thus far focused almost exclusively on the religious policies of the Communist state and especially the suppression of religious life under Communism.<sup>28</sup> The scholarship on the underground Church, which typically comes from former members of the underground community, is confined to descriptions of the mechanisms of internal functioning of the underground Church such as the production of samizdat (especially the technical aspect of this process), activities focused on spiritual life organised by secretly ordained priests, or various demonstrations and petitions for greater religious freedom.<sup>29</sup> The public presence of

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<sup>26</sup> See e.g. Mikuláš Teich, Dušan Kováč, Martin D. Brown (eds.), *Slovakia in History*, (Cambridge, 2011). Valerián Bystrický, Dušan Kováč, Ján Pešek (eds.), *Kľúčové problémy moderných slovenských dejín, 1848-1992*, (Bratislava, 2012).

<sup>27</sup> Ivan Kamenec, *Tragédia Politika, Kňaza a Človeka, Dr. Jozef Tiso, 1887-1947* (Bratislava, 2013), 160. For a hagiographical work on Jozef Tiso, see Milan S. Ďurica, *Jozef Tiso-Slovenský kňaz a štátnik* (Martin, 1992); See also Anthony X. Sutherland, *Dr. Jozef Tiso and Modern Slovakia* (Middleton, 1978). For Catholic populism during the interwar years, Felak, *At the Price of the Republic*; Jelinek, *The Parish Republic*.

<sup>28</sup> See Sabrina Ramet, *Nihil Obstat: Religion, Politics, and Social Change in East-Central Europe and Russia* (Durham and London 1998); Patrick Michel, *Politics and Religion in Eastern Europe* (Cambridge 1991); Ramet (ed.), *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and Eastern European Politics*.

<sup>29</sup> Biographies of Church hierarchies ascribe great importance to popular Catholic culture but do not explore whether and how this contributed to seeing the Church as an integral part of the nation. Memoirs written by the underground community members are a useful source as far as the dynamics of revival of popular Catholicism is concerned but again give little information on the products of this culture. See, Július Brocka and Renáta Brocková, *Kým prišiel November* (Bratislava, 2009); Ján Čarnogurský, *Videné spoza Dunaja* (Bratislava, 2005); Anton Hlinka, *Sila slabých, slabosť silných*, (Bratislava, 1991); Jukl, Vladimír, 'Gabriel' in Ján Šimulčík (ed.), *Zápas o nádej* (Bratislava, 2000), pp. 20-65; Ján Ch Korec, *Od Barbarskej noci, Na slobode* (Bratislava, 2005); František Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť rozvrátiť* (Bratislava, 1991); Štefan Šmálik, *Veľký štyridsaťročný pôst cirkvi na Slovensku* (Bratislava, 1996).

the Catholic Church after 1989 has been studied, mostly by political scientists, only in terms of Church-state relationships and only insofar it could serve to illustrate the development of political nationalism, democratisation, or the development of civil society.<sup>30</sup>

It is true that outside of Slovakia, there is a general lack of foreign interest in the country's history, but the development of nationalised public Catholic culture in the country has attracted particularly little in the way of scholarly attention.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps the construction of Catholic cultures in late socialist Slovakia does not fit the current paradigms and perspectives in the study of Catholicism and nationalism.

Non-Communist nationalist cultures in the 1980s have so far been studied typically in cases when: first, local Catholic Churches were strong enough to autonomously create independent Catholic (national) culture; second, only if they were related to (political) opposition or to the struggle for greater respect of human rights; or third, if they co-operated with the Communist state in the building of official Communist nationalism.<sup>32</sup> The Church in Poland, based on these characteristics, has hitherto attracted the most attention. Historians, sociologists, and political scientists have described the rise of the Catholic Church as a proto-oppositional space in the 1980s there, and the creation of an autonomous nationalised public Catholic culture under the leadership of Cardinal Primate Stefan Wyszyński. They have investigated the role of the Church and its culture in the rise of the first independent labour union Solidarity and its struggle for workers' rights.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Shari J Cohen, *Politics without a Past (The Absence of History in Postcommunist Nationalism)*, (Durham, 1999); Frans Hoppenbrouwers, 'Winds of Change: Religious Nationalism in a Transformation Context', *Religion, State and Society*, 30(2002), 305-316.--; 'Nationalist Tendencies,' 24-45.

<sup>31</sup> See Felix Corley, 'The Secret Clergy in Communist Czechoslovakia', *Religion, State and Society*, 21(1993),171-206; Franz Gansgrigler, *Jeder war ein papst: Geheimkirchen in Osteuropa* (Salzburg, 1991); Ján Šimulčík, *Svetlo z podzemia: Z kroniky katolíckeho samizdatu 1969-1989* (Bratislava, 1997);--*Zápas o nádej* (Bratislava, 2000);--*Čas svítania* (Bratislava, 2005).

<sup>32</sup> Miklós Tomka, *Church State and Society in Eastern Europe* (Washington, 2005); Barbara Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe*, (Budapest, New York, 2003); Jan Kubik, *The Power of Symbols against the Symbols of Power, The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland* (University Park, 1994); Jose Casanova, 'Civil Society and Religion: Retrospective Reflections on Catholicism and Prospective Reflections on Islam', *Social Research* 4 (Winter 2001), 1041-1080;--*Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago, 1994), pp. 92-113.

<sup>33</sup> Michael H Bernhard, *The Origins of Democratization in Poland: Workers, Intellectuals, and Oppositional Politics, 1976-1980* (New York, 1993); Roman Laba, *The Roots of Solidarity* (Princeton, NJ, 1991); Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence*, pp. 18-21; Brian Porter-Szücs, *Faith and Fatherland* (New York, NY, 2011), pp. 360- 90; Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz*; Kubik, *The Power of Symbols*; Roman Laba, *The Roots of Solidarity*, (Princeton, NJ, and Oxford, 1991); David Ost,

Catholic Churches (Church hierarchies) in Croatia or Lithuania similarly created nationalised public Catholic cultures.<sup>34</sup> In Slovakia, the Catholic Church and especially its hierarchy were until the last months of 1989 incomplete, fragmented, and lacking an assertive leader. There was an absence of broader political opposition and the Church was, for the most part, excluded from official nationalist cultures. The underground Catholic communities in Slovakia did not, for the most part, identify with the broader themes of anti-Communist dissent. At the same time, there was an absence of assertive hierarchy which would provide institutional support for the construction of an independent Catholic culture. Nonetheless, the 1980s did see a gradual rise of nationalised public Catholic culture.

During the 1980s and 1990s, Catholic culture in Slovakia attracted little attention as scholars were focused on searching for those cultures which anticipated the fall of state socialism and the onset of democracy. As H. Gordon Skilling, an expert on independent cultures in late Socialist Czechoslovakia and more specifically the Czech lands, wrote in 1981: 'In contrast to Bohemia and Moravia, [in Slovakia] there was an almost total lack of oppositional activity of any kind...Religious dissent, among a populace much more devout than the Czechs, was surprisingly rare.'<sup>35</sup> Even now, when scholars abandoned the initial focus on civic dissent, Catholic culture in Slovakia continues to be interesting to scholars only as far as they can describe it as a case of the rise of civil society. For example, David Doellinger, the author of the only English language study of underground Catholic communities in Slovakia, identified these communities as an illustration of the political-social concept of *parallel polis* coined by the Czech Catholic political thinker and dissident, Václav Benda.<sup>36</sup> Exploring the various forms of public (pilgrimages), semi-public (petitions), and clandestine (samizdat publishing) ways of mobilisation, Doellinger concludes that the underground Catholic communities 'significantly contributed to the construction of

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*Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics: Opposition and Reform in Poland since 1968*, (Philadelphia, 1990); Maryjane Osa, 'Pastoral Mobilisation and Contention, The Religious Foundations of the Solidarity Movement in Poland' in Ch Smith (ed.), *Disruptive Religion, The Force of Faith in social-movement activism*, (London, 1996), pp. 67-85.; Barbara Törnquist Plewa, *The Wheel of Polish Fortune* (Lund, 1992), pp. 30-111.; Bogdan Szajkowski, *Next to God....Poland* (New York, 1983).

<sup>34</sup> Vjekoslav Perica, *Balkan Idols, Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States* (Oxford, 2002); Sabrina Ramet, 'Factionalism in Church-State interaction: The Croatian Catholic Church in the 1980s,' *Slavic Review*, 44 (Summer, 1985), 298-315; V Stanley Vardys, *The Catholic Church, Dissent and Nationality in Soviet Lithuania* (New York, 1978).

<sup>35</sup> H. Gordon Skilling, *Charter 77 and Human Rights in Czechoslovakia* (London, 1981), p. 55

<sup>36</sup> David E Doellinger 'Prayers, Pilgrimages and Petitions: The Secret Church and the Growth of Civil Society in Slovakia,' *Nationalities Papers*, 30 (2002), 215-240.

both political society and civil society in Slovakia.<sup>37</sup> This tendency may owe to an increased interest in Catholicism as a democratising force. Whilst these observations are certainly compelling, they say little about whether and to what extent these Catholics were involved in the creation of a distinctive culture.

Scholars of religious nationalism have not so far explored this religious nationalism as a distinctive form of nationalism. This thesis makes the case for acknowledging cultural nationalism as an important force behind the construction of nationalised public Catholic cultures in the 1980s and the 1990s. This distinctive form of nationalism has, more generally, received little attention from social scientists because it is seen as non-political in character. Unlike political nationalism, whose aim is to gain political power in order to transform the state and make it congruent with the nation, cultural nationalism 'wishes to transform society in order to realise the nation. It strives to regenerate the true character of the nation, which is to be manifested in its culture, that is, in its art, thought, and way of life. By reviving the dormant national spirit, cultural nationalism seeks to unite the different aspects of the nation, or rather, of the nationalised culture; the traditional and the modern, the rural and the urban, reason and faith.'<sup>38</sup> As this thesis will argue, Catholic cultural nationalism was the central force behind the construction of nationalised culture in Slovakia.

Last but not least, studies of religion and nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe have so far tended to produce national histories—according to these studies Catholic cultures were created by local actors and hierarchies. This may seem to be an entirely logical perspective to take when studying nationalism. Yet as this thesis suggests, nationalised cultures can be co-created by actors from outside the countries in question. Indeed, the lack of appreciation of transnational actors in the construction of popular Catholic cultures in current scholarship does not come from

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<sup>37</sup> Doellinger 'Prayers, Pilgrimages,' p. 215.

<sup>38</sup> Susanna Rabow-Edling, *Slavophile Thought and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism* (Albany, NY, 2006), pp.3-5. See also the work of the leading scholar on cultural nationalism, John Hutchinson, 'Cultural nationalism and moral regeneration', in J. Hutchinson and A.D. Smith (eds.), *Nationalism I.* (Oxford, 1994), 123-24.; Cultural nationalism', John Breuilly (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism. Oxford handbooks in history* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 75-96.; *Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic revival and the creation of the Irish nation state* (London, 2012).; 'Moral innovators and the politics of regeneration: the distinctive role of cultural nationalists in nation-building', *International journal of comparative sociology* 33(1992), 101-117; 'Re-interpreting cultural nationalism', *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 45(1999), 392-409.

an actual absence of transnational actors who would support distinctive popular cultures, but rather owes to a lack of appreciation of the perspectives of transnational history in the study of nationalism in Central Eastern Europe.

These influences came both from outside of the region and from within. First, the 1980s saw the rise of a pope as a powerful transnational actor. One of the first things Pope John Paul II did after his election in 1978 was to present an ambitious transnational project of uniting Europe divided by the Iron Curtain on the basis of shared Christian roots.<sup>39</sup> He encouraged co-operation among different Christian denominations and among nations while at the same time strengthened nationalised public Catholic cultures in Eastern Europe. His was essentially a cultural nationalist project. While he encouraged the return to Christian national roots, he imagined these nations as part of a broader Christian European civilisation. According to Timothy A. Byrnes, the pope imagined the end of the concept of 'Eastern Europe.'<sup>40</sup> This papal transnational project has been given sufficient attention as far as the papal vision is concerned.<sup>41</sup>

John Paul II's chief biographer, George Weigel, noted that the pope, through his attention to culture in diplomacy and other activities, sought to encourage identification with his vision throughout Eastern Europe,<sup>42</sup> yet with the notable exception of Poland,<sup>43</sup> little attention has been given to how this vision was received and whether and to what extent his papacy influenced the emergence of popular cultures elsewhere in the region. In Slovakia, the papal influence was crucial. When in 1985 John Paul announced the year of Cyril and Methodius, the answer was broad activation of Slovak Catholics, both in the underground and official Church; it was the cue they had been waiting for to mobilise. Slovak émigrés, particularly those in Rome, appropriated and spread the papal vision throughout the Slovak section of Radio Vatican in their own periodicals and publications which were smuggled into Slovakia.

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<sup>39</sup> Byrnes, *Transnational Catholicism*, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (New York, 1999); Jonathan Luxmoore and Jolanta Babiuch, *The Vatican and the Red Flag: The Struggle for the Soul of Eastern Europe* (London, 1999);

<sup>42</sup> Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, pp. 408, 500-2, 576-8.

<sup>43</sup> James R. Felak, 'A Wojtyła Paradigm for Addressing Historically Problematic Relationships: John Paul II Speaks about Germany and Russia during His Pilgrimages to Poland,' ASEEES 2014, unpublished paper.

Second, an important role in maintaining the popular Catholic culture in Slovakia was played by Cardinal František Tomášek and by what voices there were in terms of dissent in the Czech Republic and elsewhere in the region. When in March of 1988 the first public demonstration for freedom of religion and respect of civic freedom organised by underground Catholic communities in Slovakia was brutally suppressed by official authorities, the Czech cardinal and Czech dissent openly supported and expressed solidarity with these underground Catholics. Helping these Slovak Catholics to find their own self-confidence was a critical act of transnational solidarity which further energized the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture.

Third, Western radio channels played a crucial-- if, in comparison to the above two actors, a more practical-- role in the construction of Catholic culture in Slovakia in the 1980s. In the early 1980s, Radio Free Europe and the Voice of America began to give special coverage to the situation of independent religious groups, and sought to encourage mobilisation for religious freedom by criticising the religious policies of the Communist state and supporting independent religious communities. The first studies of these activities focused on the internal functioning of these channels. Although the field of diplomacy studies has started to hone in on these stations for study, their role in the creation of cultures is still being under addressed.<sup>44</sup>

The lack of interest in the Slovak case (and more generally, in those Catholic cultures which were not clearly oppositional and part of official nationalist cultures) seems to be a matter of both perspective and methodology. There is a clear lack of communication between scholars of official nationalism and religious nationalism and of more broadly official and religious cultures. Popular nationalised public Catholic cultures during late Socialism have, to date, never been studied on their own. As those nationalised cultures which could not be clearly defined as either a result of oppositional activity or as official cultures which were mobilised, supported, and sponsored by the Communist states, their construction was glossed over as the product of clearly defined groups, typically either Communists or oppositional forces. Popular cultures created by Catholic nationalists typically fell to the latter category.

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<sup>44</sup> See e.g. David Hall, 'Pope John Paul II, Radio Free Europe, and Faith Diplomacy,' in P Seib (ed.), *Religion and Public Diplomacy, Global Public Diplomacy*, (London, 2013), pp. 27-56.

While the mainstream perception of religious life and its relation to nationalism under Communism has been governed by the verities of resistance and anti-national Communism, the post-Communist condition is evaluated against the narrative of resurgence and modernisation and democratization; the relationship between Catholicism and nationalism is typically considered only insofar as it appears politically relevant.<sup>45</sup> In his much-quoted study, *Fantasies of Salvation*, Vladimir Tismaneanu, a liberal intellectual and former dissident, lamented the creation of the 'strange alliances' between 'religious and national zealots...whose basis is shared hostility to modernity, popular sovereignty, minority rights, and tolerance for diversity.'<sup>46</sup>

Nuances, however, will emerge if we look closely at the particular developments of the various nationalisms throughout the 1980s and 1990s, which is what this thesis attempts to do, with particular attention to the forces beyond the specific construction of Catholic culture. To map these developments, we need analytical tools that will allow us to explore how this culture developed. In the following section I will first present a definition of culture and more specifically of nationalised culture. I will then introduce the theoretical framework that I employ in this study to understand the creation of this culture, presenting first the various cultural forms which contribute to production of meaning. I will then explain why and how culture is created within the cultural frameworks of memory, symbols and events. Employing this conceptual framework I will then, in the last part of this section, offer working definitions of the two kinds of culture that are central to this thesis: the nationalised public Catholic culture and nationalised official culture. But before doing so I shall talk briefly about two important terms, Catholicism and nationalism, the two driving forces behind any of the endeavours which contributed to the creation of these cultural forms and thus to the creation of this nationalised culture.

## **2. A Cultural Approach to the Study of Nationalised Public Catholic Culture**

### **2.1. Catholics, Catholicism and Nationalism**

In its definition of Catholicism, my thesis follows approaches pioneered by recent research in the history of religion and inspired by anthropology and the sociology of

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<sup>45</sup> Hoppenbrouwers, 'Winds of Change,' 305-316.

<sup>46</sup> Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation*, p. 8.

religion. First, I follow Brian Porter-Szűcs, a leading historian of religion and nationalism, who understands Catholicism not simply as theology and ideology but also as a set of both written and unwritten rules, such as for instance the dominance of the pope. Catholicism should be seen as a 'cultural framework that is forever being re-configured, sustained and recreated by those who speak and act within it (even as it constraints what they say and do); thoughts and actions of Catholics are determined by Catholicism only in 'imperfect, historically variable, and contextually bounded ways.'<sup>47</sup> For instance, while Catholicism teaches that the pope is the highest teaching authority, many Catholics either interpret this 'authority' or its teachings in their own ways, approach his teaching selectively, or ignore it altogether.<sup>48</sup> Catholic identity is thus fluid: its consequences, political or cultural, change over time and vary from individual to individual. In extension, there is no single way in which Catholics imagine and represent the nation and relation between Catholicism and the nation. Catholic cultures, especially those related to the nation, can be constructed by various actors, including nationalists of various types. Exploring how the 'national Church' as a 'web of meanings' was constructed demands that we attend to the various sorts of nationalism.

Nationalism also is not a static phenomenon. Nationalism, as historian Prasenjit Duara theorized, 'is rarely the nationalism of the nation, but rather marks the site where different representations of the nation contest and negotiate with each other.'<sup>49</sup> Following leading scholars of nationalism and religious nationalism in particular, I understand the ideology of nationalism as beliefs or ideas materialized in action, often in political and cultural struggles and often in discursive form.<sup>50</sup> I am in particular concerned with those discursive struggles over the relationship between the Catholic Church and the nation in which the concept co-mingled with the history of the Catholic Church and Catholics in Slovakia, sometimes intersecting with other sorts of discursive struggles such as the role of the Catholic Church and Catholics in Slovak society.

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<sup>47</sup> Porter-Szűcs, 'Introduction', p. 20.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 36.

<sup>49</sup> Duara, *Rescuing History*, p. 8

<sup>50</sup> Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism, Identity and Cultural Politics under Ceaucescu* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford, 1991), p. 9.; Peter van der Veer, 'Nationalism and Religion,' J Breuilly, (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism*, (Oxford, 2013), p. 657.

## 2.2. Nation as a Symbol and Nationalised Culture

Until relatively recently, scholars of nationalism primarily understood the term 'national culture' or 'nationalised culture'<sup>51</sup> as an overarching term for language, ethnicity, and broadly defined national traditions (ranging from folklore to national histories and legends). Culture was the 'material' out of which nations were built and which nationalists sought to protect and perfect under the aegis of the modern nation-state.<sup>52</sup> This essentialist perspective was radically unsettled with the coming of the 'cultural turn'. As the leading theorist of nationalised culture Genevieve Zubrzycki observes, by embracing the cultural turn a new generation of scholars changed both 'the lens and the focus of the field.'<sup>53</sup> The object of study shifted from an emphasis on an essentialised understanding of nationalism and national culture to one on culturally constructed national identity. Many scholars heeded the call of Benedict Anderson to see the nation as an 'imagined community.'<sup>54</sup> Since the cultural turn, the nation has been studied not only as a political entity, but also as a system constructed by means of cultural representation. A nation is now typically seen as a symbolic community. According to social scientists, it is this symbolic character that accounts for the nation's 'power to generate a sense of identity and allegiance.'<sup>55</sup> This new approach to understanding the nation translated into a new way of understanding national culture as well. It has become common to think and speak of the creation or construction of culture by means of representations.<sup>56</sup> Nationalised culture has been studied as a composition of not only cultural institutions (such as national education), but also of symbols, collective memories and other representations. Before I move on to explain the representations I've explored to gain insight into the creation of nationalised public Catholic culture in Slovakia, I shall first examine the post-cultural turn understanding of culture, its dynamics and development, and address how it is utilised in the present study.

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<sup>51</sup> In this study I use the term 'nationalised culture' rather than 'national culture.' I shall shortly explain why this is so.

<sup>52</sup> Geneviève Zubrzycki, 'National Culture, National Identity, and the Culture(s) of the Nation,' in Laura Grindstaff, John R. Hall and Ming-cheng Lo (eds.), *Sociology of Culture: A Handbook*, (New York, 2010), p. 514.

<sup>53</sup> Zubrzycki, 'National Culture, National Identity,' p. 523.

<sup>54</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities, Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London & New York, 1983).

<sup>55</sup> Barry Schwarz, 1986, p. 106, Quoted in S Hall, D Held, D Hubert and K Thompson (eds.), *Modernity, An Introduction to Modern Societies*, (New York, 1996), p. 612.

<sup>56</sup> Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 77.

Cultural historians, following the lead of cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz, generally understand 'culture' as a 'web of meanings.' Nationalised culture, according to leading theorists of culture Stuart Hall, David Held, Don Hubert and Kenneth Thompson, is a 'discourse, a way of constructing meanings which influences and organizes both our nations and our conceptions of ourselves.'<sup>57</sup> Nationalised cultures 'construct meanings about the nation with which we can identify; these meanings are contained in the stories which are told about the nation, memories which connect its present with its past, and images and symbols which are constructed of it.'<sup>58</sup> Following Sewell and Zubrzycki, I view culture as a way of constructing meanings that is dynamic rather than static, and that has only a certain limited coherence.<sup>59</sup> In fact, the very reason why I chose to refer to the culture that I study in this thesis as 'nationalised' rather than 'national,' is to emphasize the dynamic and developing character of the culture. I will first elaborate on the idea that nationalised culture is a way of constructing meanings. In the following section, I will talk about the production of meaning and will focus especially on those sources relevant to the present study – narrative, performance and ritual. Before doing so I would like to clarify the difference between nationalised culture and national identity, the central focus of most contemporary studies of nationalism.

The building of national identity is closely connected to nationalised culture and involves 'the creation and recreation of collective memories, rituals, and symbols, their institutional maintenance and renewal, the selective appropriation and annihilation of divisive memories and alternative 'identities.'<sup>60</sup> In the modern world nationalised cultures are among the principal sources of national identities, as such identities are formed and transformed within and in relation to nationalised culture. The way Slovakness has come to be represented as a set of meanings by Slovak nationalised culture enables us to know what it is to be Slovak. The question of how a nation is imagined is thus closely connected to the question of how its nationalised culture is constructed. Nationalised culture refers to the set of discursive practices on

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<sup>57</sup> Stuart Hall, David Held, Don Hubert and Kenneth Thompson (eds.), *Modernity, An Introduction to Modern Societies*, (New York, 1996), p. 613.

<sup>58</sup> Hall, Held, Hubert and Thompson (eds.), *Modernity*, p. 612.

<sup>59</sup> Zubrzycki, 'National Culture, National Identity,' p. 523.

<sup>60</sup> Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz*, p. 21. See also, Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation* (Chicago, 1995), Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY, 1983); *Nationalism* (New York, 1997); Eric Hobsbawm, 'Nations and Nationalism since 1780' (New York, 1995); Introduction: Inventing Traditions, in, E J Hobsbawm and T Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 1-14.

which nationalists draw in the construction of their national identity, and in this process they recreate, reconstruct and maintain this culture. Thus, building a national identity is one of the processes through which nationalised culture is recreated. As we shall see throughout this thesis, this was the case also in late socialist and post-socialist Slovakia.

### **2.3. Nationalised Culture and Production of Meaning**

When trying to grasp how a distinctive nationalised public Catholic Slovak culture was created and shaped during late-socialist and post-socialist periods, the tools of cultural history provide a very powerful resource. According to T. G. Ashplant and Gerry Smyth, 'the production of an artefact includes its authorship (individual and collective), its mode of publication (that is, of bringing before the public), and its contemporary historical and cultural context.'<sup>61</sup> As they argue, the systems of signification include the formal conventions, i.e. the 'political and cultural contexts, within which the artefact was produced.'<sup>62</sup> The study of reception of the artefact involves the examination of how it was 'received and "read" by contemporaries' and it should pay attention to the 'specific contexts within which this reception took place.'<sup>63</sup> According to Ashplant and Smyth, production and reception can become interrelated; reception may become part of the process of production.<sup>64</sup> In the specific case of the present exploration, it is important to emphasize that the process of production and reception is not confined only to those creators who enter the process of production with the goal of constructing nationalised culture. This is, for example, the case of the underground Catholics, who initially embraced the notion of the Church as an integral part of the nation due to a variety of influences from both inside and outside the Catholic Church.

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<sup>61</sup> T. G. Ashplant and Gerry Smyth, 'In Search of Cultural history,' in T.G. Ashplant and G. Smyth (ed.), *Explorations in Cultural History*, (London nd Sterling, 2001), p. 6.

<sup>62</sup> Ashplant and Smyth, 'In Search of Cultural history,' p. 6.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6. See also, See e.g. Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, pp. 51-143. Peter Burke (ed.) *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (Cambridge, 1991); Roger Chartier, *Cultural History Between Practice and Representations* (Cambridge, 1988); Lynn Hunt (ed.) *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, CA, 1989).

### 2.3.1. Narrative, Performance and Ritual

Narration, performance and ritual are important creators of meaning.<sup>65</sup> As we shall see throughout this thesis, narrative, performance and ritual were central to the creation of nationalised public Catholic culture. In part, this was the result of the emergence of collective memory, symbols, and the occurrence of a number of large public events as major cultural frameworks during the 1980s.

Narration is one of the central tools 'by means of which human beings give meaning to their experience of temporality and personal actions.'<sup>66</sup> Narratives function as 'frameworks for understanding the past events of one's life and for planning the future.'<sup>67</sup> Nationalism, as a distinctively modern cultural form, attempts to create a new kind of narrative—national narrative. A national narrative seeks to 'define the nation, to construct its (typically continuous and uninterrupted) narrative past in an assertion of legitimacy and precedent for the practices of the narrative present—its own relation of the national story most especially.'<sup>68</sup> By constructing national narrative, nationalists seek to 'moderate diversity via the creation of a coherent unity that may sometimes appear to rely heavily on an essentialised narrative while at other times appears to be less so.'<sup>69</sup> Similar tendencies can be noticed with regards to nationalised culture. The narrative of a nationalised culture can be told and retold (or constructed and reconstructed) in national history, literature, the media, and popular culture. These provide a 'set of stories, images, landscapes, scenarios, historical events, national symbols, and rituals that represent the shared experience, trials and triumphs that give meaning to the nation.'<sup>70</sup> However, not all meaning is produced through the cultural form of narrative. Instead, it is sometimes acted out in a performative, and often ritualistic, manner. This often

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<sup>65</sup> See e.g. Vera Nünning, Jan Rupp, Gregor Ahn (eds.), *Ritual and Narrative, Theoretical Explorations and Historical Case Studies*, (Bielefeld, 2013).

<sup>66</sup> Donald E. Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences* (New York, 1988), p. 11.

<sup>67</sup> Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing*, p. 11.

<sup>68</sup> Layoun, 1990, p. 7. Quoted in A Gupta and J Ferguson (eds.), *Culture, Power, Place, Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, (Durham and London, 2001), p. 191.

<sup>69</sup> Norman Vasu, Yolanda Chin and Kam-ye Law, Introduction, Un/settled narrations—Nationalism in the Asia-Pacific, in N Vasu, Y Chin, K Law, eds, *Nations, National Narratives and Communities in the Asia-Pacific*, (New York and London, 2014), p. 1.

<sup>70</sup> Stuart Hall, 'The question of cultural identity,' in S Hall, D Held and T McCrew, eds., *Modernity and its futures*, (Cambridge, MA, 1992), p. 293.

happens in societies where access to sources of certain types of narratives is restricted, as was the case in late-socialist Slovakia, where access to sources of historical narrative was tightly controlled.

This thesis does not go so far as seeing culture in performative terms as such, but it does recognise performance as an important cultural form for the production of meaning. David M. Guss identified four key elements of cultural performance.<sup>71</sup> The first is that the performances are ‘clearly framed events’ set off from everyday reality.<sup>72</sup> This ‘spatial and temporal bounding,’ however, does not mean that they constitute a ‘hermetically sealed world, particularly as new forms of mediation continue to redefine its borders.’<sup>73</sup> In addition to being set apart and framed, cultural performances are ‘important dramatisations that enable participants to understand, criticise and even change the worlds in which they live.’<sup>74</sup> As Richard Bauman points out, cultural performances are ‘forms about culture, social forms about society in which the central meanings and values of a group are embodied, acted out, and laid open to examination and interpretation in symbolic form.’<sup>75</sup> As such, concludes Guss, ‘cultural performance will remain both contentious and ambiguous, and while the basic structure of an event may be repeated, enough changes will be implemented so that its meaning is redirected. The same form, therefore, may be used to articulate a number of different ideas...over time.’<sup>76</sup> Performance constituted an important form of meaning production in Slovakia during the 1980s and 1990s, mainly due to the increased interest in public and commemorative manifestations of national culture and identity among both Catholic and Communist nationalists. Some of these performances had a ritualistic character, which is why I give special attention to ritual as a major cultural form.

The definition of ritual has recently undergone many changes. The ritual in this thesis refers to both secular and religious performances. The classic and perhaps most influential definition, formulated by British anthropologist Victor Turner, is that ritual is a ‘prescribed formal behaviour for occasion not given over to technical

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<sup>71</sup> David M. Guss, *The Festive State: Race, Ethnicity* (Berkeley, 2000), p. 9.

<sup>72</sup> Guss, *The Festive State*, p. 8.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>75</sup> Richard Bauman, ‘Performance and Honor in the 13th century Iceland, *Journal of American Folklore*, 99(1986), 133. Quoted in Guss, *The Festive State*, p. 9.

<sup>76</sup> Guss, *The Festive State*, p. 9.

routine, having reference to belief in mystical beings and powers.<sup>77</sup> This definition has been criticised for drawing a too-close connection between ritual and religion. It has also been criticised for giving special privilege to the observer's perception of the ritual and disregarding the heterogeneous set of the participants' points of view. Scholars now tend to focus instead on documenting the wide variety of the participants' constructions of the ritual. Catherine Bell very usefully identified five features by which rituals, or ritual-like activities, are characterised. These are 'formalism,' 'invariance,' 'rule-governance,' 'sacral symbolism,' and 'performance.'<sup>78</sup> Ritual played a prominent role in the production of meaning and the related creation of culture in Slovakia during the 1980s and 1990s. The official authorities focused on constructing and maintaining new rituals that served the goal of creating socialist patriotism and national consciousness, while at the same time restricting those rituals that could potentially undermine this official goal. They encouraged a whole new range of rituals, many celebrating important historical figures and events. Ritual was thus a powerful cultural form of meaning production.

Going back to the previously stated definition of nationalised culture, this culture is understood as a way of constructing or producing meaning in the forms of of narration, performance and rituals that moderate diversity and multiplicity of meaning with the goal of conceptualising the nation. As shall be demonstrated throughout this thesis, and as the authors of a recent study on narratives, performances and rituals argue, ritual and narration have many features in common: 'stories frequently shape and appear in performances and rituals, while performances and rituals regularly become the subject of narration. Moreover, there is often a ritualistic aspect to storytelling, narrative form, and genre.'<sup>79</sup> This thesis focuses on how meaning was produced through narration, performance and rituals in the context of a variety of cultural frameworks, especially those of national collective memory, national symbols and national events. In the following section, I shall introduce the concepts of collective memory, symbols and events, and specify why and how I use these concepts to gain an insight into the creation of nationalised public Catholic culture.

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<sup>77</sup> Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY, 1967), p. 19.

<sup>78</sup> Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford, 2009), p. 138.

<sup>79</sup> Nünning, Rupp, Ahn (eds.), *Ritual and Narrative*, p. vii.

## 2.4. Catholicism, Nationalised Culture, and Collective Memory

Central to the idea of nationalised culture in the 1980s and the 1990s was history: the Catholic Church was imagined as national in part through embedding it in various nationalist narratives of Slovak history. Given the importance of the invocation of history to the creation of official nationalised culture and nationalised public Catholic culture in this period, I turn to the concept of collective memory.

According to Stefan Berger, in contrast to individual memory, collective memory includes many elements or events which individuals did not directly experience. Nevertheless, as he argues, 'they have internalized a memory which is presented to them through a mixture of public and private narratives as a collective memory with the assumption that individuals should partake in it. Collective memory is thus, like history, always contested, and the result of attempts to give meaning to the past through interpretation.'<sup>80</sup> This thesis explores why and to what extent various historical narratives, especially public historical narratives (and of course their authors) contributed to the nationalised public Catholic culture and to the discourse centred around the notion of the Catholic Church as an integral part of nation.

I depart from other scholars who, with their emphasis on memory as a form of resistance, have usually used the terms 'counter-memory' or 'popular memory' to describe the construction of oppositional narratives rooted in remembering differently from the Communist state.<sup>81</sup> I do use the term 'national Catholic memory,' but without categorising this memory as counter-memory. Studying this process as the construction of 'counter-memory' or 'popular memory' may lead to disregarding the influence of memory cultures which are deemed dominant or elite on the construction of this national Catholic memory. Thinking with 'Catholic national memory' without further qualifiers allows one to observe the various influences which have formed and constructed this memory. In explaining how a 'web of meanings' was constructed through collective memory, I follow *presentism*, which documents how groups use the

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<sup>80</sup> Stefan Berger, 'On the Role of Myths and History in the Construction of National Identity in Modern Europe,' *European Historical Quarterly*, 39 (2009), 495.

<sup>81</sup> See e.g. Rubie S Watson, *Memory, History and Opposition under State Socialism* (Santa Fe, 1994); Richard S Esbenshade, 'Remembering to Forget: Memory, History, National Identity in Postwar East-Central Europe', *Representations*, (1995), 72-96.; Kubik, *The Power of Symbols.*; Annamaria Orla-Bukowska, 'New threads on an old Loom,' In Jan-Werner Müller (ed.), *Memory and Power in Post-war Europe* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 177-210.

past for present purposes and argues that the past is a particularly useful force for expressing interests.<sup>82</sup>

Literatures of collective memory typically distinguish between instrumental and meaning-making dimensions of collective memory.<sup>83</sup> I understand these two dimensions as interrelated: the instrumental use of the past may, for instance, affect the cultural framework; those who instrumentalise the past also live within a particular framework and inevitably draw upon it. The former sees images of the past as direct manipulation for particular purpose, e.g., any national memory can be understood as an 'organisation principle that nationally conscious individuals use to organise their history...which allows them to place events into a national narrative, which functions as a matrix of meaning.'<sup>84</sup> But we can also see it as 'an inevitable consequence of the fact that we interpret the world...on the basis of our own experience and within a cultural framework.'<sup>85</sup> National memory is, therefore, not merely the manner of organising of past, but it also reveals, in Alon Confino's words, 'the co-mingled belief practices, and symbolic representations that make people's perceptions of the past.'<sup>86</sup> This thesis will seek to explore how construction of national memory by various actors contributed to an understanding of the Catholic Church as an integral part of the nation. In other words, it seeks to explore how different cultures of collective memory helped construct national collective memory, albeit one that was never homogenous and always open to contestation and change.

Scholars typically consider construction of a national memory as part and parcel of living in a community. According to this scholarship, nations as well as Churches are 'mnemonic communities' or 'communities of memory'. According to Robert N. Bellah, at the heart of collective memory construction and reconstruction lies an assumption identified by the notion that 'communities...have a history- in an important sense are constituted by their past- and for this reason we can speak of a real 'community of memory,' one that does not forget its past. In order not to forget

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<sup>82</sup> Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, 'Social Memory Studies: From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices,' *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24(1998), 178.

<sup>83</sup> Olick and Robbins, 'Social memory studies,' 178.

<sup>84</sup> Timothy Snyder, 'Memory of Sovereignty over Memory: Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine, 1939-1999', In Jan-Werner Müller (ed.), *Memory and Power in Post-war Europe* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 55-8; See also, Cubitt, *History and Memory*, p. 200.

<sup>85</sup> Olick and Robbins, 'Social memory studies,' 178.

<sup>86</sup> Alon Confino, 'Collective Memory and Cultural History,' *The American Historical Review*, (1997), 1389.

that past, a community is involved in retelling its story, its constitutive narrative.<sup>87</sup> Given their important role in national identity construction, national memories have so far been under closest scrutiny with scholars observing the ways in which nations construct national narratives, according to the pressing needs and interests of the present.<sup>88</sup> Yet as Iwona Irwin-Zarecka reminds us, in both the Jewish and the Christian traditions, collective memory of key 'events' of religious significance is built into the observance of festivals, into prayers, into the calendar itself.<sup>89</sup> Religious and national communities come into existence through people's sharing in living through events as well as in their (re)telling.

In this thesis, community is understood as a group of those actors who seek to contribute to culture and form a 'meaning-making community' able to engage in meaningful action, but without necessarily agreeing in their emotional, moral, or political evaluations of the symbols, collective memories, and events.<sup>90</sup> The construction of the Catholic Church as an integral part of national history (or histories) is thus not seen as a function of a hitherto existing nationalised Catholic community. Rather it is seen as a result of encounters between various meaning-making--- although not necessarily, or not yet, nationalist-- communities which contest the historical role of Catholicism in its present and future relationship to the nation. The historical narratives which had been historically instrumental in imagining the Church as an integral part of the nation were not a product of unified centralised process in which a community reflects on its past experiences, but of complex interactions, in which different interests vied for ascendancy and in which some interests were more successful at asserting themselves than others—the goal in this thesis will be to explore how the Church was read back into national history amongst these struggles.

This approach to the construction of a national memory demands rethinking the use of collective memory as an analytical tool. But before I do so, I will briefly

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<sup>87</sup> Robert N Bellah, R Madsen, W Sullivan, A Swidler, S M Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, 1985), p. 153.

<sup>88</sup> Cubitt, *History and Memory*, pp. 199-201.

<sup>89</sup> Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory* (New Jersey, 2009), p. 57.; See also Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago, 1995);-- 'The Historic, the Legendary, and the Incredible: Invented Tradition and Collective Memory in Israel' in J Gillis (ed.), *Commemoration: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, 1994), 105-26.

<sup>90</sup> Zubrzycki, *Crosses of Auschwitz*, p. 26.

state why it is useful to use the concept of collective memory to explore the construction of nationalised Catholic culture in this period.

#### 2.4.1. Collective memory in the 1980s and 1990s

Scholars of nationalism have argued that collective memory, that is, different ways of appropriations of past, has been used throughout history to formulate and reinforce basic tenets of national identities, nationalist idioms and ideologies.<sup>91</sup> Since at least the 1960s, remembering became central to the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture. Indeed, since the 1960s, Communist parties increasingly turned to cultural nationalism as a source of legitimisation. Czech historian Pavel Kolář argues that in the post-Stalinist era, 'self-representation through nationalist propaganda became essential to the legitimisation of the East European regimes.'<sup>92</sup> The nation became increasingly important for these regimes as an organising principle of official memories.<sup>93</sup><sup>94</sup> Communist regimes in Central Eastern Europe have always ascribed central importance to history as a cultural resource and source of legitimacy, and this persisted even after 1968, especially in Slovakia, where most Slovak nationalists were co-opted into legitimising the post-Prague Spring regime.

At about the same time (in the 1960s) the Catholic Church underwent its own 'cultural turn' which then sparked greater interest in nationalised cultures and histories.<sup>95</sup> In Slovakia, this 'cultural turn' did not translate into an immediate (until after the 1960s) application for the construction of nationalised public Catholic

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<sup>91</sup> See for example, Anthony D Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, (Oxford, 2000);--*Chosen Peoples, The Sacred Sources of National Identity*, (Oxford, 2003),--*The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, (Oxford, 1986); Lyn P. Spillman, *Nation and Commemoration: Creating National Identities in the United States and Australia*, (New York, 1997); K A Cerulo, *Identity Designs: The Sights and Sounds of a Nation* (New Brunswick, 1995); J Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories: Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past* (Cambridge, 1992); Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* ( Chicago, 1995).

<sup>92</sup> Pavel Kolář, 'Communism in Eastern Europe,' in, S A. Smith, (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism*, (Oxford, 2014), p.207.; See also George Schöpflin, *Politics in Eastern Europe, 1945-1992* (Oxford and Cambridge, 1993), pp. 193-5. on Slovakia see Juraj Marušiak, 'The Normalisation Regime and its Impact on Slovak Domestic Policy after 1970,' *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60(December 2008), 1820-1.

<sup>93</sup> Cynthia Paces, *Prague Panoramas: National Memory and Sacred Space in the Twentieth Century* (Pittsburgh, 2009), pp. 170-209. For Slovakia See Adam Hudek, *Najpolitickjšia veda, Slovenská historiografia v rokoch 1948-1968* (Bratislava, 2010);--', 'Between Czechs and Hungarians: Constructing the Slovak National Identity from 19th Century to the Present,' *History Compass* 9 (2011), 257-68.; Andrej Findor, *Začiatky národných dejín* (Bratislava, 2011); Andrej Findor, *Začiatky národných dejín* (Bratislava, 2011), pp. 150-84.

<sup>94</sup> Kolář, 'Communism in Eastern Europe,' p.207.

<sup>95</sup> Llywelyn, *Toward a Catholic Theology*, pp. 151-9.

culture, mainly because during the Prague Spring, the Church did not manage to establish herself as an autonomous creator of culture.<sup>96</sup> It is nonetheless useful to explore the 1960s 'cultural turn,' to explain why and how collective memory began to play an important role in the construction of public Catholic cultures.

During the 1960s, the Catholic Church radically altered its stance towards the secular world and, relatedly, to the modern concept of nation. According to the leading sociologist of religion, José Casanova, the major change occurred when the Vatican 'aggiornamento' of the 1960s significantly shifted the traditional defensive Catholic position to the modern secular world and the modern secular age. Casanova argues that 'in its temporal dimension, the acceptance of legitimacy of the modern age entailed the acceptance of the principle of historicity.'<sup>97</sup> In other words, the Catholic hierarchy accepted the possibility of 'the continuous revelation of God's plans of salvation in and through history, and it became the Church's obligation to discern prophetically 'the signs of the times' in history.'<sup>98</sup> According to Casanova,

This inner worldly historicist reorientation has led Catholicism to embrace a progressive view of history to such an extent that Catholicism may be today the most post-millennialist of all major Christian denominations. Considering that traditional Catholicism had been characterized by a negative philosophy of history which viewed the modern age as a concatenation of related heresies from Protestantism to atheist communism, the reversal is quite remarkable.<sup>99</sup>

This thesis examines the Catholic 'turn to collective memory.' In using this term I seek to emphasize that this 'turn to history' was not simply about turning to 'purely' Catholic memory or about construction of official memory of the Catholic Church; I seek to emphasize that this turn to history was the beginning of a process of integrating Catholic histories with non-Catholic histories, most prominently national histories. These processes were of course not entirely new—Catholics had sought to create nationalised public Catholic cultures by fusing Catholic and national histories since at least the 19th century. This 'historicist re-orientation' led many Catholics to turn to national histories in search of Christian origins of their nations and then in turn

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<sup>96</sup> Ján Pešek, Michal Barnovský, *V Zovretí Normalizácie, Cirkvi na Slovensku v rokoch 1969-1989* (Bratislava, 2004), pp. 11-21.

<sup>97</sup> José Casanova, 'Religion, the New Millennium and Globalisation,' *Sociology of Religion*, 62(2001), 420.

<sup>98</sup> Casanova, 'Religion, the New Millennium and Globalisation,' 421.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 420.

to use them as inspiration for and legitimisation of their involvement in the public sphere. Perhaps best known among the first such uses of history was the 'theology of nation' developed by the Polish Primate Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński already before the Second Vatican Council. Wyszyński's theology became one of the central inspirations for Catholic engagement with histories and more specifically national histories throughout the region.<sup>100</sup> But even more importantly, for the Slovak case, this interest in memory was embraced by John Paul II who placed a 'return to Christian roots' at the heart of his papal vision. John Paul developed a new Catholic culture, using every opportunity-- every existing anniversary, or creating new ones-- to integrate universal and local Catholic memories with national histories. He spoke about the Christian roots of Europe at the Vatican, during his many visits to countries across the world, at various institutions and organisations from universities to the General Assembly of the United Nations.<sup>101</sup>

This Catholic culture became central also in his appeals to the Czechoslovak Catholics and the Czechoslovak society, and the Czechoslovak government more generally. In 1985, he announced the year of St. Methodius to commemorate the 1100th anniversary of the death of Methodius, the Archbishop of the first Archdiocese on Czechoslovak territory.<sup>102</sup> In 1985, the pope even attempted to get an invitation to visit Czechoslovakia, but the Czechoslovak government refused. Nonetheless, the year marked the beginning of the construction of a nationalised public Catholic culture in Slovakia; the pope, the Catholic culture he promoted, and the ways in which he did so played an important role in this construction. The Pope's impact on remembering and constructing various strands of Catholic and national cultures was enormous, but he was not the only actor to influence the end results. Having explained why this Catholic culture again became dominant and why it is useful to study, I now return to examining how the construction of national memory contributed to the construction of this culture.

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<sup>100</sup> See e.g. Osa, 'Pastoral Mobilisation and Contention', 67-85; Porter-Szücs, *Faith and Fatherland*, pp. 350-4.

<sup>101</sup> See e.g. 'Address of his Holiness John Paul II to the 34th General Assembly of United Nations, New York, 2 October 1979,' [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1979/october/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19791002\\_general-assembly-onu.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1979/october/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19791002_general-assembly-onu.html) For Poland, See Kubik, *Power of Symbols*, pp. 129-152. Felak, 'A Wojtyła Paradigm', ASEEES 2014, unpublished paper.

<sup>102</sup> See Chapter One.

#### 2.4.2. Collective Memory in the Construction of Nationalised Public Catholic Culture

Central to this thesis is the question of who had the power to reshape collective memory, and the processes by which they did it. Wulf Kansteiner conceptualises collective memory as 'the result of interaction among three types of historical factors: the intellectual and cultural traditions that frame all our representations of the past, the memory makers who selectively adopt and manipulate these traditions, and the memory consumers who use, ignore, or transform such artefacts according to their own interests.'<sup>103</sup> Scholars of social and collective memory seeking to describe the struggles for ascendancy of particular memories have employed various conceptual frameworks. One common type of conceptualisation—one that resonates with my interest in the role of the hierarchy—assumes a central role for political and social elites. They usually operate through the state or church apparatus, all with the support of other powerful cultural agencies, as they seek to coordinate the way in which the past is remembered, producing an official past. Groups of individuals within society may either acquiesce in the official or dominant reading, or may in some way resist it, be passively alienated by it but also modify it. Different scholars have used different terminology to develop slightly different emphases. Some have juxtaposed popular and dominant memory, others preferred counter-memory to popular memory.<sup>104</sup> As Geoffrey Cubitt, argues, any account of how collective memory operates in practice must recognise that 'conflicts and contestations, and the use of power by some groups against others, are endemic features of most collective experiences.'<sup>105</sup> To an extent, this applies to the construction of memory in the 1980s and 1990s.

Scholars exploring collective memory during late Socialism tended to see either repression of alternative memories by Communist states or confrontation between the Communist state and oppositional communities as the central dynamic to the development of memory during late Socialism. Scholars have typically

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<sup>103</sup> Wulf Kansteiner 'Finding meaning in memory: A methodological critique of collective memory studies,' *History and Theory* 41(2002), 180.

<sup>104</sup> See Popular Memory Group, 'Popular Memory: Theory, politics, method', in, R. Johnson, et al (eds.), *Making histories: Studies in History-Writing and Politics* (Minneapolis, 1982); George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and America Popular Culture* (Minneapolis, 1990).

<sup>105</sup> Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 224-9.

explained national memories as an important oppositional activity.<sup>106</sup> When expounding upon the 1980s, these literatures typically describe a revival of those national histories that had been previously constrained. The interest in history is then described as continuing into the 1990s, with different groups recasting themselves as the only authentic and legitimate guardians of national history.<sup>107</sup> After the fall of state socialism, scholars typically described the mobilisation of collective memories in building post-Socialist national identity and the institutionalisation of this collective memory.<sup>108</sup> The scholarship on one such form of underground 'memory'—the concept of 'national memory'—well illustrates the weaknesses of this perspective. A concept of Czech and Polish dissent, which understood debates about historical figures and events as obliterated from official discourse, this underground memory conceived of 'national memory' in opposition to the state's 'organised forgetting.' Rather than a useful analytical tool, this concept is a normatively charged construction by a particular group. It does not allow one to examine the origins of these memories and the extent to which they were embedded in broader cultural context. Newer scholarship began to describe similarities between official and unofficial narratives.<sup>109</sup> Most recent studies argue that struggles over history were struggles which cut across political or religious identifications.<sup>110</sup> The present analysis of memory will primarily focus on how history is used by Catholics and non-Catholics to construct different understandings of the 'national Church' and the ways in which it interacts with other groups. This understanding of the construction of a national memory challenges current understanding of the dynamics of construction of religious memory.

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<sup>106</sup> Watson, *Memory, History and Opposition*; Esbenshade, 'Remembering to Forget,' 72-96. Orla-Bukowska, 'New threads on an old Loom'; Kubik, *The Power of Symbols*.

<sup>107</sup> Michal Kopeček, 'In Search of 'National Memory' The Politics of History, Nostalgia and the Historiography of Communism in the Czech Republic and East Central Europe' in M Kopeček (ed.), *Past in the Making, Historical Revisionism in Central Europe after 1989*, (Budapest and New York, 2007), pp. 75-97.

<sup>108</sup> After the fall of the Communist regime, several governments established institutes tasked with preserving those nations' memory of past atrocities both Fascist and Communist. Scholars saw such turn as a typical post-Communist misuse of memory by ex-Communist nationalists. Richard S. Esbenshade argued that the concept was hijacked by right-wing post-Communist nationalists who now illegally presented themselves as the 'guardians' of the 'authentic' national memory. See Esbenshade, 'Remembering to Forget,' 72-96.

<sup>109</sup> Cohen, *Politics without a Past*, Michal Kopeček, 'In Search of "National Memory"', in. *Past in Making*, Kopeček, M, ed, (Budapest, 2008), p. 80; Jan-Werner Muller, 'Introduction, In *Memory and Power in Post-war Europe*, ed, Jan-Werner Muller, (Cambridge, 2002); Claudio Fogu, Wulf Kansteiner, 'The Politics of Memory and the Poetics of History', in Lebow, Kansteiner, Fogu (eds.), *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, (Durham and London, 2006), pp. 284-31.

<sup>110</sup> Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz*, p. 16.

Scholars of religious memory maintained that the construction of collective memory in the Catholic Church in many ways reflects the hierarchical structure of the Church.<sup>111</sup> First of all, in Catholic memory, the hierarchy and the clergy had been considered the central agent in the construction of memory. The French sociologist and philosopher Maurice Halbwachs, whose seminal work on collective memory is clearly influenced by his focus on Catholicism, observed that religious collective memory is characterized by a normativity which is 'inherent in the structure of the religious group, mostly in the unequal relationship that binds the simple believers in ritualized remembrance to the authorized creators of collective memory (the hierarchy).'<sup>112</sup> The construction of collective memory in Catholic religious tradition, i.e., institutional or official memory formed by this hierarchy, often forms the basis for collective memory reconstruction at lower levels, most commonly parishes. A crucial role in the creation of Catholic memory is also played by the transnational authority of the papacy. The most tangible expressions of this authority are the processes of beatification and canonisation, through which the papacy, the highest teaching authority within the Church, confirms the compatibility of a personal story with the general narrative of Catholic collective memory and authorises the memory of the candidate for public commemoration.<sup>113</sup> However, the centrality of hierarchy in the construction of memory within the Catholic Church does not mean that higher ranks ruthlessly promote their version of history. According to Barbara Spálova, 'the principle of the integration of opposites creates a certain loyalty of hierarchs towards those in the body with them, one which compels them not to trespass the boundaries of good taste, of what is bearable, which allows them to say only that which is acceptable for the laity.'<sup>114</sup> In the construction of nationalised public Catholic memory, the clergy no longer plays the only or even the central role. Indeed, in this thesis we will explore how groups 'from below' often played important roles in creating or reshaping memories – the power of which was soon more broadly recognised and

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<sup>111</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *La cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Paris, 1952), p. 211 quoted in Daniele Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 124-7.

<sup>112</sup> Halbwachs, *La cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, p. 211 quoted in Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a Chain*, pp. 126.

<sup>113</sup> For more on the process of beatification, see Kenneth Woodward, *Making Saints, Inside the Vatican: Who Become Saints, Who do not, and Why...* (London, 1990); On collective memory and construction of martyrs, See Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory, Early Christian Culture Making* (New York, 2004).

<sup>114</sup> Barbara Spálova, *Bůh ví proč, Studie paměti a režimu moci v křesťanských církvích v severních Čechách* (Brno, 2012), p. 372.

taken up within the hierarchy, who then had the power to further promulgate such visions of the Church.

The public collective memory of the Catholic Church is not, however, constructed by Catholics alone. The French sociologist Daniele Hervie-Légér argued that modernity brought with it the fragmentation and decentralisation of religious collective memory and subsequently changed the position of the hierarchy, in favour of non-hierarchical actors, such as lay politicians, for example.<sup>115</sup> I would argue that modernity also ushered in the fuller participation of non-Catholic actors. This thesis explores whether, to what extent, and in which ways non-Catholics, including Communist elites and especially Communist cultural elites (historians, writers, artists, etc.) could play an important part in the construction of a nationalised public Catholic memory. As has been mentioned, since the 1960s, the Communist states sought to construct national official memories. In studying how the Catholic Church was imagined as part of different cultures of national history, we thus need to take into account all these various actors and the dynamics between these actors.

## **2.5. Catholic National Symbols**

Collective memories are encoded in rituals, liturgies, and symbols. Symbols, that is, signifiers or things that represent something else, are the 'building blocks' of myths and collective memories.<sup>116</sup> Yet when studying the emergence of these symbols during the 1980s we should not see them as 'master symbols' of the opposition, or counter-symbols to the 'dominant' Communist symbols- such an approach potentially overlooks the ways in which the non-Catholic official elites may be involved in their construction.<sup>117</sup>

This focus on symbols is particularly important given the revival of their public use in Czechoslovakia of the 1980s. This revival was related to the return of religion to the public sphere as a result of developments, both within and outside of the Catholic Church, on both national and transnational levels. First, an important part of the emergence of public Catholicism was a turn to the public veneration of national Catholic symbols and an increase in events and rituals evoking these symbols.

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<sup>115</sup> Hervieu-Légér, *Religion as a Chain of Memory*, pp. 129-30.

<sup>116</sup> George Schöpflin, *Nations, Identity, Power, The New Politics of Europe* (London, 2000) p. 81.

<sup>117</sup> Kubik, *The Power of Symbols*; Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz*, pp. 62-76.

However, interest in national patron saints, for instance, had been on the rise since the Second Vatican Council and was related to a new appreciation of local cultures and popular devotions.<sup>118</sup> The revival of national Catholic symbols was accelerated by the promotion of national Catholic symbols under John Paul II, who widely used religious symbols and devotions to create a powerful nationalised public Catholic culture.<sup>119</sup> John Paul was among the keen promoters of popular devotions as an important part of public Catholicism. As Atkin and Tallet remarked, John Paul retained traditional affection for ritual, visiting shrines at Częstochowa, Fatima, Knock, and Guadalupe.<sup>120</sup>

Second, at about the same time, late Socialist elites also became interested in co-opting Catholic symbols. Communist states had used some religious symbols before the 1980s, but before this period, they had for the most part sought to recast them as secular symbols of Communist culture.<sup>121</sup> Later, a subtle but important change occurred in attitude to public manifestations of religion and this change crucially influenced the revival of Catholic symbols. Communist states continued to see religion as a 'regressive force' but from the mid-1980s on, Catholic symbols gained new importance for Communist states. Initially, state authorities allowed broader public veneration of these symbols in an attempt to co-opt them and prevent them from being cast as related to the papacy. In the last two years before the fall of state socialism, these officials began to allow the public (official) Church to mobilise around these symbols (See Chapter One). By this time, late Socialist elites sought to reach wider audiences in an attempt to build popular nationalised culture. For

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<sup>118</sup> See, e.g. Pope Paul VI, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Vatican City, 4 December 1963.

[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19631204\\_sacrosanctum-concilium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html) (last accessed 13 August 2015). See also Llywelyn, *Toward a Catholic Theology*, pp. 151-66; Letz, *Sedembolestná* (Bratislava, 2015).

<sup>119</sup> Kubik, *The Power of Symbols*, pp. 129-52.

<sup>120</sup> Nicholas Atkin and Frank Tallet, *Priests, Prelates and People, A History of European Catholicism since 1750* (New York and London, 2003), p. 314.

<sup>121</sup> For an insightful study of such practices in Czechoslovakia see Paces, *Prague Panoramas*, especially chpt. 6; See also Maria Bucúr and Nancy Wingfield, *Staging the Past: The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the Present* (West Lafayette, 2001); Similarly S. A. Smith described how the commemorative practices of the communist regime in Soviet Russia were increasingly fashioned according to the Orthodox ones, See S. A. Smith, 'Bones of Contention: Bolsheviks and the Struggle against Relics 1918-1930,' *Past and Present* 204: 1(2009), 155-194; On Hungary see Chris M. Hahn, 'Socialism and King Stephen's Right Hand', *Religion in Communist Lands*, Vol. 18, (1990) No. 1, pp. 4-24.

example, Cyril and Methodius were used by these nationalists to promote an ethnic understanding of national identity.<sup>122</sup>

How then did these symbols become instrumental in the construction of a nationalised public Catholic culture? According to the British anthropologist Victor Turner, 'a symbol's meaning depends on the power, authority, or prestige of the social groups that compete for its control, as well as each group's rhetorical effectiveness at locating the symbol within mobilizing narratives and contexts of action.'<sup>123</sup> A symbol's meaning for a particular group can be the result of various influences, the meaning of which changes according to current political and cultural contexts. However, the meaning of symbols is not constructed only relationally. As Genevieve Zubrzycki demonstrated in her sociological study on Polish national Catholic symbols, symbols are also 'historically constituted by key narratives and events.'<sup>124</sup> When I talk about a group's 'rhetorical effectiveness' at locating a symbol within contexts of action and mobilizing narratives, I also have in mind the ability to place these symbols in nationalist narratives and act these symbols out through mobilising rituals. To answer the question of how and why national Catholic symbols were revived in public use and what meaning they acquired in the process we need to attend to the question of acting symbols out, more specifically, to the question of public rituals.

A public revival of symbols is closely connected with their public acting out, i.e., with rituals. A ritual generally observes the procedures with which a symbol is invested, which a symbol compels. According to Victor Turner, ritual is a 'stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place, and designed to influence preternatural entities or forces on behalf of the actors' goals and interests.'<sup>125</sup> Since the 19th century, rituals intended to express the bond between Catholicism and nationhood began to emerge. Rather than entirely new 'inventions', these rituals were typically appropriations of already existent Catholic rituals. One such ritual was the one of national consecration. Consecration, in general, is an act by which a thing is 'separated from a common and

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<sup>122</sup> See e.g. Rudolf Krajčovič, *Veľká Morava v Tisícročí, Slovami Prameňov, Legiend, Kroník, a Krásnej Spisby* (Bratislava, 1985).

<sup>123</sup> Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz*, p. 25.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>125</sup> Victor Turner, 'Symbols in African ritual,' in J. L. Dolgin, D. S. Kemnitzer and D. M. Schneider (eds.) *Symbolic anthropology: A reader in the study of symbols and meanings*, (New York, 1977), p. 183.

profane to a sacred use, or by which a person or thing is dedicated to the service and worship of God by prayers, rites, and ceremonies.<sup>126</sup>

Over the centuries, Catholics (clergy) had consecrated buildings, parishes, dioceses, and countries to different saints, and formulas of devotion to nation was only one of many objects. The consecration of a nation is a ritualized use of a religious symbol; the ritual of 'national consecration' was a reaction to the creation of nation states and secularisation. Beginning in the 19th century, this ritual served as an ultimate confirmation of the supposed bond between the Church and the nation, and was typically a reaction to the supposedly increased threats to either Catholic faith from the newly secularized state or to the 'Catholic' nation. Most notably, in the aftermath of the Revolution, the French hierarchy called for the consecration of France to the Sacred Heart as a way to strengthen what the hierarchy presented as an ancient alliance between the homeland and religion, supposedly severed by the Revolutionaries' secularism.<sup>127</sup>

Since the late 1960s, national Catholic symbols experienced a widespread public revival, and were accompanied by the invention of new rituals. Scholars have on one hand, described cases in which religious symbols were mobilised typically by Church hierarchies or oppositional forces to become 'master symbols' of national opposition to communism.<sup>128</sup> The Polish veneration of the Virgin Mary as the 'Mother of the nation' is a case in point.<sup>129</sup> Scholars of Polish Catholicism emphasize that during the 1960s, the Polish Madonna became the 'master symbol of national consciousness'<sup>130</sup> and was 'skilfully employed by the Church hierarchy and adopted by Poles as a central symbol in Solidarity strikes.<sup>131</sup> Less attention has been given to cases when these symbols were mobilised bottom-up by laity or even by the official communist authorities. In exploring how Catholic symbols were constructed as

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<sup>126</sup> On the act of consecration see the online *New Advent Catholic Encyclopaedia* <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04276a.htm> (last accessed 14 March 2015).

<sup>127</sup> René Rémond, *Religion and Society in Modern Europe* (Oxford and Malden, MA, 1999), pp. 114-5

<sup>128</sup> Hans-Jürgen Becker, 'Heilige Landespatrone, Entstehung und Funktion einer Kirchenrechtlichen Institution in der Neuzeit,' In Stefan Samerski, Krista Zach (eds.), *Die Renaissance der Nationapatrone, Erinnerungskulturen in Ostmitteleuropa im 20./21. Jahrhundert*, (Köln, 2007) pp. 27-41.

<sup>129</sup> Porter-Szücs, *Faith and Fatherland*, pp. 360-90.

<sup>130</sup> Laba, *The Roots of Solidarity*, pp. 133-4.

<sup>131</sup> Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence*, pp. 18-21; Kubik, *The Power of Symbols*; Porter-Szücs, *Faith and Fatherland*, pp. 360- 90; Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz*, pp. 62-71; Kubik, *The Power of Symbols*.

national symbols and contributed to construction of national collective Catholic memory, I explore who used these symbols, how and why, and the extent to which these uses contributed to the construction of this culture.

## **2.6. Events—Commemorations and Pilgrimages**

Events are important cultural vehicles to study if we want to understand the dynamics of construction of nationalised public Catholic culture. In the 1980s and 1990s, public events—such as pilgrimages to Velehrad, Šaštín, Nitra, Ružomberok, i.e., places dedicated to Catholic saints or important Catholic historical figures—were the central spaces in which creators and contributors of nationalised culture could meet and interact. Especially in the 1980s, when public media was monopolised by the Communist Party, public events became the only space where the assorted creators of Catholic culture could interact. Of course, this is not to say that the underground Catholic community, for example, did not have access to the official modus of the Church nor that it could not be inspired by the official nationalist ideas or vice versa, but it is extremely important to bear in mind that events do not merely uncover meanings but can change them. This thesis follows Rogers Brubaker in his call for an ‘eventful approach’ to nationhood or ‘nation-ness’ and applies this to study of the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture. This way of theorisation of nationhood was inspired by the collapse of the Soviet and Yugoslav states and their aftermaths and by the relatively sudden and pervasive nationalisation of public and even private life. This process involved, according to Brubaker, ‘nationalisation of narrative and interpretative frames, of perception and evaluation, of thinking and feeling.’<sup>132</sup> Following the lead of such thinkers as William Sewell, Jr., and Marshall Sahlins, Brubaker argued that in order to understand how this happened, we must give serious theoretical attention to ‘contingent events and to their transformative consequences.’<sup>133</sup> Brubaker conceptualises nationhood or nation-ness as a ‘contingent, conjuncturally fluctuating, and precarious frame of vision and basis for individual and collective action, rather than as a relatively stable product of deep developmental trends in economy, polity, or culture.’<sup>134</sup> The construction of nationalised public Catholic culture is then best described as a series of ‘intermittent

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<sup>132</sup> Brubaker, *Reframing nationhood*, p.20.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

bursts of creativity, contestation, and redefinition of the “national Church” that are embedded in and caused by social, historical, and cultural environments.<sup>135</sup> Events, as Genevieve Zubrzycki defines them, are not necessarily those that change structures and create new cultural forms.<sup>136</sup> According to Zubrzycki, events are ‘meaningful and consequential in that they sporadically create, recreate, define, and redefine the culture in question through social contestation.’<sup>137</sup> Public nationalised culture is thus a work in progress as constituted through nationalist events.

Public events have been widely used as fields for analysis of various phenomena as they, according to Don Handelman, constitute ‘dense concentrations of symbols [and we may add, collective memories] and their associations that are of relevance to a particular people,’<sup>138</sup> they are ‘locations of communication that convey participants into versions of social order in relatively coherent ways.’<sup>139</sup> Brubaker agrees that these events must be viewed as ‘cultural objects’ but he argues that they ‘do not contain their own meaning’ and allow for ‘rich interpretative possibilities.’<sup>140</sup> Understood in this way, public events enable us to study the key questions of this thesis; the questions of who constructed nationalised public Catholic culture (and how and why) in the 1980s and the 1990s in Slovakia. The two types of public events are central to the construction of Catholic culture in late Socialist and post-Socialist Slovakia: public commemorations and pilgrimages. Again, similarly to collective memories and symbols, events studied in this thesis (more specifically events before 1989) are not seen as counter-events to the official state sponsored events. Rather, they are studied as occasions where different influences, different actors, meet and which allow the observer to assess their role in the construction of Catholic culture.

Commemorative occasions and ceremonies have been considered by scholars as making the past ‘an active rather than a merely passive element in people’s social awareness.’<sup>141</sup> According to Geoffrey Cubitt, commemorative events contribute to the construction of public culture on two levels: they are ‘instrumental in constituting the past that is to be remembered, and the collectivity that is expected to

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<sup>135</sup> Zubrzycki, *The Crosses*, pp. 24-5.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>138</sup> Don Handelman, *Models and Mirrors. Towards an Anthropology of Public Events* (New York and Oxford, 1998), p. 9.

<sup>139</sup> Handelman, *Models and Mirrors*, p. 15.

<sup>140</sup> Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, p. 161.

<sup>141</sup> Cubitt, *History and Memory*, pp. 219-220. See also John Gillis (ed.), *Commemoration: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, 1994).

do the remembering.<sup>142</sup> As Cubitt maintains, 'commemorative event calls on the participants to take part in or at least, to witness, the articulation of whatever element in the past is being evoked.'<sup>143</sup> According to some theorists of social and collective memory, 'commemorative practices help elicit a sense of social connectedness and the effects of commemorative activity are deepened and extended by repetition.'<sup>144</sup> Others, most notably the well-known anthropologist Katherine Verdery, have argued that commemorations are arenas in which the construction of culture as a 'continual struggle over meanings'<sup>145</sup> can be observed. Seeing public commemorations as an important part of public Catholic culture, this thesis understands commemorations as events which can elicit a sense of connectedness as well as contestation. Moreover, 'commemorative activities and pilgrimages focus attention on particular events.' In doing so, they 'not only reflect the symbolic status that those events have acquired, but actively enhance it...'<sup>146</sup> According to Cubitt, whilst 'the observance of a commemorative or feast calendar allows groups or societies to do the rounds of their symbolic reference...more isolated commemorative performances and pilgrimages allow energy to be suddenly directed into a particular corner of the symbolic system, in ways which may sometimes modify the way the collective past is understood.'<sup>147</sup> This thesis analyses both types of commemorative performances.

Pilgrimages, too, play a central role in the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture and can also be understood as either events of contestation or connectedness. One of the reasons for this (in Alan Morinis' view) is that pilgrimage centres are 'repositories of a culture's ideals.'<sup>148</sup> This is why they are either extensively supported or suppressed depending on the state's approach to this culture. Political patronage is common if the state identifies with the religious culture, but pilgrimages have also been suppressed if religious culture is not accepted as part of the official culture. The present exploration of the place of pilgrimages in the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture combines functionalist and post-modern approaches. Earlier functionalist approaches which followed Victor Turner had understood pilgrimages as taking people out of normal society and throwing

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<sup>142</sup> Cubitt, *History and Memory*, pp. 219.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>145</sup> Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies*, p. 24

<sup>146</sup> Cubitt, *History and Memory*, p. 220.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>148</sup> Alan Morinis (ed.), *Sacred Journeys, Anthropology of Pilgrimage* (New York, 1992), p. 5.

individuals together united by common purpose which is not related to society; the pilgrims would experience *communitas*, an experience of being part of one community and sharing a common purpose.<sup>149</sup> John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow challenged this arguing that ‘pilgrimage is above all an arena for competing religious and secular discourses, for both the official co-option and the non-official recovery of religious meanings.’<sup>150</sup> Through examining the use of pilgrimages by various groups, I explore how the nationalised public Catholic culture developed and changed through these events.

The events that I study are not always easily discernible as either pilgrimage or commemorations. The 1980s and 1990s especially saw the rise of public events which combined elements of public commemoration and public pilgrimage—a development which was influenced by the revival of popular Catholic devotions and increased interest in national and religious histories. The main focus of my thesis is on pilgrimage and commemorations that took place during the national pilgrimages at the shrine in Šaštín. This pilgrimage site is by no means the only popular pilgrimage site dedicated to Mary in Slovakia. The most frequented one in Slovakia is in the eastern town of Levoča. Of no less importance are pilgrimages on the feast of Cyril and Methodius to Nitra which underwent even greater changes from the early 1980s onwards. However, the Nitra pilgrimage has been historically central to the construction of a nationalised public Catholic culture, as some members of the Catholic hierarchy saw these two saints as more appropriate to express the supposed unity between Slovak nation and Church.<sup>151</sup> Since 1990, annual pilgrimages have been organised to Nitra on the feast day of Cyril and Methodius.

## **2.7. Nationalised Public Catholic Culture and Official Nationalised Culture**

Central to this thesis is the notion of nationalised public Catholic culture, in whose creation the official Slovak nationalised culture played an important role. I understand these two cultures as distinct, yet interrelated, types of Slovak culture. In the following section, I will offer extended definitions of these two cultures, employing the

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<sup>149</sup> Fiona Bowie, *The Anthropology of Religion, An Introduction* (Malden, Oxford, Carlton, 2006), p. 240.

<sup>150</sup> John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, *Contesting the Sacred, The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (Chicago, 1991), pp. 2-3.

<sup>151</sup> Ďurica, *Slováci a Sedembolestná; Naša Národná Svätýňa*, pp. 30-35; Macák, *Naša Sedembolestná Matka*.

conceptual framework introduced on the previous pages. Despite the fact that this study focuses on nationalised public Catholic culture, I shall start with the official nationalised culture. The reason for this is that nationalised public Catholic culture was formed, in part, as a reaction against this official culture.

The official nationalised culture refers to the officially created and maintained 'web of meanings' constructed through symbols, collective memories and events. The construction of this culture was spearheaded by a variety of ideological, cultural and academic elites (e.g. ideologues at the Ministry of Culture and the Institute of Marxism-Leninism, cultural elites at the heritage organisation Matica Slovenská and Slovak Television, and social scientists at the Slovak Academy of Sciences.) Starting in the late 1960s, the official authorities of the newly established Slovak Socialist Republic began building a new, real socialist national identity, officially referred to as 'national consciousness'.<sup>152</sup> Following the rise to power of nationalist communist elites in the late 1960s, 'national consciousness' became an important part of the 'socialist consciousness' of the new socialist man.<sup>153</sup> Before the 1960s, national identity had been built intermittently and only to a limited extent, largely due to the proclaimed fears of the spread of pre-communist nationalism.<sup>154</sup> However, starting in the 1960s, the Central Committee of the Communist Party in the Slovak Socialist Republic began to support the building of national identity and relatedly construction of official nationalised culture. The use of the term 'consciousness' reflected the belief that real socialism was a progressive forward-looking project being built in line with the scientific worldview of Marxism-Leninism.<sup>155</sup> However, while building this 'national consciousness,' the Slovak political and cultural elites looked not only forward but also sought inspiration from their national past.

The construction of the 'national consciousness' was, according to official sources, supposed to go hand in hand with the building of 'historical

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<sup>152</sup> The word identity was very rarely used in official discourse until after the fall of the socialist state in 1989. The use of the term 'consciousness', instead of identity, was a clear manifestation of adherence to a Marxist-Leninist worldview that, as its exponents claimed, sought to strengthen 'consciousness' and, in the process, eliminate 'superstition' and overcome 'alienation.'

<sup>153</sup> V. I. Lenin, *O Náboženstve* (Bratislava, 1972); Ja. Minkivičius, *Náboženstvo v mnohonárodnom svete* (Bratislava, 1982); Tibor Halečka a Valdimír Leško, *Kapitoly z dejín ateizmu a kritiky náboženstva* (Bratislava, 1988).

<sup>154</sup> Michal Kopeček, 'Historický výskum národných hnutí a concept socialistického patriotizmu v Československu, Maďarsku a stredo-východnej Európe,' *Forum Historie* 1, 1(2013), 17-35.

<sup>155</sup> See e.g. *Socialistický štát a náboženstvo* (Bratislava, 1986); Michal Hruškovič, *Zápas o socialistický character kultúry* (Bratislava, 1981).

consciousness.<sup>156</sup> 'Historical consciousness' was broadly defined by the official authorities as a common awareness of the nation's past in its Marxist-Leninist interpretation.<sup>157</sup> The need for reinforcing a national 'historical consciousness' was often emphasized by official authorities and cultural elites alike as a key component of 'national consciousness.' According to a contemporary leading Slovak composer, Eugen Suchoň, 'knowledge of history is the key to national consciousness.'<sup>158</sup> The official nationalised culture was considered to be the main source of both national and historical 'consciousness', and therefore was actively being constructed by both political and cultural elites through ever growing investments into official nationalised culture. For example, in 1970 the official authorities doubled the number of 'national memory sites' which included various buildings and monuments, all of which were deemed central artefacts of Slovakia's nationalised culture.<sup>159</sup> The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia also sponsored the establishment of an independent Slovak Film Institute, subsidising it generously to produce national dramas.

The official nationalised culture was represented in the cultural frameworks of collective memories, symbols and events, which portrayed the Slovak nation as a progressive independent nation, developing in line with the scientific laws of Marxism-Leninism. This ideologically-exclusive notion of the Slovak nation inevitably led to the exclusion of certain cultural frameworks from the official culture.

Central among these excluded cultural frameworks were any collective memories, symbols, rituals or events that placed religion (especially Christianity) at the centre of the development of the nation and nationalised culture. Indeed, the creation of official nationalised culture was accompanied by a campaign against any real or potential challenges to this culture. This is not to suggest that these excluded cultures were entirely in opposition to, or disconnected from, the official nationalised

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<sup>156</sup> Se e.g. Andrej Sirácky, 'Národná hrdosť a historické vedomie,' 27 August 1981, *Nové Slovo*, 1,6.

<sup>157</sup> I am aware of the fact that historical consciousness is a concept used by social scientists to describe an awareness of 'commonly shared narrative of important historical events and figures.' I use the term 'historical consciousness', but not in this sense. Rather I use it in quotation marks and refer to the building of 'historical consciousness' as a part of the building of 'national consciousness.' For the above quoted definition of historical consciousness, see Cohen, *Politics without Past*, pp. 27-8.

<sup>158</sup> Eugen Suchoň in Rudolf Krajčovič, *Veľká Morava v Tisícročí, Slovami Prameňov, Legend, Kroník, a Krásnej Spisby* (Bratislava, 1985), missing pagination.

<sup>159</sup> Interestingly new importance was given to Christianity due to 'the key role of Christian ideology during feudalism.' Vendelín Jankovič, *Národné Kultúrne Pamiatky na Slovensku* (Martin, 1984), p. 8.

culture. As this thesis suggests, the official nationalised culture was an internally diverse system of meaning that was related to at least one alternative type of Slovak culture. The shaping of official culture contributed to shaping non-communist cultures, especially the nationalised public Catholic culture. The actors creating the nationalised public Catholic culture drew on and supported parts of the official nationalised culture, but also challenged some of its central tenets.

Nationalised public Catholic culture presented a radically different view of Slovak culture. This culture was a way of constructing meanings about the nation and the church characterised by presenting the Catholic Church and the Slovak nation as vitally connected. A distinctive characteristic of this culture is that it was constructed by a number of different actors, including the official Church, the underground Church community, the transnational figure of the papacy, and the official authorities.

This wide variety of actors coming from spheres related in various ways to the official one is the main reason why I do not refer to this culture as a 'subculture,' a term typically used by scholars to describe non-communist cultures during the Communist era.<sup>160</sup> I do so despite the fact that the contributions of some creators of this culture, namely the underground Catholic community, might be seen as characteristic of a sub-culture. However, even these Catholics aimed to make their participation in the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture as public and open as possible. They for example took part in pilgrimages and official commemorations, and took an interest in the official production of cultural and academic history. These Catholics sought to create a culture in close co-operation with and as members of the official Church.

The construction of both nationalised public Catholic culture and nationalised official culture occurred through a variety of cultural forms (narration, performance and ritual) and in the cultural frameworks of collective memory, symbols and events.

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<sup>160</sup> See e.g. the work of Hank Johnston especially his 'Religio-nationalist subcultures under the communists: Comparisons from the Baltics, Transcaucasia and Ukraine.' *Sociology of Religion* 54, 3(1993), 237-255; 'Religio-nationalist Subcultures and Soviet Nationalisms: Comparisons and Conceptual Refinements.' *San Diego State University (unpubl. Manuscript, oJ)* (1991); Johnston, Hank, and David A. Snow. 'Subcultures and the emergence of the Estonian nationalist opposition 1945-1990.' *Sociological Perspectives* 41, 3(1998), 473-497. Sándor Horváth, 'Patchwork identities and folk devils: youth subcultures and gangs in socialist Hungary.' *Social History* 34, 2 (2009), 163-183.; 'Hooligans, spivs and gangs. Youth subcultures in the 1960s.' *Muddling Through in the Long 1960s: Ideas and Everyday Life in High Politics and the Lower Classes of Communist Hungary* (2005): 199-223.

The cultural forms included the construction of national Catholic narratives through samizdat, sermons and all-night programmes during pilgrimages. Performances also figured prominently. Pilgrimages to various (mostly Marian) churches across Slovakia can be seen as major national-religious performances during which nation and church were symbolically fused. Finally, rituals, especially the ritual of consecration, also played an important part, especially in the 1980s. After 1989, commemorative rituals such as the annual commemoration of the death of leading figures of Catholic nationalism (e.g. Andrej Hlinka in Ružomberok) played an important role. In the following section, I will offer a short historical overview of the development of a nationalised public Catholic culture before the Communist era. This section does not aspire to cover the enormity of this topic. Rather, it focuses on the two main symbols, the central collective memories and events that helped to constitute this culture—in so far as it helps the reader better orientate themselves before the story of the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture in the 1980s and 1990s—i.e., the main topic of this thesis.

### **3. Nationalised Public Catholic Culture before 1948**

In this section, I give a brief overview of the development of nationalised public Catholic culture and its relationship to Catholicism in the 19th and the early 20th century through the examination of the gradual nationalisation of two cults of popular Catholic devotion in Slovakia: Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, and Cyril and Methodius. I argue that the ways in which and the extent to which these processes occur depends on various factors, but especially on the Church-state relationship, the position of the Church in the society, its relationship to the currently dominant national movement, and the position of the nationally-oriented Catholics within the Church. (This depends on the specific content of the faith and its current understanding of the idea of nation. The role of the Vatican has been crucial throughout the 20th century.) The extent to which this interweaving of the Catholic and national bonds occurs depends largely on whether there are conditions under which the Catholic and national other can merge. One of these conditions may be the existence of an ethnic group within a secularising state dominated by a different ethnic group. The Church-state relationship and the intra-Church relationships are crucial also in the sense that they determine the extent to which the Catholic elites

will be able to propagate their understanding of Catholic and national identity. Their manner of spreading this narrative may further reveal elements of structural support and cultural resources, both of which in turn influence the processes of Catholicisation and nationalisation.

### 3.1. Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows

The first attempts to place Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows (or, the *Mater dolorosa*, a Roman Catholic devotion which underscores the suffering of Mary) at the centre of a nationalised public Catholic culture appeared in the second half of the 19th century. At this time Slovakia was part of Austria-Hungary. Whilst the Slovak national emancipatory movement was growing and included increasing numbers of Catholics, it faced increased suppression from the Hungarian state as well as from the Church dominated by Magyar nationalists. The use of the meme of Our Sorrowful Lady to mobilise Slovak Catholics specifically first came upon the scene in 1863, when Andrej Radlinský, a leading Catholic promoter of Slovak national rights, attempted, with the help of Bishop Štefan Moyzes of Banská Bystrica, to organise an all-national commemoration of the 1000th anniversary of Cyril and Methodius' mission at the shrine of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows in Šaštín. Radlinský planned to connect the commemoration with the 300th anniversary of Šaštín pilgrimages which was planned under the auspices of the Esztergom Cardinal Jan Scitovský. Scitovský, however, rejected this manner of celebrating the Cyrilomethodian anniversary,<sup>161</sup> and nationalist Catholic historians have tended to interpret Scitovský's rejection as a necessary concession to Hungarian pressure, emphasising Scitovský's sermon in the Slovak language (instead of in Hungarian) as proof of his heartfelt support for the Slovak nation and of the protective role he played as a member of the hierarchy in the preservation of the Slovak nation.<sup>162</sup> Yet the Catholic hierarchy, with the possible exception of Moyzes, did not see Slovak nation-building as a priority. Their main pre-occupation at the time was the challenge of liberalism. Indeed, even if Ján Scitovský delivered his sermon in the Slovak language, the content of his sermon was not about the suppression of the Slovak nation. Rather, he focused on the 'danger' of the

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<sup>161</sup> Ďurica, *Slováci a Sedembolestná* (Bratislava, 2008), pp. 26- 28; *Naša Národná Svätýňa* pp. 30-35; Macák, *Naša Sedembolestná*, pp. 112-14.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 26- 28; *Ibid*. pp. 112-14.

'godless unfaithful' posed by the liberals.<sup>163</sup> The attempts of nationally-minded Slovak Catholics to use ecclesiastical traditions, and pilgrimages to mobilise Slovak Catholics were thus thwarted by the Catholic hierarchy, which was either Magyarising or more concerned about the 'dangers' of liberalism.

Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows became central to Slovakised Catholic culture during the first Czechoslovak Republic. Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows was introduced as a 'National Patroness' in the 1920s in the context of two processes: one, the construction of a political Czechoslovak nation, which suppressed the dreams of Slovak nationalists of an independent and self-standing Slovak nation; and, two, the secularisation sponsored by the new Czechoslovak state which sought to circumscribe the previously privileged position of the Church and whose official memory was openly anti-Catholic (if not anti-Christian). The secular Czech nationalists elevated Jan Hus as the central symbol of the new state; the 15th century reformer had inspired the Czechs under the Hapsburgs to oppose Austrian hegemony. Symbols of Catholic memory were rejected in acts of vandalism or simple omission from the new commemorative national narrative. Throughout Bohemia, Catholic statues were demolished alongside statues of the Austrian emperors. The toppling of the Marian column in Prague in 1918 would be recollected repeatedly by the Catholic press in Slovakia as symbolising the dangers of secular Czech progressivism.<sup>164</sup> Slovak Catholics were alarmed not only by the anti-clerical rhetoric and practices of the government, but also by their plans for the separation of church and state, as well as by their proposals on land reform, which would affect the Church.<sup>165</sup> In 1925, a new Holiday Law was enacted which established the official feast days of the Interwar Republic. Despite the compromises made in the crafting of the law, the Catholic nationalists in both parts of the Republic were left unsatisfied, although moderate Catholics in the Czechoslovak People's Party esteemed it as a major success<sup>166</sup> More importantly for Slovak Catholics, the overwhelming majority of the feasts designated as holidays had their origins in Czech collective memory.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> *Naša Národná Svätýňa*, pp. 32-35.

<sup>164</sup> Kamenec, *Tragédia politika, kňaza*, p. 68.

<sup>165</sup> Tížik, *Náboženstvo vo verejnom živote*, p. 39.

<sup>166</sup> Paces, *Prague Panoramas*, p. 119.

<sup>167</sup> Tížik, *Náboženstvo vo verejnom živote*, p. 53.

The exclusion of Catholic saints was only one among many factors which prompted the Slovak episcopate to assert their own patron saint more actively. The introduction of the National Patroness came soon after the new Holiday Law was enacted in 1925. Alarmed by the use of the Czech Reformer Jan Hus in Czech nationalist as well as government discourse,<sup>168</sup> the then Slovak Catholic hierarchy wrote to Rome, asking to acknowledge the Slovak nation's veneration of Seven Sorrows and proclaim the Seven Sorrows as the National Patroness.<sup>169</sup> The response from Rome, which had only recently interrupted diplomatic ties with the Czechoslovak state in reaction to the government's elevation of Hus,<sup>170</sup> confirmed that Slovaks could venerate this cult.<sup>171</sup>

At first glance, it may seem that the Vatican's support for a national patron saint in a new, Catholic-dominated state could be read as a blessing for religious nationalists. Most probably, however, it was a move meant to boost loyalty to Rome, thus centralising power in the papacy's hands. This phenomenon is also known also as *ultramontanism*, advanced especially by Pope Pius XI.<sup>172</sup> This, however, did not significantly impact the rise of the symbol as a central element connected to the emerging nationalised public Catholic culture in Slovakia. The symbol was also understood as embodying the central logic of the development of the Slovak nation as presented by nationalists. The suffering of the National Patroness came to symbolise the 'suffering' of the nation throughout history.<sup>173</sup> By the end of 1930s, a complete reconstruction of the shrine was undertaken, and Slovak inscriptions were added to the baroque walls of the Habsburg-sponsored basilica.<sup>174</sup> From the 1920s on, national pilgrimages would be organised on the feast of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows each year on 15 September.

Soon leading members of the Slovak episcopate began to support Catholic nationalists in their agenda to promote an ethnic understanding of the Slovak nation and to attain greater political autonomy.<sup>175</sup> Andrej Hlinka, the leader of the interwar

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<sup>168</sup> Paces, *Prague Panoramas*, pp. 100-38.

<sup>169</sup> 'Sedembolestná', 2.

<sup>170</sup> Paces, *Prague Panoramas*, p. 126

<sup>171</sup> 'Sedembolestná', 3.

<sup>172</sup> Martin Conway, *Catholic Politics Catholic politics in Europe, 1918-1945* (London and New York, 1997), p. 40.

<sup>173</sup> 'Na deň Sedembolestnej P. Márie,' *Katolícke kázne*, 4(1928), 76-80.

<sup>174</sup> Macák, *Naša Sedembolestná*, p. 128.

<sup>175</sup> Letz, *Sedembolestná*, p. 65, pp. 77-9.

autonomist Slovak Peoples Party, promoted Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows as a symbol of territorial integrity and political autonomy of the Slovak nation. Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows was not only the patron of the nation, but also symbolised the possibility of an autonomous political entity on the present-day Slovak territory—the Slovak country, as it were.<sup>176</sup> This connection is nicely illustrated by a relief that was installed at the shrine in this period depicting Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows with the double cross on three hills (the official emblem of Slovakia in Czechoslovakia).<sup>177</sup> This understanding of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows was promoted by Catholic nationalists, who were the most ardent autonomists during the first Czechoslovak Republic.

Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows continued to be promoted after the demise of Czechoslovakia and the establishment of the Slovak Republic in 1939. At the high point of the nationalisation of the Church during the Nazi-dominated Slovak Republic (1939-1945), led by priest-politician Jozef Tiso, the shrine of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows was, thanks to subsidies from state, turned into a Slovak Church. The Catholic Church had, in the meantime, become a symbol of the national identity, territorial integrity and unity of the Catholic Slovak nation. Hungarian and German inscriptions were replaced with Slovak ones. Now Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows was fully connected to an ethnic Slovak nation, defined by a distinctive language, territory, and faith. The suffering of the National Patroness came to symbolise the 'suffering' of the nation-state following the loss of territory to Hungary in the First Vienna Award (1938).<sup>178</sup> After the Communist Party assumed power in 1948, the official authorities dismantled the Church as a basis for the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture, attempting to erase the Catholic Church from the narrative of Slovak 'ethnogenesis' and the development of Slovak statehood. In this new context, the symbol of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows was reduced to a local patron saint and the shrine was abandoned, its status reduced to a local (diocesan) pilgrimage site.

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<sup>176</sup> Andrej Hlinka, 'Matka Sedembolestna Patronka Slovenskej Krajiny,' *Slovák*, 8 April 1927, 1.

<sup>177</sup> Letz, *Sedembolestná*, p. 65

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

### 3.2. Saints Cyril and Methodius

St. Methodius along with his brother St. Cyril invented the Slavonic script and brought Scripture and liturgy books, which they had translated to Slavonic language, to the old Slavic chiefdom of Great Moravia. The chiefdom was in the 9th century, and it was located on the territory of what is now the Czech and Slovak Republics. This was not the first Christianising mission -- in the 9th century, there had already been missions by Irish and German missionaries --<sup>179</sup> but since the 19th century, the mission has been presented as the first Christianising mission by emerging Slovak nationalists. In Hungary, the Catholic Church had promoted the cult especially since the 16th and 17th century as part of a re-catholicisation campaign, when the Church elevated locally venerated saints.<sup>180</sup> In the 19th century, Cyril and Methodius began to be used by Catholic nationally-minded priests who, facing Magyar nationalism, sought to prove that the Slovak nation was not only a historical nation dating back to the 9th century but also highly developed nation. Cyril and Methodius thus played a prominent role in the Romanticist nationalist construction of national narrative. Most notably, the Slovak writer Ján Hollý wrote a poem in the early 19th century, *Cyriľometodiáda*, which became popular among nationally-minded Slovak literati. In it, the author praises Cyril and Methodius for Christianising and therefore, according to the author, civilising the nation and integrating it into European civilisation.<sup>181</sup> This was followed by another poem *Svätoplukiada*, about *Svätopluk*, the last prince of Great Moravia, setting the missionaries into the context of what he saw as the first state of the Slovak nation. Merging the religious and political histories of the nation, Hollý played a pre-eminent role in marrying together the two central symbols of Catholic nationalism in Slovakia.

Later in the 19th century, facing Magyar nationalism and Habsburg indifference towards the cause of Slovak national emancipation, Slovak nationalists of both Protestant and Catholic stock sought to support the idea of the historical right of the Slovak nation to the area of Northern Hungary, and promoted the idea of

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<sup>179</sup> Vladimír Turčan, 'Cyril a Metod-Trvalé Dedičstvo,' in E Krekovič, E Krekovičová, E Mannová (eds.), *Mýty naše slovenské*, (Bratislava, 2005), pp. 36-7.

<sup>180</sup> Gabriela Kiliánová, 'Lieux de memoire and collective identities in Central Europe: The case of Devín/Theben/Dévény Castle,' *Human Affairs*, 2(2002), 153-65.

<sup>181</sup> Matúš Kučera, 'Velka Morava a slovenské dejiny', In Josef Poulik Bohuslav Chropovsky and Kol., *Velká Morava a počátky československé státnosti*, (Praha, 1985), pp. 262-264.

Slovak historical primacy in the region.<sup>182</sup> Great Moravia was the first Slovak state, the Golden Age, they claimed, and Cyril and Methodius made Slovaks the first nation to have the vernacular used as liturgical language. The cult of Cyril and Methodius was promoted by some Slovak Catholic clergy that had likewise faced Magyar attempts to promote nationalism through Church structures. Yet Cyril and Methodius could still have non-national meanings. On July 5, 1863, Štefan Moyzes, Cardinal of Esztergom in southern Slovakia along the Hungarian border, organized the first mass commemoration of the mission and requested Pope Leo XIII to make the day a Church-wide feast of Cyril and Methodius.<sup>183</sup> This commemoration was never conceived as a nationalistic event, but simply as an acknowledgement of an ecclesiastical tradition and its importance for Slovaks and indeed all Slavs, and for Hungarians.<sup>184</sup>

By the end of the 19th century, the two brothers were more and more often used as an argument for national independence. In the 19th century, this myth was cherry-picked to invent and promote Slovak and Slavic Church tradition and also to claim a degree of territorial independence. As other Churches in the region were being nationalised, the 19th century advocates of Slovak political autonomy organised major nationalist events -- such as public proclamations or establishment of nationalist institutions-- on dates connected with the two brothers. (Notably, the Slovak heritage organisation, *Matica Slovenská*, was established on the tenth centenary of the mission in 1883.<sup>185</sup>) Thus the 'Cyrilomethodian tradition', as we have seen, became even more intertwined with the memory of national emancipation, a murky situation which left it vulnerable to reinterpretation not only on the feast day of July 5, which should have been a purely religious event, but also in connection with these other events, anniversaries, and public holidays with strong undertones of Slovak nationalism.

The dismemberment of the Habsburg Empire in 1918 spelled the end of the marriage between the Church and the Monarchy on one hand, and Catholicism and Magyar nationalism on the other. With the creation of new states, Catholic culture in

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<sup>182</sup> Richard J. W. Evans, *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs, Central Europe c. 1683-1867* (Oxford, 2006), p. 157.

<sup>183</sup> Gabriela Kiliánová, 'Komu patrí Devín', in Eduard Krekovič, Eva Krekovicova, Elena Mannova (eds.), *Myty nase Slovenské*, (Bratislava, 2005), p. 122

<sup>184</sup> Kiliánová, 'Komu patrí Devín', p. 122

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid*, p. 122

Slovakia would be renationalised. However, the newly founded Czechoslovak state continued to observe the anniversary and sought to incorporate it into a newly forming Czechoslovak national memory. The Catholic feast of Cyril and Methodius became a civic holiday. The feast of the Czech King St. Wenceslas was the only other Catholic saint's day to be recognised as they, unlike other Catholic Saints, were the only two which enabled the comingling of national and religious memory.<sup>186</sup>

But at this point, the 19th century Slovak interpretation had already developed a widespread following who, even under a new Czechoslovakia, wanted to win back both the brothers and the idea of Great Moravia for the Slovak nation. The emerging Slovak Catholic nationalists led by Andrej Hlinka, the priest politician and leader of the Slovak Peoples' Party, also sought, especially from the early 1930s, to use the tradition to promote the idea of Slovak autonomy. Therefore, when in 1933 the state co-organized *Pribina* festivities in commemoration of the consecration of the first Church on Slovak territory in 833 (during the reign of Duke Pribina of the Nitra Chiefdom), it became clear that Cyril and Methodius had become a site of conflicting memories.<sup>187</sup> Albeit the consecration of the church had been performed by a bishop from Salzburg before the arrival of Cyril and Methodius, the two brothers and Great Moravia formed the focal point of the festivities. This clearly testified to the Prague government's effort to put emphasis on the period of Great Moravia, which was now considered to be the first common state of the Czechs and Slovaks.<sup>188</sup> Slovak autonomists interrupted the festivities and presented their requests for greater autonomy for the Slovak nation, emphasising that the Pribina Chiefdom, which they believed to be the first state of the Slovak nation, predated Great Moravia. Hlinka based his request on the 'historical rights' of the Slovak nation. Had it not been for the Pribina Chiefdom and that the Slovaks were already familiar with Christianity, they claimed, the Cyrilomethodian mission would not have been nearly as successful.<sup>189</sup> While some Bishops supported the HSL'S agenda, Bishop Karol Kmeťko of Nitra protested against any politicisation, and repeatedly stressed the religious nature of the event.<sup>190</sup> Instead, Kmeťko used Cyril and Methodius to promote Slavic unity in the face of Bolshevism rising in Russia. Despite the fact that at this point, the Catholic

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<sup>186</sup> Paces, *Prague Panoramas*, p.119

<sup>187</sup> Zajonc, 'Prečo je Nitra staroslávne mesto', p. 139.

<sup>188</sup> Findor, *Začiatky národných dejín*, pp. 181-3.

<sup>189</sup> Zajonc, 'Prečo je Nitra staroslávne mesto', p. 139

<sup>190</sup> *Slovák*, February 26, 1933, pp. 3-4; Felak, "At the Price of the Republic", p. 102

hierarchy was fully nationalised and the Bishoprics were occupied by Slovak bishops, the festivities showed that the nationalisation of the Church did not mean a marriage with religious nationalism. The main focus of some in the hierarchy was on the promotion of a much less politically-charged albeit nonetheless somewhat national cult of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows as the National Patroness.<sup>191</sup> Against the backdrop of consolidation (of a secular Czechoslovak unitary state), Cyril and Methodius were used to legitimise opposing views of Czechoslovak as well as Slovak statehood, religious as well as secular culture.

During the nominally independent-- but in reality Nazi-dominated-- wartime Slovak State (1939–1945), Catholic nationalistic views prevailed in the political realm, and Great Moravia was presented as the first state of the Slovaks. As Cyril and Methodius could not, of course, feature as leaders of this chieftom, the HSL'S joined this myth with the myth of 'King Svätopluk', the first king of Slovaks.<sup>192</sup> The religious 'Cyrilomethodian tradition' was fully transformed into a nationalistic one and fully overlaid with the newly-constructed statehood collective memory.<sup>193</sup> Both memories formed an important part of official national ideology and the period saw unprecedented state support of the public promotion of the symbol. Citing Christian principles, the Slovak state commemorated Cyril and Methodius as 'the Apostles of the Slovaks' and harbingers of national independence.<sup>194</sup>

Inheriting the cult of Cyril and Methodius, the Communist use of its 'legacy' was determined by a range of factors, especially in the first postwar decades: the progressive programme to establish a nationalised public Catholic Church as independent from Rome, the regime's antagonistic relationship towards the wartime Slovak Republic, and the communist self-perception as the only legitimate fighter against Nazi occupation.<sup>195</sup> While their employment of these themes was a result of what Cynthia Paces describes as 'the unavoidability of the sacred in national memory, the party strove to strip Cyril and Methodius of religious meaning. The party

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<sup>191</sup> Ďurica, *Slováci a Sedembolestna* pp. 28- 41

<sup>192</sup> Andrej Findor, *Začiatky národných dejín* (Bratislava, 2011), pp. 129-32.

<sup>193</sup> In 1939, the Slovak State organised a pilgrimage of Slovaks to the ruins of Devin Castle on the feast of Cyril and Methodius. German politicians were also present. Kiliánova, 'Komu patrí Devín', p. 127

<sup>194</sup> Vladimír Turčan, 'Cyril a Metod- Trvalé Dedičstvo', in Eduard Krekovic, Eva Krekovicova, Elena Mannova (eds.), *Myty nase Slovenske*, (Bratislava, 2005), pp. 36-42.

<sup>195</sup> Jiří Macháček, 'Disputes over Great Moravia: chieftom or state? The Morava or the Tisza River?', *Early Medieval Europe* 17(2009), 249.

invoked the cult mainly in the context of Great Moravia to buttress the ideology of Czechoslovak unitary state, as well as the idea of Slavic brotherhood.<sup>196</sup> In the official cultural production, the secular meaning of Cyril and Methodius was emphasised, whereas in practice, it meant that the legacy of their work was reduced to the script and language they introduced, and disregarded the Christianising content of their mission. During the Stalinist period, the tradition of Cyril and Methodius was first 'de-Slovakised'—they were no longer symbols of historicity of Slovak nation and but were promoted as symbols of 'Slavic brotherhood.' Pilgrimages to Nitra, where relics of Cyril and Methodius had been venerated in the pre-communist period, were now banned but those to Devín were turned into a secular 'Feast of Slavic brotherhood.'<sup>197</sup> As I will argue in Chapter 1, this situation began to change in the 1960s. Therefore we can see that the Cyrilomethodian tradition, Catholic ritual, saints and their shrines, already had a long history. They reemerged in 1980s, albeit in new forms.

#### **4. Data and Methods of Analysis**

##### **4.1. Discourse and Discourse Analysis**

In gathering and analysing the data for this research project, I relied on discourse analysis. For the cases examined in this thesis, 'discourse' was the most signifying practice through which culture was constructed and shaped, and it was on a discursive level that many important differences and similarities in meaning emerged. This thesis explores how a nationalised public Catholic culture was constructed in different types of texts, from the spoken (e.g. speeches by Church or political leaders, speeches by 'ordinary' participants at events) to the written (e.g. newspapers, underground samizdat publishing before 1989). Most of the texts analysed in this thesis were produced in relation to symbolic events, including pilgrimages, public commemorations, and demonstrations. First, I analysed events related to Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows. These events include but are not limited to pilgrimages to the Šaštín shrine and events that took place at this pilgrimage site from 1984 to 1993. I also analysed commemorations and events related to Sts. Cyril and Methodius. These events included the commemoration of the anniversary of the death of St. Methodius in 1985 and pilgrimages devoted to Cyril and Methodius in Nitra (these have been organised annually since 1990). I also analysed a demonstration

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<sup>196</sup> Paces, *Prague Panoramas*, p. 3

<sup>197</sup> Kiliánová, 'Komu patří Devín', p. 130

organised by the underground Church community in 1988, as well as a series of events, commemorations, and pilgrimages which emerged after 1989. In addition to the 'national pilgrimages' to Cyril and Methodius in Nitra, southern Slovakia, I looked at the production related to commemorations of the interwar leader of the Slovak People's Party, Andrej Hlinka, in Ružomberok. In the next section, I will describe in greater detail which collections I used to study this production and why.

For now, suffice it to say that the various public events analysed in this thesis were typically accompanied by an increased production of materials reflecting the various meanings these events had for different groups. These texts included special issues of periodicals (official, unofficial), commemorative publications, texts produced on the spot but mainly programmes and speeches, as well as texts produced after the events, which include but are not limited to reports in the media. I chose to analyse the texts related to those events that were typically organised or attended by groups which were interested in producing or in instrumentalising national collective memory and symbols. These texts, therefore, allow not only to examine the different meanings that were produced by these individual groups but also to observe whether and to what extent meaning was produced in encounters among these different creators.

In the 1980s, discourses were produced, but not simply by opposing groups in strictly divided spheres that were fixed and bounded. Catholic culture was constructed in the discursive conditions of the 1980s when, given the common interest in the construction of the nation, both official and unofficial discourses overlapped, as they were at the same time constantly contested both from within and without the sites of their production. On the most general level, there are two approaches to discourse in communist countries. On one hand, some studies of discourse in communist countries typically divide discourse into an 'official' discourse, perceived as bounded, 'monologic' statements not responding to other discourses, and an 'unofficial counter-discourse' reacting against the official discourse and often created in a different parallel sphere of existence, such as the underground.<sup>198</sup> Other studies, best represented by Alexei Yurchak, argue that official discourse became 'normalized, ubiquitous, and predictable', that it no longer functioned 'at the level of meaning as a kind of ideology in the usual sense of the word', and socialist citizens

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<sup>198</sup> Kubik, *Power of Symbols*, pp. 12-13.

no longer paid attention to its literal meaning.<sup>199</sup> This thesis followed these approaches in some respects but departs from them in one important respect. It was indeed sometimes the case that nationalised public Catholic culture was constructed against the official socialist discourse and could thus be considered as a counter-discourse. In other cases it was clear that it was possible to create this culture publicly, because its creators were able to place it within the context of the authoritative discourse. Thus, nationalised public Catholic culture was also constructed within the official discourse. It was also sometimes the case that unofficial creators of culture took a genuine interest in the official discourse. In fact, sometimes parts of this discourse were reproduced in unofficial production.

#### **4.1.1. Archives and Materials**

The central questions with which I approached the task of choosing archives and collections were: who constructed nationalised public Catholic culture, how and why it was done, and how this construction developed over time. These data are derived from groups which were most actively involved in this construction. In this section I will set out which groups' materials I chose, describe these materials, explain why I chose them and suggest in what ways and how they are useful in analyzing the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture. I also touch on what I am missing out on by focusing on these collections and these sources, and what possible effects this may have on the analysis of this construction. Contemporary materials include but are not restricted to: materials accumulated directly in the process of cultural production or as a result of this process, as well as variety of materials analysed to understand the context of this construction. I chose these sources, because the groups who produced them were the most important in the construction of a revived Catholic nationalised culture. This section has two parts: the first part looks at materials from pre-1989 production and the second at post-1989 materials.

First, I analysed materials produced by a community of Catholics which is typically referred to as the 'secret Church' or 'underground Church.' The goal was to find out when, why, and in what ways the underground Church began to construct a nationalised public Catholic culture. The central materials used to analyze the underground Church production were *samizdat* (that is self-published texts) texts.

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<sup>199</sup> Alexei Yurchak, *Everything was Forever until It Was No More* (New Haven and Oxford, 2006), p. 15

Samizdat publications, especially samizdat journals, were an important platform of communication, mobilisation and exchange of information of the underground Catholic community in Slovakia. Wide use was made of mostly Catholic Slovak samizdat journals which are part of the LIBRI PROHIBITI collection in Prague. This library holds the most complete collection of samizdat available, including all Slovak Catholic samizdat journals published in the period from 1985 to 1989. Thanks to this collection, I was able to explore the overwhelming majority of samizdat journals published by various groups and individuals from the underground Church. From 1985 the number of samizdat journals began to grow, as every major group within the underground Church produced its own samizdat journal. These journals include but are not limited to *Náboženstvo a Súčasnosť* (edited by the leading Lay Apostolate Fellowship, first issue published in 1982), *Rodinné Spoločenstvo* (edited by the Movement of Christian Families, first issue published in 1985), *ZrNO* (published by the Salesians religious community), *Svedectvo* (edited by Bishop Ján Ch. Korec, published since 1988), *Bratislavské Listy* and *Hlas Slovenska* (published since 1988). All of these journals include a wide range of materials covering the public mobilisation of underground Catholics, (including pilgrimages and commemorations) and articles about Catholic and national history. Published by different communities gathered in the underground Church they allow the different attitudes of these groups to be explored. The samizdat sources are also useful in giving insight into the ideologies which motivated the construction of these cultures and the strategies of its construction. They also allow establishing the ways and the extent to which the construction by the underground Church was inspired by other groups (by the papacy, émigrés, official production, the official hierarchy, Czech Catholics, and others). Although samizdat journals were typically not dated, the *samizdat* reports from pilgrimages always carried information about the time and place of each pilgrimage. My analysis of this material is the first of its kind and the most comprehensive content analysis of Catholic samizdat in Slovakia. Apart from journals, I explored a range of other samizdat sources related to the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture, ranging from essays, speeches, video and tape recordings, and materials accumulated in the construction of this culture, such as reports, written notes and letters. These sources were gained from the personal archives of members of the underground Church. Much of the production prepared for pilgrimages and commemorations, such as youth programmes, were not

preserved by their authors. I managed to gain access to transcripts of programmes which were identified by several members of the underground Church as the most popular in the personal archive of the author of these programmes himself (Pavol Abrhan Personal Archive).

Samizdat sources as a source of data about the construction of public culture has to be approached with caution for several reasons. Currently accessible samizdat publications represented only a part of the samizdat production of the underground Church and were controlled by a select number of underground Church leaders. The process of drafting samizdat works can be seen as the first stage of construction of a nationalised public Catholic culture. The journals were edited by the leaders of the underground Church and, as became clear in oral history interviews with these men and women, the content of samizdat was often the result of struggles. In addition, samizdat journals were self-censored: the editors sought to avoid themes which, though popular in the underground community, were deemed too political or too contentious. This influenced their coverage of events. For example, they were silent about those programmes at pilgrimages which were deemed too 'political.' As will be mentioned in the following section on oral history interviews, these interviews can be used to get at some of these aspects of the production of the underground Church. Informed by oral history interviews, we can establish the extent to which the underground community struggled over which parts of the underground discourse it would become a part of.

Second, I examined the production of the official Church, looking mainly at *Katolícke Noviny* and *Duchovný Pastier*, and *Pútnik Svätovojtešský* materials related to various commemorations and pilgrimages. The materials consulted in this thesis include newspaper articles, studies, essays and books. The material on the official Church is, however, rather thin. The public production of non-Communist actors was circumscribed by the Communist authorities for most of the 1980s. Even when the attitude of official authorities became less restrictive to various manifestations of public Catholicism towards the end of the 1980s, the number of official sources covering these manifestations did not increase. Church archives from this period have not yet been made available. Moreover, when using these materials we need to be aware that these materials were censored by the official authorities; the effect was typically that there is very little information on the involvement of official Church at pilgrimages, not to mention reports about what happened at these events.

Thirdly, I explored sources published by the official elite. The goal was to find out whether and in what ways public cultural construction was nationalised and to what extent and in what ways Christianity became part of this nationalisation. I also sought to answer the question of whether and how far this construction of nationalised culture went in relation to the official Catholic culture. I first explored the collection of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the *de iure* highest body of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, located at the Slovak National Archive. The material found in this archive provided interesting information about pilgrimages. Since Velehrad 1985 leading authorities became interested in public manifestations of Catholicism. They began to monitor major pilgrimages and officials from the Office of Church Affairs (at the Ministry of Culture), took part in all major pilgrimages and produced reports which were then sent to the Central Committee. These sources included much useful detail about the official and unofficial programme at pilgrimages. The major downside of these sources is that they are written by officials who were trained to record those parts of the production of the official Church and underground Church which they saw as provocative – the reports thus include details about these ‘provocative’ aspects but are silent about other parts of the programme. Nonetheless, the information in these reports complements the reports published in *samizdat* form, which tended to be silent about these ‘provocative’ aspects of the programmes.

Some archives, including those most relevant for this research (Ministry of Culture, the Office of Church Affairs at the Ministry of Culture, Matica Slovenská, Ministry of Education) concerning the official construction of culture, have not yet been made accessible to the public. This restriction limited my data about the period (1987-1989) when the official authorities became directly involved in the construction of nationalised culture. I have learnt from reports to the Central Committee that beginning in 1988, official authorities at the Ministry of Culture began to prepare their own programmes for pilgrimages and that these were prepared in conjunction with the official Church. Transcripts of these programmes, provided they have been archived, could help establish the extent to which and the ways in which the official authorities sought to construct a nationalised culture and how the official Church participated in these efforts. I also did not gain access to Church archives for this period; these archives may also include records of the official programmes co-organised by the state.

The materials found at the Central Committee concerned solely pilgrimages but did not provide much information about the official collective memory and symbols and the extent to which and the ways in which Christianity and the Catholic Church were considered as part of this endeavour. I therefore turned to public cultural production. I chose to analyse the production of those institutions and figures which played leading roles in the construction of official nationalised culture. I looked at the production of the three institutions which were at the centre of national cultural production in Slovakia: the heritage organisation *Matica Slovenska*, the Centre of National Development and the Slovak Writers' Committee. The production of these institutions was immense; I therefore chose to focus on either major collected works or works by leading writers (Milan Ferko), historians (Viliam Plevza, the head of the Institute of Marxism Leninism, Matúš Kučera, Jan Dekan), archaeologists, literary historians (Vladimir Mináč, Juraj Chovan Reháč) and Communist intellectuals and artists (the leading film director Andrej Lettrich) who were amongst the most active and leading creators of official nationalised culture. These men were also closely related to political elites; their production thus reflects quite well what was being allowed by the political elite and when. Their production consulted in this thesis includes but is not limited to newspaper articles, studies, reviews, and books (popular and scholarly). These official elites had good access to official media (*Nové Slovo*, *Literárny Týždenník*) and official publishing and produced a lot of material and on a regular basis. This character of their production allows exploration of how the position of Catholic Church and more broadly Christianity developed over time.

Another important source which allowed examining the extent to which the official elites sought to create this culture is television. I used the archives of Slovak Television and the Slovak Film Institute, which are accessible to public use. The materials from these archives perhaps even better reveal the manner in which Catholicism began to be made part of the public culture. The consulted materials included production plans (STV Archive) and a variety of materials related to film and series production. By far the most valuable among the materials I consulted are those from the preparation of the first Slovak historical drama film. Supported by the Ministry of Culture in Slovakia and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Slovak Socialist Republic, the project brought together major Slovak and Czech authorities in the field of official cultural production – scholars of ancient history, prominent artists and filmmakers – and gives a unique opportunity to explore the

reasons behind these contestations. The film was financed with what was then the biggest budget in the history of Czechoslovak film production. The project lasted five years before (1984-1989) it was halted, allegedly due to a financial crisis. The projects, plans and scripts produced over this time span allow an examination of when, whether and to what extent Christianity and relatedly the Catholic Church were related to the public nationalised culture. If in 1985 the authors of the film struggled over whether and what place should be given to Christianity, by 1988, after the official approach to the Catholic Church changed, they all agreed that Christianity was important for the history of the Slovak nation.

For the post-1989 period, I looked at materials produced by groups which were engaged in the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture. These included the Catholic hierarchy, the Christian Democratic Movement (the political party established by former members of the underground Church), *Matica Slovenská* and the Slovenská Národná Strana, the Slovak National Party (SNS). The 1990s saw an unprecedented increase in the number of public events and interest in them. These events were covered in the Catholic and nationalist media, especially *Katolícke Noviny* (official weekly of the Catholic Church in Slovakia), *Bratislavské Listy* (monthly of the Christian Democratic Movement), *Slovenský Denník* (Christian Democratic daily), *Slovenské Národné Noviny* (*Matica Slovenská* began as a weekly). These papers include reports about these events, speeches, and pictures. I also make use of materials such as party programmes, political speeches, and policy proposals. During this period, the Catholic hierarchy began to play a central role in the construction of a nationalised culture. The archives of the Catholic Church from this period are, of course, not yet accessible; nonetheless, I have managed to gain access to the archive of the Spiš Diocese, which included the personal archive of Bishop František Tondra (Bishop from 1988-2011). During the period explored in this thesis (1989-1993) Tondra served as the main secretary of the Slovak section of Czechoslovak Bishops' Conference, his personal correspondence thus includes copies of correspondence among members of the Czechoslovak episcopate. These materials cover only a small part of the communication among the Czech and Slovak Catholic hierarchy. This collection nonetheless provided interesting information about communication (letters) within the Slovak episcopate and between the Czech and Slovak episcopates concerning the issue of the Slovak political future and its

relationship to the Catholic Church. This fund provided me with interesting data about the role of various members of the hierarchy in the construction of public culture.

#### 4.1.2. Oral History Interviews

I interviewed twenty-two persons who actively constructed public Catholic culture from the 1980s up through the early 1990s. As in-depth accounts of personal experience and reflections, in this thesis oral history interviews were used to obtain information about various aspects of the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture which could not be derived from the available archival material.<sup>200</sup> Whilst I see oral history interviews as a valuable source of information, I am aware that they are subjective and constructed in interaction with the interviewer.<sup>201</sup> In the following I will explain how I selected these interviewees, which groups they represent, how I analysed the interviews, and what questions I sought to answer in the process.

Most of the interviewees for this sample were selected on the basis of previous research on the available cultural production of the groups (or institutions) to which they belonged. The rest of the sample is a result of the snowball effect: these interviewees were identified and contacted thanks to other interviewees. The largest group of interviews was done with people who were members of the so-called 'underground Church.' This results mainly from the fact that this thesis began with the goal of focusing on the construction of this nationalised public Catholic culture by the underground Church. The interviewees can be divided into several different groups according to the sphere from which they created nationalised public Catholic culture.

The underground Church members can be divided into several groups. The first group of these underground Catholics – mainly founding members of the underground Church communities – belonged to the interwar generation. All of the interviewees were imprisoned during the 1950s and 1960s, were released during the thaw in 1960s and during the Prague Spring became actively engaged in the religious revival. These men also played major roles in the public emergence of underground communities in the 1980s. I also interviewed a number of 'underground'

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<sup>200</sup> Ritchie, Donald A (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, (Oxford, 2011); Perks, Robert. *The Oral History Reader*, (London and New York, 1998).

<sup>201</sup> See e.g. Eva M. McMahan, Kim Lacy Rogers, *Interactive Oral History Interviewing* (New York, 2011).

Catholics who had been socialized during the thaw of the 1960s and played a crucial role in politicisation of the underground community in the late 1980s. These men and women then went on to assume leading positions among the post-Socialist, mostly political but also ecclesiastical elites. I have also sought to include the youngest leaders of the underground community, many of whom first came upon the scene as it were in the 1980s.

The more I explored the role of the underground Church in the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture, the more aware I became about the importance of members of the so-called official Church in construction of this culture, especially by the end of 1980s. These results of my research brought me to interview a second group, the leading members of the official Church in the 1980s. I interviewed leading members of the hierarchy, such as Jan Sokol (Archbishop of Trnava) or František Tondra (Bishop of Spiš diocese). Some of the figures of central importance (Bishop Julius Gábriš of Trnava, Bishop Jan Pásztor of Nitra, Štefan Garaj of Spišská Kapitula) died long before this research began. I tried to explore their role through interviews with their close cooperators (Jozef Jarab, Viliam Judák, František Tondra). Third, I interviewed a number of those who were active in the construction of the official nationalised culture, including leading members of the hierarchy, editors at leading official media and from the heritage organization *Matica Slovenská*.

This sample also omits various people who could have provided valuable information about the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture. These mainly include several leading figures of the official Church and the official cultural construction. This applies to the members of the association of priests loyal to the Communist state, the Association of Priests, *Pacem in Terris* (ZKD PiT). I tried to approach two of these priests, but they were not interested in being interviewed. These men, who wished to remain anonymous, were not willing to talk about their professional and personal lives before and after 1989. I assume that some of these men were not willing to talk because in the currently dominant official memory of the Catholic Church their professional and personal lives have been seen in terms of 'collaboration' with the Communist state.

This sample also omits state officials from the Ministry of Culture who began to play important role in the construction of this culture towards the end of state

socialism. One of the reasons for this omission is that I initially aimed to focus on grassroots and Catholic construction of this culture and did not look to official authorities as co-creators of this culture. Also, those of my interviewees who were closest to these officials (members of official Church) spoke about these men simply in terms of repression of Catholic culture (such as the last pre-1989 Head of the Office of Religious Affairs, Vincent Máčovský).

My sample also omits Catholic émigrés who played an important role in the creation of the nationalised culture both before and after 1989. In some cases (leading Slovak émigré in Rome Cardinal Jozef Tomko, František Sočufka, director of Radio Vatican in Rome) these people did not make themselves available or did not think that their information could be useful for my research.

Most of these interviews (with the exception of two) took the form of semi-structured life-story narrative interviews which I, at points, interrupted with follow-up questions. These follow-up questions typically concerned details about various aspects of nationalised public Catholic culture. I tried to phrase such questions in as open-ended a manner as possible. In some cases I failed to ask follow-up questions at important parts of an interview and missed an opportunity to learn about issues relevant for my research. In other cases, I asked inappropriate questions which prevented the interviewee from developing crucial points. This was often the result of my lack of experience as an oral historian. In conducting and analysing these interviews I sought to be aware that 'oral history interviews are interactively constructed.'<sup>202</sup> My role as an interviewer was influenced by the extent to which I knew the milieu from which some of the interviewees came.<sup>203</sup> I am quite familiar with the environment of the underground Catholic communities and more broadly the environment of the Roman Catholic Church in Slovakia. I was much less familiar with the environment of Communist official elites.

How did I analyse these interviews? In the most general sense there are two approaches to oral history interviews and their analysis. The first approach sees oral history as an opportunity to recover the voices of those groups whose stories are not

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<sup>202</sup> McMahan, Rogers (eds.), *Interactive Oral History Interviewing*.

<sup>203</sup> Marta Edith Holečková, *Cesty českého katolíckeho samizdatu 80. Let* (Prague, 2009), pp. 195-6.

part of official histories or whose voices in public life had been suppressed.<sup>204</sup> For example, oral histories of religious communities in East-Central Europe have focused on the memories of repression of the religious in the 1950s.<sup>205</sup> These interviews are typically analysed as a source of data for writing histories of these communities. The second approach in oral history understands these interviews as an opportunity to uncover 'how people make sense of their past, but also how they connect individual experience and its social context and how past becomes part of the present, and how people use it to interpret the world around.'<sup>206</sup> According to James Mark, analysis of oral history interviews then allows the historian to examine the impact of 'public memories on the individuals' conception of their own lives and the way in which these interacted with, and in some cases replaced, the ways that they had learned to think about their lives...'<sup>207</sup> These oral historians thus analyse oral history interviews to uncover how narrators are influenced by public religious collective memories and how they appropriate these memories.<sup>208</sup>

With regards to the first approach, the goal of the oral history interviews in this thesis was not to give voice to non-elite groups about which history is completely silent. Some of the men and women in this sample were at different points in their lives part of elite groups; some parts of their professional and personal lives and some aspects of their thoughts have been quite well covered. They have published memoirs,<sup>209</sup> and parts of their personal and professional stories are part of social and political histories, as well as documentary films. The literature on the underground

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<sup>204</sup> Slovakia's National Memory Institute as well as former members of Catholic dissent have been collecting memories of religious activists imprisoned during the 1950s and 1960s. See for instance <http://www.upn.gov.sk/english/project-oral-history-witnesses-of-the-oppression-period> or <http://www.upn.gov.sk/obdobie-1945-1989/vypovede-pamatnikov-o-barbarskej-noci> (last accessed 29. 11. 2011)

<sup>205</sup> See Miroslav Vanek, *Bezmoc mocnych a moc bezmocnych* (Prague, 2008); Holečková, *Cesty českého katolíckeho*.

<sup>206</sup> Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany, 1990), p. 188.

<sup>207</sup> James Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution, Making Sense of the Communist Past in Central Eastern Europe*, (New Haven, 2010), p. xxii.

<sup>208</sup> For the use of oral history interviews to explore the influence of Catholic anti-communism on personal stories under communism, See. James Mark, 'Victims' Stories', in J Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution, Making Sense of the Communist Past in Central-Eastern European Europe*, (New Haven and London, 2010), pp. 166-193.

<sup>209</sup> E.g. for memoirs and other publications concerning underground Church see, Július Brocka and Renáta Brocková, *Kým prišiel November* (Bratislava, 2009); Ján Čarnogurský, *Videné spoza Dunaja* (Bratislava, 2005); Jukl, Vladimír, 'Gabriel', Ján Šimulčík (ed.), *Zápas o nádej* (Bratislava, 2000); Ján Ch Korec, *Od Barbarskej noci, Na slobode* (Bratislava, 2005); Ján Čarnogurský, *Videné spoza Dunaja* (Bratislava, 2005), Ján Čarnogurský, *Videné spoza Dunaja* (Bratislava, 2005). Mikloško František, *Čas stretnutí* (Bratislava, 1996); Ján Čarnogurský, *Videné spoza Dunaja* (Bratislava, 2005).

Church especially is growing. However, parts of their stories which are crucial for analysis of the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture and its development over this period have not been covered for various reasons, and these figures tended to be silent about them. One of the aims of these interviews was to get at these aspects of their lives, which are for various reasons not public. In some cases interviewees were willing to talk; in others they wished to remain silent.

With regards to the second approach to oral history interviews, the primary aim of the present analysis of oral history interviews was not to uncover the extent to which and the ways in which these interviewees were influenced by collective memory and how they appropriated these memories in return. Of course, in analysing these interviews I sought to be aware that the testimony of these men and women was also about representing the historical role of their community and was shaped by changes in the political context and public memory. The extent to and the ways in which the interviewees were willing to talk about different aspects of the construction of Catholic culture depended largely on how they understood their own life story and how they related it to the public memory of the current period. Members of the official Church hierarchy and more broadly of the official Church before 1989 tended to say rather little about the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture in the late 1980s. One of the reasons may be the fact that the current official memory of the Church focuses either on stories of suffering under communism or on the emergence of the underground Church community.<sup>210</sup> Some underground Church members on the other hand tended to emphasize only certain aspects of this public culture. A leading post-1989 Christian Democratic politician saw this culture as anticipating anti-Communist opposition and the post-1989 Christian Democratic Movement and de-emphasized any links to the official culture. Other Catholics who after 1989 became involved in creation of civil society with former civic dissidents saw this period as the beginning of Catholic involvement in public culture and overemphasized their links with civic dissent. It also meant that they tended to underestimate or entirely omit the role of the clergy and the official Church, not to mention official communist authorities. They were also not willing to talk about cooperation with independence nationalists in the

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<sup>210</sup> See for example, Marián Gavenda, *Nekonečné horizonty kardinála Korca* (Bratislava, 2011).; Ján Ch. Korec, *Od Barbarskej noci...*(Bratislava, 1990); See also František Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť rozvrátiť* (Bratislava, 1991), 69-122.; See also Ján Hnilica, František Vnuk, *Pavol Hnilica, biskup umlčanej cirkvi. 2 časť. 1951-1995* (Bratislava, 1996). Peter Šturák, *Otec Biskup Gojdič, OSMB (1888-1960)* (Prešov, 1997).

the 1990s. Leading figures of Catholic hierarchy (Cardinal Korec) did not want to talk about the early 1990s because this period was marked by growing disagreement among nationalist Catholics.

Having taken all these limitations into account, these oral history interviews were a valuable source of information in several respects. Interviews with the leaders of the underground community provided useful information about the origins of underground cultural nationalism, especially in the 1960s, and how this nationalism changed over the 1980s. The interviews with the younger generation of the underground Church members provided useful information about the extent to which and the ways in which the cultural nationalism of the underground Church was inspired by both civic dissent and the official nationalised culture. The interviews with members of official Church and official cultural elites helped establish the ways and the extent to which the Communist nationalists were involved in late Socialist construction of Catholic culture. These interviews were also helpful in exploring the extent to which and the ways in which these alliances continued after 1989 and how they became instrumental in construction of post-Socialist culture.

## **5. Survey of Chapters**

My thesis consists of three chapters. The first chapter explores the origins of nationalised culture in the early to mid-1980s. The construction of this culture revolves around the 'Methodian year,' which was a special year announced by Pope John Paul II with the official goal to celebrate Cyril and Methodius's role in the development of Slavic cultures as specifically Christian ones. The chapter starts with an overview of how the official nationalised culture in Czechoslovakia had developed since the 1960s and observes the central role of collective memory in its genesis. I argue that the Catholic Church was not part of this nationalised culture. Catholic pasts and symbols were mobilised only as far as they were deemed 'patriotic.' The chapter charts how this began to change in the mid-1980s. By the middle of the decade, Catholic national symbols had been significantly revived and pilgrimages became an important space of construction of Catholic culture. The chapter analyses how nationalised public Catholic culture is constructed through increased interest in the construction of national Catholic memory, symbols and events, and assesses who played the central roles in the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture.

Chapter Two explores the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture in the two years proceeding the fall of state socialism in November 1989. During this period, the underground Church remained a central player in the construction of nationalised culture. However, the official Church also became directly involved in the construction of nationalised culture. These two actors created nationalised public Catholic culture independently of each other, but since they were both interested in the same symbols (Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows) and religious histories, at first glance their efforts appeared as a common attempt to revive a nationalised culture. However, the underground Catholic communities were increasingly inspired by civic opposition and began to create this nationalised culture in support of civic liberties. Similarly to the first chapter, this chapter uses the construction of these symbols, memories and events to assess who plays central roles in construction of nationalised public Catholic culture and how these agents play this role. But it also explores whether, to what extent and in what ways this construction changes on the eve of the fall of state socialism. Catholic nationalised culture was not a result of post-1989—the underground ideas came increasingly into public spaces before 1989—and the Communist state embraced this new Catholic patriotic culture and promoted it.

Chapter Three explores the development of nationalised public Catholic culture after November 1989 and in the new political system. This chapter tells the story of the run-up to Slovak independence. In the 1980s, Catholic culture expanded. Even if not all Catholic leaders wanted independence, they promoted a culture that allowed it to happen more easily. During the first three years, nationalised public Catholic culture flourished and became central to the construction of post-Socialist nationalised culture. There was an increased number of commemorations that fused national and Catholic memory. The former members of underground community were now in leading positions in Church and politics. The ideology motivating these creators was cultural nationalism focused on the renewal of Christian national identity. Again, I employ the construction of these symbols, memories and events to assess who plays central roles in the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture. I explore the ways in which this construction changed after the fall of Communism, but also the ways in which this construction followed from the pre-1989 construction. Therefore, the thesis tells the story of the revival of a nationalised public

Catholic culture that had its roots long before Communism collapsed, and in the work of the underground Church in the early 1980s. Their activities would eventually provide a platform for the creation of a post-Communist nationalised public Catholic culture that would undergird the struggle for national independence.

## **Conclusion**

My thesis sets out to document the rise of a nationalised public Catholic culture which positioned the Catholic Church as an integral part of the nation in the period between 1985 and 1993. I explore the development of this culture after two major changes: the establishment of the Slovak Socialist Republic (nominally autonomous as part of the Czechoslovak Socialist Federation) and the establishment of an independent Slovak ecclesiastical province. The aim of my introductory section was to situate my thesis within the current scholarship on religion and nationalism, and more specifically on Catholicism and nationalism. My work explores the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture through analysis of collective memory, symbols and events. I argue that the development of a nationalised public Catholic culture during late socialism and early post-socialism is a significant part of a longer history of nationalisation of Catholic culture and Catholicisation of nationalised culture.

## CHAPTER ONE

### The Re-making of a 'Marian Nation'

#### Nationalised Public Catholic Culture during Late Socialism

On 15 September 1985, on the feast of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows, the National Patroness of Slovakia, a mass pilgrimage was held at the national shrine of Our Lady in Šaštín in western Slovakia. It was the first mass rally of its kind to take place since 1950 when Communist authorities had reclassified the site, denigrating it from national to local importance in an effort to discourage the participation of pilgrims from across Slovakia on the patroness' feast.<sup>211</sup>

Just a year prior, however, in September of 1984, this situation looked completely different. Groups of lay Catholic activists came on foot from around Slovakia, presented a full night's programme of songs, prayers, and lectures about Slovak history, and turned the main mass service into a manifestation of support for the Catholic hierarchy and the pope.<sup>212</sup> They embraced Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows and believed that the predominantly Catholic Slovak nation continued to suffer because the Catholic Church was administratively and ideologically attached to the socialist state, and thus, in their view, was not fulfilling its role of a truly 'national Church,' a church fused with the nation. These Catholics believed that the Catholic Church should play central role in the creation of nationalised public Catholic culture and in a more broadly nationalised culture. The Church, in its subservience to the state, could not play this role.

Such an understanding of the relationship between the Slovak nation, the Church, and the state did not appear out of thin air. Before the Communist takeover, Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows had been the central symbol of a nationalised public Catholic culture. Because of the location of the shrine in western Slovakia (the historical hotbed of Slovak nationalism and movements for emancipation) and near Bratislava (the Slovak capital and political centre), the national pilgrimages had long served to reflect the state of affairs between the Church and the state; everything

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<sup>211</sup> Macák, *Naša Matka*, pp. 130-2.

<sup>212</sup> 'Šaštín 1984,' *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť*, 4(1984), 3-5., LP; Július Brocka, interview with the author, 13 July 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.; Vladimír Jukl, Interview with the author, 7 January 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.; František Mikloško, interview with the author, 13 July 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.

from their attendee count to the details of their arrangement bespoke the underlying sentiments of the society towards their overlapping national and Catholic identities.

As a symbol, Our Lady of Seven Sorrows changed over time in accordance with prevailing winds of the current cultural and political context: for example, she had been used by Catholic nationalists in the struggle against the secularising interwar Czechoslovak government to promote ethnocentric understanding, the Slovak nation, and attainment of Slovak cultural and political autonomy. Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows also served as a symbol of national identity, territorial integrity, and the overall unity of the Catholic Slovak nation.<sup>213</sup> Now, in the early 1980s, Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows was revived by these Catholics as a symbol of Christian national identity – with the aim of promoting institutional and moral renewal of the Church and, subsequently, of the nation. In fact, these Catholics are perhaps best understood as cultural nationalists seeking renewal of national identity – not as advocates for a revived form of Slovak political autonomy. After 1989, many of these Catholics would become involved in recasting Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows as a symbol of Slovak autonomy, but as of yet, they did not understand the meaning of this symbol in these terms.

The revival of a symbol related to the pre-Communist nationalised public Catholic culture in the mid-1980s is nonetheless important to study, as this was the beginning of gradual rapprochement between Catholicism and nationalism and the beginning of the re-building of a nationalised public Catholic culture. The underground activists, however, were far from the only agents in this revival.

Studies of post-war Slovak Catholic nationalism typically commence in the 1990s, when Catholic nationalism became crucial to the articulation of a distinct Slovak identity, as well as to nation-building and the eventual attainment of political independence.<sup>214</sup> Catholic nationalism is, however, not just a post-Socialist phenomenon. Its roots trace back to late Socialism. In fact, the rise of Catholic nationalism in this period was the result of processes which began the late 1960s, developments which created the context for its rapid growth in the 1980s. The story of Catholic nationalism was by no means a linear development of growing

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<sup>213</sup> Letz, *Sedembolestná Panna Mária*, p. 65, pp. 77-9, 85.

<sup>214</sup> See e.g. Hoppenbrouwers, 'Nationalist Tendencies,' 24-45.

oppositional nationalism in response to suppression by the Communist state as is typically assumed by scholars of post-war Central and Eastern European Catholic nationalism. Oppression - or the perception of it - does play an important part, but it is only part of the story of the rise of Catholic nationalism.

In exploring how Catholic nationalism developed, this chapter follows more recent studies of Communist states, which see them not so much as oppressors of minority nationalism, but rather as 'makers of nations.'<sup>215</sup> This is also a story of the mutual, often unwitting, participation in the re-creation of a nationalised culture by many different groups: the official state-sponsored Catholic Church, the Vatican, John Paul II, and crucially, the underground Church which emerges in the 1980s. The grounds for the construction of this culture emerged as a result of clashing views about the appropriate role of the Church in Czechoslovak society, the relationship between Catholicism and national identity, and the relationship between religion and the idea of a Slovak state.

This chapter will trace the growth of this Catholic nationalism in a variety of guises and assess the power of different visions of religion and nationalism in Slovak politics and society in the late Socialist period. It is divided into three sections. The first explores the fortunes of Catholicism and nationalism during the 1960s and during the early period of late Socialism (1968-late 1970s). It begins in the 1960s when Slovak nationalism assumed new importance for the Communist project in Eastern Europe as part of de-Stalinisation. This section explores the extent to which this change affected Slovakia and prepared ground for the late Socialist re-imagination of the Catholic Church as an integral part of the Slovak nation. This section also observes that from the 1960s on, Catholics became increasingly interested in the category of nation and national history, and that Catholic Churches in some countries of the region became actively involved in the forging of a nationalised public Catholic culture, constructed either independently of the Communist states or under their sponsorship (as part of the official nationalised culture).

This period was likewise crucial in making collective memory the central 'discursive field' for thinking about nationalised culture and national identity. The

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<sup>215</sup> Adrienne L. Edgar, 'Nation-making and National Conflict under Communism,' in S. A. Smith (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism*, (Oxford, 2014), pp. 523.

Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia had never undertaken the construction of an autonomous nationalised public Catholic culture mainly because, first, it lacked the institutional autonomy and strength needed to create such a culture and second, the Communist Party prevented non-communist actors from creating a nationalised culture. Nonetheless, throughout the early 1980s, a nationalised public Catholic culture -- one which cast the Catholic Church as an integral part of the nation through collective memory, symbols and events-- began to emerge.

The second section explores how and why this nationalised public Catholic culture began to be constructed in the 1980s. It argues that the nationalised culture was created especially by underground Catholic activists who began to surface at public pilgrimages and most consistently cast the Church as a part of the nationalised culture and national history. This was done mainly through the construction of a national Catholic narrative.

Their construction of this narrative was, however, a result of direct and indirect involvement of several important actors. Most visibly, they were encouraged by the papacy which emerged as an important inspiration for the creation of nationalised public Catholic cultures in the region and throughout the world. The official authorities in turn, by allowing the use of pilgrimages and promoting official Slovak nationalism (while simultaneously circumscribing the Church both in its contact with the nationalising papacy and Catholic laity), helped create a community which began to cast the Church as an integral part of the nation. A nationalised public Catholic culture thus began to take form through a combination of selective repression with increasing access to Slovak nationalism. This limited whilst at the same time allowed just enough space to make sense of the Catholic role in terms of Catholicism and nationalism. The 1980s were also the first time when those cultural elites who began to imagine the socialist state as an ethnic one were compelled to think about the place of Christianity in the project of late Socialist nationalism. All of these experiences – whether those of the official Church, supporters of the Communist state, and the underground Church – would from now on become central to the construction of a nationalised public Catholic culture.

## **1. Nationalism and the Catholic Church in the 1960s**

To understand the revival of a nationalised public Catholic culture, we must return to the 1960s, which marked a key change in the relationship between state, nation, and Church, and would establish patterns that persisted into the last decades of state socialism. In Czechoslovakia, as in all of Central and Eastern Europe, and indeed, globally, the 1960s saw increased interest in nationhood. It was also a time when the first post-war Catholic nationalism emerged already in Poland in the 1950s. Slovakia itself did not see a significant revival of popular Catholic nationalism, but it was during this period when preconditions for the 1980s re-construction of Catholic nationalism were formed and when actors who would come to play central roles in the construction of a nationalised public Catholic culture emerged.

These preconditions were: first, the re-emergence of an ethnic definition of Slovak nationhood propelled by a wide group of cultural elites interested in the maintenance of this nationalism; second, the re-assertion of the Catholic Church as an institution independent from the state; and, third, the appearance of a bottom-up mobilisation in the Catholic Church. This was also a time of emergence of interest in history as the central space within which new ideas of nationhood were discussed, and through which they were promoted.

### **1.1. Nationalism and Communism in the 1960s**

Interest in nationhood began within Communist Parties, but in some cases soon turned into a broader assertion of different forms of nationalisms, including Catholic nationalism. Czech historian Pavel Kolář writes that in the post-Stalinist era, 'self-representation through nationalist propaganda became essential to the legitimisation of the East European regimes.'<sup>216</sup> The first crisis of the Communist regimes in the early 1950s thus not only led to de-Stalinisation, but also to a revival of 'national roads' to socialism.

This was not the first time that 'national roads' to communism had emerged. After 1945, the Soviet leader Joseph V. Stalin tolerated the politics of 'national roads to

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<sup>216</sup> Pavel Kolář, 'Communism in Eastern Europe,' in, Stephen A. Smith, (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism*, (Oxford, 2014), p.207.

Stalinism' and thus of coalitions with non-communist democratic parties.<sup>217</sup> With the onset of Cold War, however, Stalin, according to Kolář, 'reconfigured this symbiotic relationship between nation and class.'<sup>218</sup> He goes on to say that, 'with the slogan of "sharpening the class struggle during the construction of Socialism," class came to predominate over nation,' and the 'focus now shifted from external foes to 'class enemies' within the nation and later within the Communist Parties themselves.'<sup>219</sup> Attacks on 'right-wing nationalist deviations' and 'bourgeois nationalism' were, Kolář notes, 'key features of Stalinism,' especially in Poland and Czechoslovakia.<sup>220</sup>

At the beginning of the 1950s in Slovakia, the well-known Slovak nationally-minded Communists Gustáv Husák and Ladislav Novomeský were put on trial and imprisoned as 'bourgeois nationalists', their 'deviation' supporting greater Slovak autonomy within the post-war Czechoslovak state. Reflecting the slowness with which de-Stalinisation reached Czechoslovakia, the two men spent more than a decade incarcerated. In fact, in late 1950s another campaign against the remnants of 'Slovak separatism' was initiated, removing all those Communists who believed that respect for ethnic distinctiveness should translate into the state's and the Party's structure and politics.

Yet by the beginning of the 1960s, these 'nationalists' were released and became central to re-casting the Stalinist rule as 'alien to the nation.' This perception was a powerful driving force behind both the uprisings of 1956 in Poland and Hungary as well as the revival of interest in the nation within the party.

In 1968, Novotný was replaced by Slovak Communist Alexander Dubček as Party Leader. A Slovak was thus placed in the strongest position of power in the party and in the common Czechoslovak state. As Karen Henderson points out 'Dubček's style came in stark contrast to the cold, aloof Communist leaders' to which people had become accustomed during the past twenty years.<sup>221</sup> However, Dubček aimed for more profound reform of the party and relatedly the Czechoslovak state. Yet, for all

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<sup>217</sup> See e.g. Peter Kenez, *From the Nazis to the Soviets, The Establishment of the Communist Regime in Hungary, 1944-1948*, (Cambridge, 2004); Martin Mevius, *Agents of Moscow: The Hungarian Communist Party and the Origins of Socialist Patriotism 1941-1953* (Oxford, 2005); --, (ed.), *The Communist Quest for National Legitimacy in Europe, 1918-1989*, (London and New York, 2011).

<sup>218</sup> Kolář, 'Communism in Eastern Europe', p. 206.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., p. 207.

<sup>221</sup> Karen Henderson, *Slovakia, The Escape from Invisibility* (London and New York, 2002) p. 22.

the efforts to change both the form and the substance of communist leadership, the reform period saw 'very few structural political and economic changes.'<sup>222</sup>

On April 5, 1968, Alexander Dubček and his associates in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia issued a political plan the aim of which was to look for Czechoslovakia's own path towards mature socialism. This so –called Action Programme (AP) called for acknowledgement of individual liberties, the introduction of political and economic reforms, and change in the structure of the state. This Programme was, however, not implemented since the personnel changes needed to facilitate its implementation did not take place.

The main result, then, was, as argued by Henderson, a step towards what nearly twenty years later would be called *glasnost*.<sup>223</sup> In the spring and summer of 1968, people could talk, more or less openly, about issues that had not been discussed in public since the Communist upheaval in 1948. The major issue in Slovakia was greater level of Slovak autonomy, cultural but even more so political. Federalisation became one of the central themes of the reform period.<sup>224</sup> In fact, the formal transformation of hitherto unitary Czechoslovak state into a federation would be the only one of the Programme's aims which was realised, if only to an extent. The federation would remain a purely formal arrangement, and would never become fully implemented.<sup>225</sup> Nonetheless, the campaign for federalisation and the assertion of Slovak nationalist elites, cultural and political, which preceded it, would become an important source of inspiration for late Socialist as well as post-Socialist nation-building, especially after the 1980s. The discourse about Slovak cultural and political autonomy, therefore, merits broader discussion.

Calls for formal acknowledgement of Slovak sovereignty first appeared among official cultural elites. These elites first advocated the ethnic principle alongside the principle of class. The first impulses for this change began to emerge already in the early 1960s. At about this time, Slovak cultural elites connected to the periodical *Kultúrny Život* began to feel uneasy about their national history being framed as only

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<sup>222</sup> Henderson, *Slovakia*, p. 22.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>224</sup> Jozef Žatkuliak, 'Slovakia's Position within the Czechoslovak Federation, in, M Teich, D Kováč and Brown,' eds., *Slovakia in History*, (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 320-4.

<sup>225</sup> Žatkuliak, 'Slovakia's Position,' pp. 324-9.

a stage in development towards a unitary Czechoslovak state.<sup>226</sup> These reform- and nationally-minded elites began to uncover previously 'forgotten' pasts and reinterpret those which they felt had been distorted by Stalinist official history in a more national way. In comparison with previous histories marked by the centralising spirit of the Stalinist period, the Slovaks, especially cultural elites, began to search for their 'own' national narrative. This also meant challenging the class struggle as the central logic of the Slovak past, and these elites began to turn to development of the Slovak nation as an independent ethnic group and nation. Indeed, rather than class struggles between feudal princes and serfs, or workers and capitalists, the Slovak cultural elites now looked to the 'beginnings of Slovak ethnogenesis' in the 9th century chieftom of Great Moravia, the Slovak 'national revival' in the 19th century and the 1944 anti-fascist Slovak National Uprising (SNP).<sup>227</sup>

These Slovak nationalists also began to probe the official memory of the development of Czechoslovak statehood. In this, they began to understand the development of Slovak statehood tradition as independent from the development of common Czechoslovak statehood, and shifted emphasis to the Slovak elements in the narrative of the historical development of Czechoslovak statehood. When Czech historians questioned Stalinist understandings of the interwar Republic as a result of the Bolshevik Revolution and began to frame it as a work of the 'founding fathers' (T.G. Masaryk, Edvard Beneš and Milan R. Štefánik), Slovak nationalists preferred to turn to Milan R. Štefánik, the only 'founding father' of Slovak origin. The heritage organisation *Matica Slovenská* organised a 'national pilgrimage to his mausoleum in western Slovakia in the spring of 1968.<sup>228</sup> Given the re-assertion of the national principle within socialist patriotism, these periods and figures of Slovak emancipation were now included as progressive moments of history.<sup>229</sup> This revival of interest in history and the use of history to think about new ways of political arrangement (federation) anticipated the roles history would play in official discourse for the decades to follow. This national memory and its creators would also play a central

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<sup>226</sup> Vladimír Kusin, *The Intellectual Origins of the Prague Spring* (Oxford, 1977), p. 70.

<sup>227</sup> Jan Rýchlik, *Česi a Slováci ve 20 století, spolupráce a konflikty, 1914-1992* (Prague, 2012), p. 444-56.

<sup>228</sup> Rýchlik, *Česi a Slováci ve 20 století*, p. 481.

<sup>229</sup> Hudek, *Najpolitickéjšia veda, Slovenská historiografia v rokoch 1948-1968* (Bratislava, 2010), p. 185-219; Hudek, 'Between Czechs and Hungarians', 264-5.

role in the construction of a nationalised public Catholic culture in the 1980s and 1990s.

The role of this official nationalist culture in building a nationalised public Catholic culture had not yet become evident in the 1960s. This was primarily because leading Communist nationalists did not intend to abolish the power monopoly of the Communist Party and its related position of exclusive creator of official culture.

During the 1960s, the movement of Slovak nationalist political and cultural elites focused on advocating greater political autonomy for Slovaks and the rearrangement of the common state with the Czechs from a unitary to a federal one. As federalisation became the central agenda of Slovak nationalist Communists, the construction of a Slovak national consciousness through the construction of an independent Slovak narrative became part of the legitimisation of the project of federalisation. During the Prague Spring, Slovak elites also debated the extent to which federalisation demanded democratisation. On one hand, there were those who saw democratisation as *sine qua non* of the federation and called for a common 'front' of Czech and Slovak 'progressive forces.'<sup>230</sup> When in the spring of 1968, the USSR grew suspicious about the democratising persuasion of the changes in Slovakia, a group of leading Communist intellectuals who had disagreed with the democratising trend left *Kultúrny Život* and coalesced around the weekly *Nové Slovo*. (For the purposes of this chapter, I will call these Communists authoritarian nationalist Communists.)<sup>231</sup> These different views translated into diverse approaches to the Catholic Church and its role in society, political life, and culture.

Whilst authors around *Kultúrny Život* published articles about different aspects of the Church's past and present and saw the Church as an autonomous creator of Slovak culture,<sup>232</sup> the Communists at *Nové Slovo* regarded the Catholic Church only in terms of its contribution to working people and the development of socialism.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Rýchlik, *Česi a Slováci*, p. 480.

<sup>231</sup> Stanislav Sikora, 'Pokus o reformu socializmu v Československu v roku 1968,' in V Bystrický, Dušan Kováč, Ján Pešek (eds.), *Kľúčové problémy moderných slovenských dejín, 1848-1992*, (Bratislava, 2012), p. 326.

<sup>232</sup> *Kultúrny Život*, 5 April 1968; 12 April 1968; 24 May 1968; *Katolícke Noviny*, 14 July 1968, Quoted in Šimulčík, *Združenie Katolíckych Duchovných*, pp. 63-9.

<sup>233</sup> Viliam Plevza, *Vzostupy a pády, Gustáv Husák prehovoril* (Bratislava, 1991), p. 97.

Thus, shortly before the end of the political thaw which would reach its zenith in the Prague Spring, Slovak nationalist elites became divided over the extent to which further nationalisation of Slovak culture should translate to the inclusion of broader segments of the Slovak people into the Communist project of reform.

This became clear in relation to the Catholic Church and its role in Slovak history. The Communists around *Kultúrny Život* began to read the Catholic Church into the history of Slovak ethnogenesis and national emancipation. *Kultúrny Život* became a space where religious rights were defended, and the first views about the positive role of Catholicism in the history of the nation were evoked.<sup>234</sup> The Communists around *Nové Slovo* refused to cede the emancipation of the Church in this sense. For them, an independent and powerful Church was a reminder of the Slovak Republic (1939-1945). These Communists imagined nation-building as a 'progressive' process; that is, as a process which would happen under the lead of the Communist Party and within the Communist state. Characteristic for the approach of the group around Husák was the proposal to constitute a Slovak ecclesiastical province as a way to establish a 'good relationship with the Church.'<sup>235</sup> The motivation for support of an independent Slovak province was, however, not to grant greater autonomy for the Church. According to Husák, the goal was to consolidate the southern frontier with Hungary and adjust ecclesiastical boundaries according to state borders.<sup>236</sup>

## 1.2. The Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia

For the most part, the authoritarian elites took pains to keep the Catholic Church within the confines of the Communist system and extraneous to any debates about the Slovak past, about nationalisation or democratisation. Between 1948 and the 1960s, the Catholic Church in Slovakia had been brought under extensive control of the state and isolated from society. The state dismantled its structures, including its religious orders, charities, schools, and associations.<sup>237</sup> The state also prevented the

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<sup>234</sup> *Kultúrny Život*, 5 April 1968; 12 April 1968; 24 May 1968; *Katolícke Noviny*, 14 July 1968, Quoted in Ján Šimulčík, *Združenie katolíckych duchovných Pacem in Terris, Výber samizdatových dokumentov, 1969-1989* (Prešov, 2002), pp. 63-9.

<sup>235</sup> Plevza, *Vzostupy a pády*, p. 97.

<sup>236</sup> Renáta Jakubčová, 'Kreovanie slovenskej cirkevnej provincie v širšom kontexte', *Politické Vedy* [online] Vol. 12, 3(2009), 121-31. [http://www.politickevedy.fpvmv.umb.sk/userfiles/file/3\\_2009/5\\_jakubcova.pdf](http://www.politickevedy.fpvmv.umb.sk/userfiles/file/3_2009/5_jakubcova.pdf) (last accessed 30 August 2015).

<sup>237</sup> See e.g. Norbert Kmeť, *Postavenie cirkví na Slovensku 1948-1951* (Bratislava, 2000); Ján Pešek and Michal Barnovský, *Pod kuratelou moci, Cirkvi na Slovensku 1953-1970* (Bratislava, 1999).

Church from functioning as an autonomous creator of a nationalised culture by controlling its media, closing down its pilgrimage sites and eliminating any notion of the Catholic Church as an important agent in the history of the Slovak nation.

All real power within the Church was held by an association of priests loyal to the state, the Movement of Peace Clergy. The Church was also controlled by the Office for Church Affairs through the Ministry of Culture. Throughout this thesis, I call this Communist concept of the Church and Catholic culture the 'patriotic Church' and the 'patriotic culture.' In this arrangement, the Church could be involved in public life to a certain extent as dictated by the Communist authorities.

Ostensibly, the Church was supposed to support the official ideology, including official nationalism. But as far as public life was concerned, the life of the Church was confined to church spaces. The Church was banned from mobilising independently of the state and without the permission of the state.<sup>238</sup> However, some public manifestations of faith, which took place outside of Churches, such as pilgrimages and other practices of popular devotions, were more generally tolerated.

According to leading Czech historians of the Catholic Church under Communism, for the authorities, 'these customs were a mere relic of the past which could not play any role in the growth of religiosity.'<sup>239</sup> These spaces were, however, tolerated only to a point. They were tolerated only as long as the Church hierarchy did not attempt to use them for Church-wide mobilisation. However, during the 1960s and 1970s (with the exception of 1968) there were no attempts to use pilgrimages in this way. As Hanuš and Balík point out, Catholics in Czechoslovakia were divided over popular devotions. In fact, popular devotions and their related practices were criticised by progressive Catholics, who, inspired by the Second Vatican Council, sought new, more modern, ways of (mass) mobilisation of Catholics.<sup>240</sup> This approach of these progressive Catholics to popular devotions would change by the mid-1980s; popular devotions (especially those to Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows and Cyril and Methodius) would experience a revival in which various actors would play a role (including official authorities, the papacy, and underground communities of

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<sup>238</sup> Stanislav Balík and Jiří Hanuš, *Katolícka cirkev v Československu: 1948-1989* (Brno, 2007), pp. 127-152.

<sup>239</sup> Balík and Hanuš, *Katolícka cirkev v Československu*, p. 283.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 284.

Catholics). But to understand why and how this revival occurred and what role it played in the rise of a nationalised public Catholic culture, I will first say a few words about the situation of the Catholic Church in the 1960s.

Despite the political thaw in the 1960s and the official support of nationalism, the official authorities in Czechoslovakia were not about to let the Church establish itself as a creator of an autonomous nationalised culture, as was the case in Poland, nor had they envisioned the Church as an active co-creator of a national official culture, as was the case in Hungary. In the 1960s the Churches in these countries underwent institutional reconstruction and became variously engaged in the creation of nationalised cultures. In Poland, the Church assumed the position of the creator of an autonomous nationalised culture. Under the leadership of the primate Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, the Church engaged in a programme of 'national consecration' in 1956. Through this programme, the Church gained sufficient strength and autonomy to be able to mobilise beyond an alternative nationwide programme, turning herself into a creator autonomous from the Communist Party.<sup>241</sup> In 1966, the Polish Church celebrated a thousand years of Christianity in the country.<sup>242</sup>

Similarly in Croatia, the Church soon established itself as a creator of a nationalised culture which was likewise autonomous, albeit slightly less so than in Poland. The Croatian Church began its own Great Novena modelled on a similar one in Poland to celebrate thirteen centuries of Christianity and Christendom, with early medieval Croatian kings celebrated alongside Catholic saints,<sup>243</sup> and the Catholic Church in Croatia played a central role in the Croatian Spring. This new position of the Churches would be challenged by official authorities during the next decade as they sought to consolidate their power, but the 1960s would see the beginning of the creation of independent public nationalised public Catholic cultures.

Czechoslovakia's situation was very different. Until 1967, the Church had not involved itself in the reform movement. The first signs that the episcopate in Slovakia were preparing to assert themselves with respect to the state appeared in 1967, just over a year before the end of the Prague Spring (in August of 1968). The hierarchy

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<sup>241</sup> Jan Kubik, 'The Celebrations of the Great Novena of the Polish Nation and the Millennium', in Kubik, *The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power, The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism*, (University Park, PN, 1994), pp. 110-17

<sup>242</sup> Kubik, *The Power of Symbols*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>243</sup> Perica, *Balkan Symbols*, pp. 63-73.

refused to see itself as subordinate to patriotic clergy and thus effectively questioned its hitherto subordinate position in relation to the state. Slowly, if slightly belatedly, the Czechoslovak hierarchy assumed a more independent position *vis á vis* the state. One of the reasons for Church's lagging behind in that country was the fact that it had been substantially isolated from other Churches in the region. Even more importantly, it had also become alienated from the Vatican, which had since the early 1960s been actively encouraging Churches to open up towards civil society (or nations).

Indeed, the Polish and Croatian Churches were explicitly encouraged in their new role by the Vatican after the Catholic Church rethought its relationship to society and state at the Second Vatican Council, which was crucial for the development of the social vision of the Church. As J. Bryan Hehir argues, the change made the Church less political and more social.<sup>244</sup> Vatican II's Declaration on Religious Liberty in particular encouraged a distancing of the Church from the state. The previous model, which saw the confessional state as the ideal, assumed that the closer the Church could get to the state, the better off the Church would be. This model was embodied in a multiplicity of concordants. John Courtney Murray notes that after the Second Vatican Council, the idea was to recognize the state's appropriate secularity, to engage it selectively, but not to tie the Church's fate to formal engagement with the state.<sup>245</sup>

Another important change in terms of agents taking part in constructing the public face of the Church was that greater authority was given to the laity.<sup>246</sup> Whereas in the 1940s and 1950s it was almost inconceivable that Church activities, including Catholic political parties, would not be fronted by priests, later such arrangements came to be accepted as standard practice.<sup>247</sup> In Eastern Europe, this about-face would translate into various programmes of renewal in the decades to follow. For the majority of the 1960s, the relationship between the Czechoslovak state and the Vatican was not good enough to allow the Vatican to have any significant influence on the position of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovak society.

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<sup>244</sup> J. Bryan Hehir, 'The Old Church in the New Europe,' in Timothy A. Byrnes and Peter Katzenstein (eds.), *Religion in an expanding Europe*, (Cambridge, 2006), p. 108.

<sup>245</sup> John Courtney Murray, 'The Problem of Religious Freedom,' *Theological Studies*, 25(1964), 503-75.

<sup>246</sup> Hehir, 'The Old Church', p. 108.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

Even after the Church in Czechoslovakia became free enough to catch-up with Churches in Poland or Croatia, the main focus was on reforming and rebuilding the Church internally rather than on reshaping its relationship within society. Towards the end of 1960s, Catholics who had been in prisons for the better part of the past decade joined ranks with those involved in church reform, and came to play a crucial role there. Along with the hierarchy, they established the Project of Council Renewal. The main goal of this project was to 'help the Church hierarchy to implement the reforms of the Second Vatican Council.'<sup>248</sup> The hierarchy rather promptly resumed its leading position and began to talk about the need for national renewal, but it had not managed to become an autonomous creator of culture.<sup>249</sup>

One of the hierarchy's first steps was of an administrative character; it called for the establishment of an independent Slovak ecclesiastical province.<sup>250</sup> Historically, this could be seen as a step towards gaining autonomy from the state. However, this step was proposed in cooperation with former members of the association of patriotic clergy, an association openly loyal to the Communist state.<sup>251</sup> The proposal was, in fact, backed by several leading Communists, most notably Gustáv Husák. Whilst for the Catholic hierarchy this was a major step, the lay leaders of the Project of Council Renewal were left unsatisfied. The Catholic laity who had returned from prisons wanted to consistently de-politicise the Church and bring it closer to the nation.

Not only was it the Second Vatican Council which inspired this understanding of the role of the Church amongst lay believers, but their pre-Communist engagement with the pre-Communist Catholic Action, especially its apolitical segment around a movement whose members referred to themselves as *Rodina* Movement also played an important role.<sup>252</sup> The Rodina (English: the Family) Movement was established in the early 1940s by Croatian anti-fascist priest Tomislav Kolakovič (a pseudonym)

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<sup>248</sup> Balík and Hanuš, *Katolícka cirkev v Československu*, pp. 279-84. Pešek and Barnovský, *V Zovretí normalizácie*, pp. 15-21.

<sup>249</sup> Jozef Haľko, 'Cirkev, Mierové hnutie katolíckeho duchovenstva a Dielo koncilovej obnovy v roku 1968,' *Impulz Revue* (2008) accessible online at <http://www.impulzrevue.sk/article.php?300> (last accessed 5 August 2014).

<sup>250</sup> Haľko, 'Cirkev, Mierové hnutie,' <http://www.impulzrevue.sk/article.php?300>, (last accessed 5 August 2014).

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., <http://www.impulzrevue.sk/article.php?300>.

<sup>252</sup> Jozef Jablonický, 'Tomislav Poglajen Kolakovič na Slovensku, 1943-1946,' in Jozef Jablonický, *Fragment of Histórii* (Bratislava, 2009), pp. 284-5.

among Slovak students in Bratislava. The movement functioned until 1950, becoming one of the central groups for the budding underground church.<sup>253</sup> Amidst attempts on the part of the Slovak wartime state to merge Catholicism and state fascism, Kolakovič advocated the need for Catholics to engage more zealously in social justice issues. Following Catholic social teaching and the teachings of Catholic philosophers such as Jacques Maritain, Kolakovič thus sought to follow both the demands of the Gospel as well as to block communist inroads among the lower classes.<sup>254</sup> Accordingly, as Silvester Krčméry, one of leading Rodina members pointed out, the movement was not 'based on traditional structures, such as the clergy or the monastic communities, but rather it would be representative of every social group: youth, adults, lay people, priests, monks, and nuns, and single and married people.'<sup>255</sup> During the early post-war years, Kolakovič and his followers, according to James Felak, kept aloof from politics: they engaged with none of that time leading political parties, the Demokratická Strana (DS, the Democratic Party) and the Communist Party.<sup>256</sup> They maintained this attitude after the Communist take-over, rejecting state control of the Church. In the 1950s alone, at least 35 members of Rodina, including two leading members, Vladimír Jukl and Silvester Krčméry, were sentenced to long prison terms as part of a major Communist clamp-down on Catholic structures.<sup>257</sup> When in the 1960s Jukl and Krčméry were released from prison after having served long sentences, they began to work to revive the understanding of the Church as focused on the society and nation, and autonomous from the state and politics; now in the 1960s, unlike in the 1940s, they could draw inspiration from churches across the region.

The success of the Catholic Church in Poland was the main source of inspiration for the Slovak laity. They saw how the state respected the Catholic Church as a 'moral authority' and allowed the Church to retain its traditional structure, together with a certain liberty and activism of the laity.<sup>258</sup> Earlier, in 1966, Jukl and Krčméry took part at the culmination of the Great Novena in Poland, the national

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<sup>253</sup> Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môct'* pp.

<sup>254</sup> James Ramon Felak, 'The Roman Catholic Church Navigates the New Slovakia, 1945-1948,' in B Berglund and B P Szucs, eds, *Christianity and Modernity in Eastern Europe*, (Budapest and New York, 2010), p. 122.

<sup>255</sup> Silvester Krčméry and Vladimír Jukl, *V Šlapajách Kolakoviča* (Bratislava, 1996), p. 12.

<sup>256</sup> Felak, 'The Roman Catholic Church,' pp. 122-3.

<sup>257</sup> Mikloško, *Nebudete ich moct'*, pp. 69-81.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.; Vladimír Jukl, Interview with the author, 7 January 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.

pilgrimage to the Polish national shrine at Jasna Gora Monastery.<sup>259</sup> Jukl had been friends with Polish Catholics from the officially sanctioned Polish Catholic weekly, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, the intellectual powerhouse of a fledgling Polish nationalised culture. In hoping for a similar Catholic nationalised culture in Slovakia, Jukl and Krčméry envisioned a unified Church led by a strong hierarchy and supported by an active laity.

These new Catholic leaders were now focused on what they saw as the first necessary step towards broader change of the Church's position in society: to depoliticise the hierarchy, abolish the patriotic clergy, and establish Church structures separate from the state apparatus. Rejecting the anti-Vatican and anti-hierarchical attitude of the Communist party, they sought to abolish peace clergy, restore the leading role of the hierarchy, leave engagement with politics to the laity, and restore loyalty to the papacy. As leading members of the Works of Council Renewal, they sought to incorporate these changes into the Church as soon as possible.<sup>260</sup>

In 1968 they were joined by Bishop Ján Korec, one of the bishops who had been secretly ordained in the late 1950s.<sup>261</sup> Korec immediately supported their initiative and would eventually become the leading figure in the promotion of these changes.<sup>262</sup> It was not until 1968 that underground Catholics gained access to the media. At that time, they abolished the peace and patriotic orientation of the Church and focused on spiritual renewal in keeping with the guidelines of the Second Vatican Council.<sup>263</sup> By the end of 1968, the Church had begun to act as an independent agent of national mobilisation, and in that same year planned another public pilgrimage to Devin celebrating Cyril and Methodius.<sup>264</sup> Other places of mass mobilisation were revived, including the national pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows in Šaštín.<sup>265</sup> At last, the Church in Czechoslovakia took its own strides along with its fellow Churches in the region.

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<sup>259</sup> 'Gabriel', p. 38.

<sup>260</sup> Haľko, 'Cirkev, Mierové hnutie,' <http://www.impulzrevue.sk/article.php?300>, (last accessed 5 August 2014).

<sup>261</sup> Ján Ch. Korec, *Od barbárskej noci* (Bratislava, 1990), pp. 370-5.

<sup>262</sup> Ján Ch. Korec, Interview with the author, 17 August 2012, Nitra, Slovakia.

<sup>263</sup> Vladimír Jukl, Interview with the author, 7 January 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.

<sup>264</sup> Vladimír Jukl, Interview with the author, 7 January 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.

<sup>265</sup> Letz, *Sedembolestná*, 93-4.

Yet before these changes could fully take root and renew the Church as a creator of nationalised culture, Warsaw Pact armies occupied Slovakia in 1968 effectively thwarting all reformist attempts, including those concerning the Church. The thaw in Czechoslovakia was too short-lived, and the Church policies that were eventually espoused by the post-Prague Spring regime were not democratising enough to enable the Church to establish itself as an independent and integrated agent of national mobilisation.

In 1971 the peace clergy were re-established and the Church returned to its close cooperation with the state. The Project of Council Renewal was abolished, and the Church saw no progress in materializing its social vision, creating an alternative nationalised culture, or moving closer to the laity. In the next decades, the Communist elites supported the creation of a nationalised culture, but in this the Catholic Church was barred from playing a significant role. In the following section, I will describe how and why the post-Prague Spring political elites continued to create a nationalised culture and the position of the Catholic Church in this official project.

### **1.3. Real Socialism and 'National Consciousness'**

Real socialism in its last decades is typically understood by scholars as a mutually beneficial agreement between the society in question and the Communist Party: the society agreed to remain silent in return for increased access to consumer goods.<sup>266</sup> Most specifically, the 1970s have been identified as a time of 'inertia.'

That decade was certainly a time of setback as far as political rights were concerned. After the Prague Spring was crushed by Warsaw Pact tanks, the authoritarian Communists proceeded to build state-socialism, eager to prove the socialist patriotic credentials of Czechoslovakia. This was a process which was characterised not only by demonstrations of loyalty to Marxism-Leninism in both ideology and practice, and loyalty to the USSR and Brezhnevite concept of 'limited sovereignty.'<sup>267</sup> As mentioned, this led to an official halt to attempts to reform the position of the Church: the Project of Council Renewal was dissolved and several of

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<sup>266</sup> See e.g. Paulina Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV, The Culture of Communism after 1968 Prague Spring* (New York, 2010).; J. Marušiak and Norbert Kmeť, eds, *Slovensko a režim normalizacie* (Prešov, 2003), pp. 238-49. Juraj Marušiak, 'The Normalisation Regime and its Impact on Slovak Domestic Policy after 1970,' *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 60. 10(December 2008), 1805-1825.

<sup>267</sup> Robert A. Jones, *The Soviet concept of "limited sovereignty" from Lenin to Gorbachev: the Brezhnev Doctrine* (MacMillan, 1990).

its leading members were forced to leave the public church and were relegated to the underground Church.

The first phase of normalisation brought with it purges within the Communist Party, sending a whole generation of reform Communists underground. In the Czech lands, the better part of those who had been purged from the Party found themselves working menial jobs. However, in Slovakia many nationalist Communists who were involved in the Prague Spring were soon co-opted to help in the creation of a real socialist nationalised culture which would become the source of the official cultural identity—of real socialist national consciousness.

The constitution of the Slovak Socialist Republic as part of the Czechoslovak Socialist Federation was officially presented as the definitive fulfilment of all national ambitions of the Slovaks, as well as the definitive solution of the amiable relationship between the Czechs and Slovaks. According to leading 1970s Slovak historian Miloš Gosiorovský, the wordage of the constitution of the Slovak Socialist Republic removed 'all the remnants of the 19th century struggle for national self-assertion.'<sup>268</sup>

In keeping with the new importance of nationality, 'national consciousness' became an important part of real socialist consciousness. 'The greater the scope of the sources...the greater will be our pride of our national past and present.'<sup>269</sup> 'Historical consciousness' was supposedly informed by the findings of the newest historical research and cultural production maintained by cultural elites, especially historians. Given the centrality of cultural elites to the legitimisation of the normalisation regime/real socialism, construction of 'historical consciousness' became central to building a 'national consciousness.' The aim was to strengthen 'Slovak national consciousness' and proclaim the common state as the culmination of historical movements of emancipation of Slovaks, which were now regarded as the 'progressive' parts of Slovak history.

The role of the official maintenance of this 'historical consciousness' was to make sure that national consciousness as constructed by Communist elites expressed the process of unification of the two nations. The national consciousness acknowledged national distinctiveness but was cast as part of a broader federal consciousness. The

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<sup>268</sup> Miloš Gosiorovský, *Česi a Slováci. Historie Vzájemných vztahů* (Prague, 1979), p. 156.

<sup>269</sup> Eugen Suchoň, in Krajčovič, *Velká Morava v Tisícročí*, missing pagination.

officially declared plan is nicely captured in the following part of a conversation on 'internationalism, patriotism, and nationalism' published in 1978 on the 10th anniversary of the Federation. The participants in this conversation were three leading ideologues, including the editor-in-chief of *Tribuna*, the ideological weekly, who believed that,

The socialist way of life will make progress and will become stabilised. At the same time, the process of unification between the Czech and Slovak nations and nationalities will become consolidated; the Czechoslovak Socialist Federation will further advance toward its goal of full accomplishment. As a result of the complete integration of all aspects of social life, the international relations of the Czech and Slovak nations with the nations of the Soviet Union, neighbouring socialist nations and all other nations of the world socialist system will be further reinforced. The above-mentioned objective processes will be reflected more actively in the conscience, and especially in the national conscience, of the people as our socialist ideology further develops.<sup>270</sup>

The authors of this vision, it seems, did not see any reason to acknowledge that the 'consolidation of unification' of the Czech and Slovak nation(s) may turn out to be a complicated and eventually unsuccessful process, nor did they seem to worry that the cultural elites tasked to safeguard this consolidation through the maintenance of a 'historical consciousness' might engender changes which would emphasize national sovereignty at the expense of unity.

What they did believe was that Socialism would safeguard the proper balance between national and supra-national identities. Building national identity was not considered to have the potential to undermine this essentially civil supra-national project, since, these Communists believed, the historic goal of Slovak nationalism – a sovereign state – was achieved. The fact that post-Prague Spring consolidation removed all right-wing nationalists was enough for the Communists to declare that chauvinist nationalism had disappeared.

During the first five years of 'normalisation,' collective memory or 'historical consciousness' as unity was not questioned – the main goal, during this period, was to remove those Communists who were deemed inappropriate for the new Socialist 'national consciousness.' For the nationalism which had appeared among Communist cultures, the biggest change was that, at least on a rhetorical level, it was brought back into the service of state socialism. Initially, maintaining 'national consciousness'

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<sup>270</sup> *Tribúna*, 30, 27 July 1977, 3. See English language transcript. Proletarian Internationalism and Socialist Patriotism, Czechoslovakia, 19 August 1977, RFE/RL.

within state socialism involved making sure that those phenomena which were deemed regressive were excluded from this project. Crucially, according to Vladimír Mináč, the head of the 'normalised' heritage organisation Matica Slovenská and a leading figure of Slovak normalisation nationalism, pre-Communist Slovak nationalists were 'alien' to the Slovak nation.<sup>271</sup> Post-Prague Spring purges thus applied only to the Prague Spring 'democratic' nationalists. Chauvinist nationalist elites were mostly spared any major sanctions, not to mention purges. The post-Prague Spring regime dealt most harshly with those who went too far in their attempt to revive Slovak nationalised culture and began to seek inspiration in the vestiges of the pro-Nazi wartime Slovak state, or, even worse, got involved with the émigrés from the wartime pro-Nazi regime.<sup>272</sup> The regime also restricted those institutions, such as the Catholic Church, whose very existence was deemed to be a persistent reminder of the war-time Slovak Republic's nationalised culture.

The central characteristics of late Socialist historical and national memory can be illustrated through the key symbol of this socialist historical and 'national consciousness,' the Slovak National Uprising (Slovenské Národné Povstanie, SNP). Central to official memory was the official interpretation of this defining event in the development of Czechoslovak and Slovak statehood: the state was central to official memory and sovereign statehood was considered the central historical achievement of the nation.

The Socialist state also emphasized the centrality of the 'people.' Commemorations of the Slovak National Uprising (1944) became the key event of official memory of late Socialism in Slovakia.<sup>273</sup> In the 1970s, the Communist understanding of the Slovak National Uprising—of a folk-led response as led by the Party-- was stabilised as the centrepiece of official Slovak memory and key historical referent for the current Slovak Socialist Republic. The Slovak National Uprising (SNP) was promoted as central to socialist statehood tradition despite a certain ambiguity in its use—in that during this uprising, no state was brought down or established. The SNP was nonetheless used as a central statehood tradition because it was seen as a moment when Slovaks rejected the fascist state and

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<sup>271</sup> Vladimír Mináč, *Dúchanie do pahrieb* (Bratislava, 1970).

<sup>272</sup> For example Slobodník or Kaliský, Tažký or Ferko See Gil Eyal, *The Origins of Postcommunist Elites (From Prague Spring to the Breakup of Czechoslovakia)* (Minneapolis, 2003), p. 122.

<sup>273</sup> Eyal, *The Origins of Postcommunist Elites*, pp. 124-5.

showed support for the founding of a progressive communist state with the Czech nation.

Andrej Sirácky asserts that 'historical consciousness' meant the fact that 'the Slovak nation had its own republic – in a common Czechoslovak state – that it has its own party and national organs, that it has all the attributes of a developed nation.'<sup>274</sup> The late Socialist official authorities banned those interpretations of the SNP which questioned the exclusive leadership of the Communist Party.<sup>275</sup> It goes without saying that any alternative interpretations of the idea of the development Slovak statehood (the interwar Czechoslovak Republic and the Slovak Republic of 1939-1945) were suppressed by the official authorities. It was also assumed that official collective memory was entirely secular. The main memorial hall of the SNP was conceived as both a museum and as a research institution, emphasising the scientific character of 'historical consciousness.'<sup>276</sup> This focus on the Slovak National Uprising demoted other traditions in addition to alternative sources of Slovak statehood that appeared during Prague Spring among the Communist elites.

With this new statehood tradition beginning in the SNP and culminating in the establishment of the Slovak Socialist Republic, the 9th century chiefdom of Great Moravia, presented as the first state of Czechs and Slovaks and the source of common statehood tradition, seemed to have been pushed into background. Great Moravia was, however, soon re-discovered by the mid-1980s, but not in attempt to reinforce an understanding of Slovak history as part of common Czechoslovak history. Rather, it became an inspiration for the re-definition of Slovak statehood along ethnic lines. Great Moravia remained important to those ethnic nationalists who had associated themselves with the new Slovak socialist state but who wanted to give even greater space to Slovak ethnogenesis in the official national narrative. These nationalists held leading positions in major cultural institutions. By the early 1980s, they had become involved in attempts to strengthen Slovak national identity through the strengthening of Slovak autonomy. The rise of these nationalists in the 1980s was, however, by no means linear.

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<sup>274</sup> Sirácky, 'Národná hrdosť a historické vedomie,' 1,6.

<sup>275</sup> See e.g. Jozef Jablonický, *Glosy o historiografii SNP: zneužívanie a falšovanie dejín SNP* (Bratislava, 1994).

<sup>276</sup> Barbara Lášticová and Andrej Findor, 'From Regime Legitimation to Plurality of History? Europeanisation in a Slovak Museum', in B Tornquist-Plewa and Krzysztof Stala (eds.), *Cultural Transformations After Communism* (Lund, 2011), pp. 163-80.

Czech and Slovak historians, writing from a post-Socialist perspective, describe normalisation as a period of growing distance between the Czech and Slovak nations, as well as between Slovaks and Hungarians.<sup>277</sup> These scholars maintain that communist elites are responsible for tensions between these groups. The major reason lies in the fact that the Communists had institutionally disabled the Federation during the 1970s, and thus facilitated the alienation of Czechs and Slovaks from the idea of common Czechoslovak statehood, laying the groundwork for the break-up of the Federation in 1993. The focus on the institutional side of politics may be the reason why they have so far missed an important piece of the puzzle: the nationalisation of culture and, to some extent, politics as well. In Czechoslovakia as well as in other multi-national countries in the region, the nationalisation of culture and politics became an important facet of late Socialism. As Ronald Suny has pointed out with reference to Soviet republics, the republics had become nation-states in nearly every way except the possession of genuine sovereignty.<sup>278</sup> This, however, did not prevent their political and cultural elites from creating a powerful nationalised culture. Slovakia had officially been declared sovereign. Slovak (and Czech) sovereignty had also been declared but left unrealised, since the 'sovereign' state did not yet possess a constitution. Slovakia, like the Soviet and Yugoslav Republics, had its own Academy of Science, universities, museums, newspapers, theatre companies, and Communist Party. As Adrienne L. Edgar notes, they even had a 'legions of scholars dedicated to studying their own culture and history.'<sup>279</sup> By the end of the 1970s, further construction of a nationalised culture through nationalisation of historical narratives began to appear on a greater scale.. This shift would influence the emergence of other non-communist nationalised cultures, including, in powerful ways, the Catholic one.

By the late 1970s, socialist national consciousness in Slovakia began to turn into a space from which demands for greater appreciation of Slovak cultural and ethnic distinctiveness emerged. In the span of a few short years, Slovak cultural elites had begun to work to place Slovak ethnogenesis at the centre of official historical memory. The General Secretary of the Communist Party and President

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<sup>277</sup> Rýchlik, *Česi a Slováci*, pp. 545-53; Dušan Kováč, *Slováci, Česi, Dejiny* (Bratislava, 1997), pp. 92-94.; --, *Dejiny Slovenska* (Prague, 1998).

<sup>278</sup> Ronald G. Suny in *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, 1993), pp. 111-12.

<sup>279</sup> Edgar, 'Nation-making,' p. 530.

Husák was not directly involved in this nationalisation, but it was widely known that the Minister of Culture, Miroslav Válek, supported the construction of a nationalised Slovak culture thanks to the support of the General Secretary. The heritage organisation *Matica Slovenská*, in particular, played an important role in promoting the ethnic distinctiveness of the Slovak nation. Nationalisation of state socialist culture and politics was already visible in the 1970s. By the late 1970s, the first attempts to promote the Slovak language as the exclusive language of education on Slovak territory appeared. From the late 1970s on, laws curbing the language rights of the Hungarian minority emerged (which, for official authorities, conveniently overlapped with the containment of Hungarian dissent which mobilised beyond requests for broader cultural rights).<sup>280</sup> Soon the late socialist scholars began to give the idea of Slovak statehood a firmer 'ethnic base' and placed such an understanding at the core of the 'historical consciousness' they wanted to see launched.

Towards the end of the 1970s, historical national narrative was increasingly redefined in ethnic terms. This became apparent especially amidst changing understandings of 'historical consciousness.' Rather than a clear and fixed historical legitimisation of the current federal state, 'historical consciousness' was now being re-defined by leading cultural elites (medieval historians among them playing a major role) as the 'most mobile part of socialist consciousness,' 'a part of active societal motion,' a part of everyday reflection of 'where we come from and where we are going,' 'connecting every individual to current political tasks.'<sup>281</sup> According to leading medieval historian Ján Dekan, the nation was 'a historically developing societal organism.' The 'integrative basis' of 'historical consciousness' was, in his view, 'ethno-linguistic identity'. 'Historical consciousness' was a consciousness of 'historical, as well as ideological, continuity or discontinuity' of national development, which relied on this 'ethno-linguistic identity.'<sup>282</sup> By the early 1980s, the first studies began to emerge which sought to emphasize the self-sufficient, stand-alone

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<sup>280</sup> For an account of the situation of the Hungarian minority during 'normalisation' see Juraj Marušiak, 'Maďarská menšina v slovenskej politike v rokoch normalizácie,' in Marušiak and Kmet' (eds.), *Slovensko a režim normalizácie*, pp. 238-49. Marušiak, 'The Normalisation Regime,' 1815-17. 1817-8.

<sup>281</sup> Matúš Kučera, 'O nevšednej publikácii, Historické a spoločenské vedomie,' *Nové Slovo*, 11 June 1981, 8.

<sup>282</sup> Ján Dekan, 'Úvodom,' in M. Kučera, *Postavy veľkomoravskej histórie* (Osveta, 1986), p. 5.

character of the Slovak nation in terms of statehood. The return of the history of Great Moravia was an important part of this process.<sup>283</sup>

This emphasis on ethnic and linguistic identity was increasingly translated into the construction of national narrative, and with it, the understanding of the historical development of the idea of Slovak statehood began to change. Slovak historians began to promote the role of Great Moravia in the development of Slovak statehood. They also began to emphasize that Great Moravia had greater importance for the Slovaks than it could ever have for the Czechs or Moravians, because 'only the Slovaks maintained their specific national identity' within this early medieval state.<sup>284</sup> Historical figures, events, and developments which, according to these nationalist elites, enhanced ethnic distinctiveness were progressive and could be integrated into official socialist 'historical consciousness.' The Slovak nation and statehood were thus increasingly understood in ethnic terms.

In the mid-1980s, these nationalists made the first attempts at defining the historical development of the Slovak nation and statehood as independent from the development of the Czech nation and Czechoslovak statehood. Slovak historians began to claim that the Slovaks were the first state-bearing nation in the area and that the origins of Slovak statehood could be found in the Nitra chiefdom, which predated Great Moravia.<sup>285</sup> In 1986, a highly popular history book by Matúš Kučera, *The Figures of Great Moravian History*, sought to cast the rulers and chiefs of tribes inhabiting current Slovak territory in the medieval era as predecessors to the current Slovak political elites. The most prominent role was given to Prince Pribina of Nitra chiefdom. Disregarding other documented rulers of Great Moravia, he turned his attention to Svätopluk, who was in the eyes of this esteemed historian, the only Great Moravian ruler of Slovak origin.<sup>286</sup> These views became best visible in the preparation of the first 'national historical drama film' produced by nationalist Slovak cultural elites. The film presented the history of the Slovak nation and the

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<sup>283</sup> Matúš Kučera, 'O nevšednej publikácii, Historické a spoločenské vedomie,' *Nove Slovo*, 11 June 1981, 8.

<sup>284</sup> Kučera, 'O nevšednej publikácii,' 8.

<sup>285</sup> Matúš Kučera, 'Veľká Morava a začiatky našich národných dejín,' *Historický Časopis*, Vol. 33, 2(1985), 163-200.

<sup>286</sup> Matúš Kučera, *Postavy veľkomoravskej histórie* (Osveta, 1986).

development of Slovak statehood as entirely separate from the history of development of Czechoslovak statehood.<sup>287</sup>

Moreover, Slovak historians began to portray these ‘ancestors’ as ethnic Slovaks playing a central role in the preservation of the idea of Czechoslovak statehood. According to current official history of Czechoslovakia—this legacy was preserved by the first Czech king, Bořivoj, in the Czech Kingdom which had been established in Great Moravia’s neighbourhood, shortly before the disintegration and eventual fall of Great Moravia.<sup>288</sup> Now leading Slovak historians began to reject this part of official history—this, too, translated into the historical/drama film being prepared at this time. The leading Slovak historian sought to portray Svätopluk as playing the central role in securing the historical continuity of the idea of Great Moravian statehood in subsequent state formations on Czechoslovak territory. The aim of this national historical drama film was to strengthen the ‘national pride and ‘historical consciousness’ of the Slovak nation.’<sup>289</sup> Kučera now claimed that the statehood tradition was passed on to the Czech Kingdom by the last Great Moravian ‘king’ Svätopluk. This, according to Kučera, happened several years before the fall of Great Moravia, and at a time when the Czech Kingdom was being established amongst internal turmoil. At this time, argued Kučera, Svätopluk offered help to Bořivoj, and taught him how to rule and maintain order in his kingdom.<sup>290</sup> This new trend was, however, not yet fully public. However, in 1985 this project came out in response to the emergence of a new Catholic nationalism. This official nationalism would play a crucial role in the nationalisation of the Catholic underground community later in that decade, and would lay the groundwork for the emergence of a nationalised public Catholic culture in the 1980s and its maintenance in the 1990s.

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<sup>287</sup> Matúš Kučera, ‘Ideové otázky prípravy trojdielneho filmového projektu z doby Veľkej Moravy,’ Bratislava, 13 February 1986, Personal Collection of Andrej Lettrich, Unfinished Films, Slovak Film Institute, SFÚ, unprocessed materials.

<sup>288</sup> Dušan Treštík, Filmový project Veľká Morava, Jednání v Malých Vozokanech 20. – 21. 2. 1986, Personal Collection of Andrej Lettrich, Unfinished Films, Slovak Film Institute (henceforth SFÚ), unprocessed materials.

<sup>289</sup> Andrej Lettrich, ‘Ideovo-umelecky zamer 4-dielneho filmového projektu Veľka Morava,’ Private Collection of Andrej Lettrich, Unfinished Films, SFÚ, unprocessed materials.; Kučera, ‘Ideové otázky prípravy,’ Unfinished Films, SFÚ, unprocessed materials.

<sup>290</sup> Matúš Kučera, ‘Ideové stanovisko k filmovému projektu Veľká Morava,’ Českolovenská Televizia Bratislava, 6.5. 1985, Unfinished Films, Slovak Television Archives (henceforth STA), unprocessed materials.

As part of the return to the ancient Slovak past, the so-called 'cultural legacies' of Great Moravia gained greater attention among cultural elites. As will be explained later in this chapter, this return would be crucial for the creation of a national Catholic narrative. This concerned especially the mission of Cyril and Methodius to Great Moravia and their subsequent work on the territory.<sup>291</sup> In the ninth century Methodius came, together with his brother Cyril, from the Byzantine Empire to Great Moravia. They brought the Eastern liturgy, translated liturgical books, and invented script (known as Glagolitic), and stood at the beginnings of the local Church organisation. (Methodius also became the first Bishop of Pannonian province.) During the period of the wartime Slovak Republic, Cyril and Methodius played an important part in the official memory of Great Moravia as the first Slovak state. This, however, did not mean an acknowledgement of the role of religion in Slovak history. It is important to keep in mind that socialist 'historical consciousness' was supposed to remain consistently atheist. The official interest in Cyril and Methodius was, of course, not one of interest in the Christianising aspect of the mission, but rather the mission was used to emphasize the advanced development of the Slovak nation and the importance of language for national identity.<sup>292</sup> This new interest in Cyril and Methodius would become apparent in the 1980s, and would play a crucial role in the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture.

### **1.3.1. The Catholic Church and Socialist 'National Consciousness'**

The official support of construction of a nationalist narrative did not mean that the Church would be allowed to return to public construction of at least some parts of its pre-Communist nationalised culture. Rather, since official elites sought to create a 'genuinely socialist' nationalised culture, the role of the Church as a non-Communist creator was restricted. During the first years of 'normalisation' the socialist state brought the Church under its full control; the Church was re-established as a 'patriotic Church' and was not allowed to create a public culture independently of the communist state. Attempts to de-politicise the Church from the time of the Prague Spring were denounced as expressions of 'right-wing reactionary forces.' The 'Project of Council Renewal', which had sought to detach the Church from the state, was

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<sup>291</sup> Adam Hudek, 'Cyrilo-metodská tradícia', in, *Konštantín a Metod, Bratia, ktorí menili svet* (Bratislava, 2011).

<sup>292</sup> See Richard Marsina, *Metodov Boj* (Bratislava, 1985); Rudolf Krajčovič, *Veľká Morava v tisícročí* (Bratislava, 1985).

abolished almost immediately after the beginning of the occupation.<sup>293</sup> In 1971, the Association of Clergy, *Pacem in Terris* (ZKD PiT), an association of clergy loyal to the socialist state and the Church hierarchy, once again found itself breached by state sympathizers and again fully under state control. The public life of the Church hierarchy was confined to participation in the construction of the official real socialist culture and the role of the Church was circumscribed especially where the public construction of a nationalised culture (national and historical collective memory) was concerned. The state continued to tolerate popular devotions but was careful not to let the Church use them as spaces of national mobilisation. This situation began to change at the beginning of the 1980s, and the central role in this change would be played by the papacy. But to understand how important this change was for the Catholic Church, we first need to look in greater detail at the situation of the Catholic Church during the 1970s and the role the Vatican played in this context.

The Vatican played a crucial part in the reconstruction and legitimisation of the 'patriotic' Church after the Prague Spring. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Vatican acknowledged communist governments as legitimate<sup>294</sup> and seemed to have come very close to accepting the Church as imagined by the Communists. The Vatican agreed to name three new bishops (Ján Pásztor, Jozef Feranec, Július Gábris) who were known for their support of the Communist Party. These three Bishops endorsed the post-Prague Spring regime and supported the current political leadership. The Vatican agreed to decrease its support for Slovak Catholic émigrés in Rome especially those who were counted amongst the most consistent critics of the 'patriotic' Church. The Vatican also agreed to circumscribe the role of the underground hierarchy, i.e. the bishops and clergy who were secretly ordained in the 1950s and who now constituted a structure which the official Church (and state) were unable to control fully. The Vatican weakened its contacts with the best known representatives of both groups: Bishop Pavol Hnilica, who had been active in the Rome emigration, was ordered to be silent on the situation of the church in Czechoslovakia, whilst the secretly ordained Bishop Korec was ordered to stop

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<sup>293</sup> Pešek and Barnovský, *V Zovretí normalizácie*, 21.

<sup>294</sup> Luxmoore and Babiuch, *The Vatican and the Red Flag*, pp. 110-153.

secret ordinations.<sup>295</sup> This arrangement of the Church as being close to fully absorbed by the state was, however, challenged by the Vatican itself after the election of Pope John Paul II in 1978.

On a rhetorical level, the Church hierarchy in Slovakia regularly declared its 'socialist patriotism.' The Church leadership publically reiterated its attachment to 'the socialist homeland, a commitment to the revolutionary transformation of society [and] the cause of communism.'<sup>296</sup> The Slovak episcopate also agreed that the current statehood arrangement of the Czechoslovak Socialist Federation was the epitome and fulfilment of all Slovak national aspirations, past and present. Bishop Julius Gábriš, head of the Trnava diocese (the only Archdiocese in Slovakia), became especially supportive of the current system. He was one of the first supporters of the Federation Act (1968); as he claimed, 'every Slovak could have felt [that] those desires, for which many Slovaks have sacrificed in Slovak National Uprising, were fulfilled.'<sup>297</sup> Emphasising the centrality of Slovak National Uprising (SNP), Gábriš also identified with the central place of the SNP in Slovak 'historical consciousness.' According to Gábriš, the only other wish the Catholic Church had was the establishment of an independent Slovak province.<sup>298</sup>

By the mid-1970s, the Catholic Church in Slovakia resembled the Church in Hungary, as far as its role in the legitimisation of the state was concerned. In Hungary, too, the episcopate became an ardent supporter of the communist regime. Yet their position in the official nationalised culture was rather different. Whilst the Church in Czechoslovakia was excluded from official official culture and especially official national memory, the Church in Hungary played an active role in the legitimisation of the current state and construction of narrative.<sup>299</sup> The Church in Hungary was, for example, allowed to stage mass commemorations of Catholic saints who also had a central role in nation-building. For example, the Church

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<sup>295</sup> Hnilica, *Rozhovory s Vnukom; Hnilica biografia; Korec biografia; Cuhra; František X. Halás, Fenomen Vatikán, Idea, dějiny a současnost papežství – Diplomacie Svatého stolce – České země a Vatikán* (Brno, 2004), pp. 611-23.

<sup>296</sup> Stephen White, *Russia's new politics: the management of a postcommunist society*, Fourth edition, (Cambridge, 2004), p. 182.

<sup>297</sup> *Gábrišov rukopis '28. Október – deň slobody'*, undated ARKABÚT, f. Július Gábriš. Quoted in Haľko, *Arcibiskupov zápas*, p. 77.

<sup>298</sup> Haľko, *Arcibiskupov zápas*, pp. 177-94.

<sup>299</sup> Leslie László, 'Religion and nationality in Hungary,' in P. Ramet (ed.), *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics*, (Durham and London, 1989), p. 290-3.

actively participated in the celebrations of the 1000th anniversary of the birth of the first king of Hungary, St. Stephen, the first Christian King and a Catholic saint, held in 1970 in Budapest.<sup>300</sup> Furthermore, the state relied on the structures of the Church in maintaining the Hungarian identity of Hungarians beyond the borders.<sup>301</sup> In the Czech lands and in Slovakia, by contrast, bishops were mere attendees at state-designed commemorations (e.g. anniversaries of the SNP) celebrating events and figures of the official memory of the state. Unlike the Hungarian Church, the Church in Czechoslovakia was thus not a co-creator of nationalised memory. Moreover, Church anniversaries could not be included in official national historical narratives.

The Slovak Church was not afforded an active role in the late Socialist nation-building and creation of a nationalised culture. First, with the official national memory focused as it was on Slovak statehood and dominated by Communists, any alternative participant in the construction of national narrative was by default excluded. The ability to keep the Catholic Church in check was no exercise in state socialist narcissism; rather, it was one of the major proofs that the emergent socialist Slovak nationalism was considered to be the only correct and truly 'progressive' one. Criticism of political clericalism, as exemplified by the wartime Slovak state, became an integral part of the articulation of Slovak socialist patriotism. Socialist patriotism as progressive culture was formed in opposition to 'regressive nationalisms'.<sup>302</sup> Given that the Church was a powerful creator of a nationalised public Catholic culture and had been part of the Slovak Republic, it was imperative to write this Church out of the Slovak national narrative.<sup>303</sup>

What best showcased the position of the Church? An independent Slovak ecclesiastical province was established in 1977 as a result of an agreement between the Czechoslovak state and the Vatican. Such a province had long been one of the central goals of Slovak Catholic nationalists;<sup>304</sup> even during the 19th century, it was, alongside political autonomy, one of the hot button demands in protecting Slovak Catholics from the Magyarising influence of the Church hierarchy. The impetus behind it dated back the Prague Spring when the Slovak hierarchy pushed for it, but

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<sup>300</sup> Lázsló, 'Religion and Nationality in Hungary,' p. 294.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid., pp. 295-6.

<sup>302</sup> Mináč, *Dúchanie do pahrieb*.

<sup>303</sup> Slobodník or Kaliský, Tažký or Ferko see Eyal, *The Origins*, p. 122.

<sup>304</sup> Peter Mulík (ed.), *Úsilie Slovákov o samostatnú cirkevnú provinciu, Zborník referátov z odborného seminára, 20 Rokov samostatnej slovenskej cirkevnej provincie* (Sereď, 1997).

at that time, the proposal did not prove successful owing to the Vatican's reticence in making decisions amidst political instability, but the province was eventually constituted in 1977 as a result of the Vatican's more conciliatory approach to communist governments and late socialist communist nation-building. The establishment of an independent Slovak province, however, did not mean that the state would acknowledge the Church as an institution supporting Slovak sovereignty as such. The Communist apparatus was very vocal in expressing that the establishment of an independent Church organization was not intended to present the Catholic Church as an expression, not to mention a symbol, of Slovak autonomy or national identity and Communist authorities, as will be developed in the next section, did not allow this to be presented as a culmination of historical efforts of Catholic nationalists. They did not allow the Church to use this opportunity to present itself as an integral part of the nation. After 1989, independent Church organisations would be used by these same (by then ex-Communist) elites to claim that the Church had historically supported Slovak independence. However, in the 1980s, an independent ecclesiastical province was presented merely as an expression of state sovereignty and the result of historical development of the Czechoslovak and Slovak statehood.

Public proclamation of the establishment of the province at Trnava Cathedral in 1978 was never once allowed by the official authorities to be depicted as a celebration of the Catholic Church as an integral part of the nation and its history. The event was intended by official authorities to shore up the idea that the Communist Party was the only representative of the nation. The proclamation, however, was not read in all Churches across the province, as would be typically done, but was announced in Trnava, the ecclesiastical centre of Slovakia, during a common weekday mass. The official authorities approved a special guest list which was dominated by members of the *Pacem in Terris* association.

Despite all these efforts to the contrary, an attempt to use this event to present the Church in exactly the opposite light did take place: Bishop Gábriš of Trnava gave a sermon in which he presented the Church as crucial player in the preservation of Slovak national identity and spoke about the role of the Catholic Church in the 'social,

national, and cultural development of Slovaks.<sup>305</sup> The sermon was both an account of the development of Church administration on Slovak territory and at the same time an account of the importance of Catholicism in the historical development of the Slovak nation.<sup>306</sup> The official authorities understood it as a provocation; it marked the first time that Bishop Gábriš, otherwise perfectly observant of the official rules, attempted to read the Church back into national history. The official authorities were, nonetheless, content that there were no other 'provocations' and the service did not have a greater, i.e. 'nationwide', appeal.<sup>307</sup> Although Gábriš' sermon would anticipate his future attempts to present the Church as an integral part of the nation and its history, for now, he was the only one in the Slovak hierarchy to cast the Church as part of national narrative.

For most of the 1970s, the authorities successfully kept the Church away from constructing the official nationalised culture or national narrative and successfully prevented Catholic symbols from taking on national meaning. Perhaps the best illustration of the Church's subordinate position in the construction of the official culture was that at the centre of the Church's public appearances was the annual attendance of the Slovak episcopate at celebrations of the Slovak National Uprising. The Church and its spaces were not part of the official nationalised culture; Catholic Church leaders were merely one of many participants in the broader system. The creation of nationalised culture was the exclusive domain of the Party elites. The absence of Catholicism from official nationalised culture, however, did not mean that the Communist elites completely erased these symbols and memories.

The post-Socialist, largely Catholic historiography typically described the status of the Catholic Church and its symbols in late Socialist nationalised culture and politics as an illustration of the suppression of the Church as an institution.<sup>308</sup> They argue that during the 1970s the Communist elites did not contribute in any way (not even indirectly) to the maintenance of cultural repertoires which could serve to construct a nationalised culture. It is also true that Catholicism was not considered as a source of inspiration in the construction of real socialist culture, and that the late

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<sup>305</sup> Július Gábriš, 'Dôležitý medzník našich cirkevných dejín, ' in *Ročenka 1979* (Trnava, 1979) 38-42.

<sup>306</sup> Haľko, *Arcibiskupov Zápas*, pp. 188-9.

<sup>307</sup> Pešek and Barnovský, *V zovretí normalizácie*, p. 88.

<sup>308</sup> Letz, *Sedembolestná Panna Mária*, pp. 94-9; Macák, *Naša matka Sedembolestná*, pp. 130-47.

Socialist state promoted atheism and Marxism-Leninism as the only moral system.<sup>309</sup> The adherence of the Church to these roles was guarded by the same institutes which promoted atheism. The Institute of Scientific Atheism was chief among them; its role was to make sure that the Church did not step outside of the prescribed zone. Furthermore, the cultural institutions creating and maintaining late Socialist nationalised culture were also to make sure that the Church as such would not assert itself as an autonomous contributor to official nationalised culture, not to mention creator of an alternative national culture.<sup>310</sup> However, segments of nationalist Catholic memories, nationalist Catholic symbols, and sites which before 1948 had been used to create a nationalised public Catholic culture survived either via active preservation by official cultural institutions (this was the case of Cyril and Methodius) or because the official authorities saw them as irrelevant and were not interested in wasting energy in suppressing them (Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows). It was these cultural artefacts that would by the mid-1980s gradually become part of the official nationalised culture. Before exploring how this happened, I will first examine how these artefacts survived the 1970s to emerge in the 1980s.

The survival of these artefacts was safeguarded in at least two ways. First, a number of cultural and research institutions did undertake study of select Catholic figures, especially those Catholics who were deemed to have helped to forge the Slovak national consciousness through promoting the Slovak language and culture and contributing to the development of the Slovak nation as a historical and self-standing nation. These Catholics were studied as national awakeners, and their membership in the Catholic Church was de-emphasized. The official authorities celebrated Anton Bernolák who was the first to standardise the Slovak language. By the mid-1980s, they also celebrated Ján Hollý (1785-1849), the first Slovak poet to write exclusively in Bernolák's standardised language<sup>311</sup> and the first person to declare the Slovak nation as 'self-standing'.<sup>312</sup> He was considered to be part of progressive national history because of his interpretation of the Cyrilomethodian

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<sup>309</sup> M. P. Mčedlov, *Náboženstvo a súčasnosť* (Bratislava, 1984), pp. 191-232.

<sup>310</sup> Matúš Kučera, Interview with the Author, 6 October 2011, Bratislava Slovakia; Juraj Chovan Rehák, Interview with the author, 14 April 2015, Hubová, Slovakia.

<sup>311</sup> Juraj Rehák-Chovan (ed.), *Pamätnica z osláv dvojstého výročia narodenia Jána Hollého* (Martin, 1985).

<sup>312</sup> See e.g. Roman Holec, 'Problémy vzťahu "cirkev-národ-štát" v dlhom 19. Storočí a rok 1918' in P. Švorc, Harbulova, Schwarz (eds.), *Cirkvi a Národy strednej Európy (1800-1950)* (Prešov and Wien, 2008), p. 41.

tradition as a 'tool activating national pride and consciousness.'<sup>313</sup> By the mid-1980s, Holly was celebrated not only on major anniversaries but also annually at festivals and through films, radio programmes, and other media, and became the subject of extensive research.<sup>314</sup> The state also began to build commemorative spaces related to these figures, renovating a number of parish buildings and turning them into memorial halls, such as, for example the Parish Centre of Ján Hollý. Yet, the Catholic Church was not allowed to commemorate these figures at these memorials; rather, commemorations were organised and led by the *Matica*. In short, the Communist state did not regard the Church hierarchy as a legitimate co-creator of the nationalised culture, and instead filled this role unilaterally.

High-ranking members of the Church were excluded from official commemorations of Catholic national awakeners; rather these commemorations were led instead by leading figures of official cultural institutions.<sup>315</sup> Not even the patriotic clergy-- officially loyal to the regime-- were actively involved. Their role was reduced to publishing articles about these national awakeners in *Duchovný pastier*.<sup>316</sup> To be clear, these figures were celebrated not as Catholics, but rather as national emancipators; their Catholicism was of only passing importance. These historical Catholic figures who had supported the idea of the self-standing Slovak nation and Slovak language, were commemorated as exemplary Slovaks. However, the interest in promoting Slovak history as a story of emancipation of the Slovak nation contributed to the preservation of these figures and others like them.

Second, some of the symbols which had been favourites of Catholic nationalists prior to 1948 were once again introduced to public veneration as they were no longer considered mobilising. As chance would have it, this was the case of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, the state seemingly ignoring the fact that during the first Czechoslovak Republic, the National Patroness became an important symbol of the myth of Slovak victimhood, which in turn served to maintain Slovak Catholic nationalism. Yet although the state left the shrine of Our Lady open to pilgrimages, it

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<sup>313</sup> Rudolf Dupkala, Milan Sidor, *Cyrlometodská tradícia v plánoch klerikalizmu* (Bratislava, 1985), pp. 26.

<sup>314</sup> Mišo A. Kováč, 'Ľudové hry v diele Jána Hollého a jeho audiovizuálna konkretizácia,' in Rehák-Chovan, *Pamätnica z osláv dvojstého výročia narodenia Jána Hollého* (Martin, 1985), p. 390.

<sup>315</sup> Rehák-Chovan, *Pamätnica z osláv dvojstého výročia*.

<sup>316</sup> Ján Hollý, 'Cyrlometodiáda (Úryvok z III spevu)', *Duchovný Pastier*, 1985, Ján Hollý, 'Na Slovenský národ', *Duchovný Pastier*, 1985, 147. See also Alojz Martinec, 'Apológie a chvály národa', *Duchovný Pastier*, LXVI/1 (January 1985), 264-5.

did curtail their scope. Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows was neither explicitly encouraged by the official authorities nor fully suppressed by it. I would, however, argue that this attitude toward Catholic popular devotions was also a result of increased interest in popular customs as part of the nationalised culture.

For most of the 1970s and at the beginning of the 1980s, the greatest space was allowed for those parts of Catholic culture which could be classified as part of 'folk culture'. Various Catholic symbols were allowed as part of the socialist state's promotion of the image of the Slovak nation as a 'plebeian nation.' As Vladimír Mináč, head of the heritage organisation *Matica Slovenská* and author of this late Socialist concept of the Slovak nation, described the Slovak nation as 'plebeian' in his 1970 essay— that is, not a 'passive nation without history,' but a 'nation making history through everyday work and folk customs.'<sup>317</sup> According to Mináč, Slovak history was made by common people. 'Even though Slovakia was not considered to have her own history (that is, not in terms of having our own kings, crown, or insignia of power, victorious battles, and peace treaties), we do not have our own feudal history, we still have our own history, predecessors, continuity. The bearers of this continuity are not...Kings and Dukes, but non-history makers, misera plebs contribuens.'<sup>318</sup> One important result of this populist aspect of socialist patriotism was the acceptance of some aspects of 'people's Catholicism.' Pilgrimages were not controlled as strictly as during the 1950s, and Catholic publications could be filled with praise of the practices and customs of the 'common Catholic people.' Catholic patron saints which could be marked as 'people' patrons, i.e. patrons of agriculture, for example, were studied at official cultural institutes.<sup>319</sup> Furthermore, Catholic iconography was studied as a reflection of the consciousness of the 'common people.'<sup>320</sup> In doing so, the state maintained symbols which would in the 1980s begin to play a crucial role in the gradual, mainly bottom-up, revival of nationalised public Catholic culture.

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<sup>317</sup> Mináč, *Dúchanie do pahrieb*, p. 71.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>319</sup> See for example Veronika Géciová-Komorovská, *Ľudový kult svätých patrónov na západnom Slovensku* (Bratislava, 2009), p. 5. Anton Bagin, 'Vývoj zobrazovania svätých a ich znakov,' *Katolícke Noviny* 19 June 1974; Ján Hudák, *Patrocínia na Slovensku, Súpis a historický vývin* (Bratislava, 1984).

<sup>320</sup> Soňa Kovačevičová, 'Ikonoграфия ako prameň štúdia ľudovej kultúry na Slovensku,' *Slovenský národopis*, 18, 3(1970), 421–449.

The late Socialist official authorities maintained some of the central historical figures and symbols of pre-1948 nationalised culture. Some (such as Cyril and Methodius) were maintained as objects of research; others were made increasingly part of the public nationalised culture (Ján Hollý). Still other symbols (Our Lady of Seven Sorrows) persisted simply because the state thought them 'harmless.' In this way, the Communist regime preserved these symbols, even as it imbued them with different meaning. However, the Catholic Church as such was still not allowed to become a co-creator of this nationalised culture. Except for rare exceptions (Bishop Gábriš of the Trnava diocese), the Church hierarchy did not protest against this arrangement.

During the late Socialist era, patriotic priests loyal to state were held up as the ideal Catholics in that they gave primacy to state socialist identity and ethnic identity over Catholic identity. Towards the end of the 1970s the hierarchy seemed to have embraced its role and the space marked out for it by the state. The Catholic Church in Slovakia was a consistent supporter of the socialist state, ready to reject any attempts to question the socialist state's legitimacy, policies, or rhetoric. When in 1977 the human rights movement, Charter 77, demanded that the Czechoslovak state observe its own obligations to the Helsinki Final Act, the Bishops condemned the initiative as an unfair and unpatriotic attack on the socialist state.<sup>321</sup> The Czechoslovak hierarchy did not see these issues as a problematic and they continued to express their support in the 'peace' efforts of the state.<sup>322</sup> They fully respected that the Church as such was not counted as a co-creator of national narrative. At the beginning of the 1980s, this system was, however, unsettled by a rather unusual actor: the pope himself. From the 1980s on, Pope John Paul II would repeatedly criticise the limited role of the Catholic Church in public life and more broadly in nationalised culture.

## **2. John Paul II and New Vision of Nationalised Public Catholic Culture**

John Paul II was the first pope to encourage the involvement of the Churches in the public life of their societies and their nations through the emancipation of Church as

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<sup>321</sup> Pešek and Barnovský, *V zovretí normalizácie*, pp. 86-7.

<sup>322</sup> Every issue of *Duchovný Pastier*, the weekly controlled by *Pacem in Terris*, included reports documenting the various ways in which the Church expressed its support for the state. See e.g. 'Zo života Pacem in Terris,' *Duchovný Pastier*, 10 December 1973, 443. *Společně za mír a život* (Prague, 1983).; *Odkaz Slovenského Národného Povstania* (Trnava, 1974).

part and parcel of nationalised cultures. John Paul II, the first Slav from a communist country to be elected the head of Roman Catholic Church, encouraged Catholics to imagine themselves as an integral part of the individual nations and to become actively involved in the creation of an autonomous nationalised public Catholic culture. Nationalised culture and identity were central to the papal geopolitical vision of a united Christian Europe.<sup>323</sup> His vision was that of a Europe of unified 'Christian nations,' of a Europe in which each nation would understand that the origins of its nations are related to the origins of Christianity on its respective territory. According to the new pope, Eastern European nations needed to re-discover these Christian foundations of their national cultures.<sup>324</sup> The pope called on individual Churches to engage in what was effectively a cultural nationalist project, aimed 'to regenerate the true character of the nation, which is to be manifested in its culture, that is, in its art, thought, and a way of life.'<sup>325</sup> Considered together with the papal documents on human rights and social justice, this call compelled Catholics to what James R. Felak coined 'a Wojtyła paradigm' – a combination of 'patriotism with openness to reconciliation, bridge-building, and cooperation, all concerns fostered by the Catholic Church at least since the Second Vatican Council.'<sup>326</sup> In Eastern Europe, this cultural nationalism was part of broader programme of public engagement in 'moral resistance', which per the pope, ought to address two main objectives: the reawakening of each nation's Christian spirit through culture, and historical awareness and the identification of values and ideas which Christians and non-believers upheld in common.<sup>327</sup> Before I go on to analyse the implications of this new programme of public engagement for the Church in Czechoslovakia, I will first describe the strategies and the objectives of this programme in greater detail, using the example of the Church in Poland.

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<sup>323</sup> This is discussed in e.g. David Willey, *God's Politician: Pope John Paul II, the Catholic Church, and the New World Order* (New York, 1992), pp. 1-25.

<sup>324</sup> Vatican II had brought up a 'right to culture' and about Christianity's 'acculturation' in various contexts. Paul VI saw it as the role of Christians to regenerate culture; John Paul II claimed that this regenerative power of Christianity was inculcated to these nations at their 'national birth' and any national renewal had to start by a return to these roots. In John Paul II's hands 'culture' became a word for identity, history, and spirituality put together – the common good and soul of the nation, in his view – something more decisive than the material power and boundaries he saw as symptoms of modernity.' Luxmoore and Babiuch, *The Vatican and the Red Flag*, p. 215.

<sup>325</sup> See e.g. Hutchinson, 'Cultural nationalism', pp. 75-96.

<sup>326</sup> Felak, 'A Wojtyła Paradigm for Addressing Historically.'

<sup>327</sup> Luxmoore and Babiuch, *The Vatican and the Red Flag*, p. 181.

This new public role for the Catholic Churches was clearly inspired by the pope's personal experience of and engagement in the Catholic Church in Poland, which had by early 1980s been functioning as an independent and leading creator of nationalised culture in Poland. What is more, this position of the Church was fully accepted and revered by various segments of Polish society, including the traditionally anti-clerical Polish Left. This was in part a result of the fact that despite persecution, public suppression, and isolation in the 1950s and in the 1960s, the Church managed to establish itself as a relatively autonomous institution with a strong and unified hierarchy and was thus the only independent institution in the communist Poland.<sup>328</sup>

This new public role was also significantly helped by the Church's cultural nationalism, the central ideology used by the Polish Church to strengthen and legitimise its public role. Demands for greater freedom for the Church and later respect for workers' and human rights were almost always legitimised by a distinctly Catholic nationalist narrative, by evocation of Catholic symbols and by regularly held events (pilgrimages and commemorations).<sup>329</sup> From the late 1950s onwards, the Church, under the leadership of Primate Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, historicized its role as the 'saviour of the nation.' According to Genevieve Zubrzycki, Wyszyński successfully integrated various strands of Polish nationalism: a theology of the nation influenced by the Biblical notion of the chosen people and by nineteenth-century Polish messianism while incorporating the 19th century ethnic definition of the national community.<sup>330</sup> The Church appropriated as its own messianic narrative as invented by the 19th century Polish nationalists (after the partition of Poland) and represented itself as both a victim of the communist system and a timeless heroic defender of the nation...against an illegitimate, foreign, and colonialist party-state.<sup>331</sup> This self-perception was built on a historical national narrative in which ethnicity was equated with religion. In Poland, Marianism became the symbol of the Church's role in the protection of Polish statehood, and this role was firmly anchored in a narrative which began with Baptism of the first Polish Prince Mieszko, the moment which perpetually bound together the Church, Polish nation, and Polish state. Since the late

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<sup>328</sup> Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence*, p. 21.

<sup>329</sup> Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz*, p. 65

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63

<sup>331</sup> Luxmoore and Babiuch, *The Vatican and the Red Flag*, p. 205.

1960s, Catholic popular devotions, most notably those to *Our Lady of Częstochowa*, the Queen of Poland, and to the Martyr St. Stanislaw had been successfully used by the Church to mobilize Catholics for the cause of greater freedom for the Church.<sup>332</sup> Pilgrimages to the shrine at Jasna Góra, dedicated to the Queen of Poland, became central to this nationalised public Catholic culture. In the 1980s these narratives, symbols, and events were ready-made and readily embraced by emerging opposition groups.

The creation of this autonomous nationalised culture prepared the Church to absorb societal discontent and become the site of 'ersatz political pluralism' even without intentionally adopting an activist stance against the Communist regime.<sup>333</sup> When in 1980 Solidarity, the first independent Labour Union, emerged as a powerful mass organisation and demanded bettering of worker's rights, its members almost automatically embraced the cultural nationalism of the Polish Church. The symbol of Our Lady of Częstochowa was 'skillfully employed by the Church hierarchy and adopted by Poles as a central symbol in the Solidarity strikes.'<sup>334</sup> By the 1980s, the Catholic Church was widely acknowledged as the only institution entitled to represent the Polish nation.<sup>335</sup> It was this public culture which the Catholic hierarchy used in turn in its defense of not only the rights of the Church, but human rights also more broadly. After Solidarity was driven underground and martial law was imposed in 1981, the Church continued to employ its nationalised culture in defence of personal and national freedom.

This creation of the autonomous nationalised public Catholic culture and its employment in defence of the Church was personally experienced and advanced by the Cardinal of Krakow, Karol Wojtyła. After he was elected pope in 1978, he continued to promote this understanding of a nationalised public Catholic culture. , The place where 'we have always been free' is what he said of *Jasna Góra*, the central pilgrimage site in Poland dedicated to the National Patroness, Mary the

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<sup>332</sup> Jose Casanova, 'Civil Society and Religion: Retrospective Reflections on Catholicism and Prospective Reflections on Islam', *Social Research* 4(Winter 2001), 1047.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19

<sup>334</sup> Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence*, pp. 18-21; Laba, *The Roots of Solidarity*, pp. 133-4.

<sup>335</sup> Zubrzycki, *Crosses of Auschwitz*, pp. 71-6

Queen of Poland during his 1983 visit there.<sup>336</sup> In talking about freedom, he made it clear that he did not mean simply individual freedom but also 'freedom of the nation, of the free fatherland which has recovered the dignity of a sovereign state.'<sup>337</sup> As the pope specified, 'Freedom is given to man as a measure of his dignity and to the nation as a measure of the dignity of that which claims to embody it-the state- and which cannot do it effectively unless it is sovereign.'<sup>338</sup> As the head of the Catholic Church, the pope could now encourage Catholic Churches across the region to follow in the footsteps of the Polish Church, to become an independent creator of nationalised public Catholic cultures and to employ these cultures not only in moral renewal of society, but also in defence of human rights. He was of course aware that some Churches in the region were not in position to do so, at least not now in the early 1980s. The Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia was a case in point.

The Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia was not able to co-create a nationalised culture, not to mention create a nationalised public Catholic culture on its own. The Church was fully controlled by the state, which had not only prevented the Church from becoming an autonomous creator of a national culture but which had also showed no interest in engaging the Church in the construction of the official nationalised culture. Nonetheless, the mid-1980s saw the first signs that segments of the Church might be able successfully to create a nationalised public Catholic culture. The pope would play an important role in this construction. But before I go on to explain why and how this happened, it is crucial to examine in what ways the papal vision was a challenge to the late Socialist communist elites and their understanding of politics and culture.

The pope challenged the idea that the Communist Party was the only legitimate representative of societies and nations in communist countries and that Communist Parties were the only creators of nationalised culture. The pope also challenged the notion that all public efforts of Churches should focus on the achievement of world peace under the leadership of the Communist party. The pope, of course, did not reject the idea that humanity should strive for peace, but he argued

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<sup>336</sup> Sermon at Jasna Gora, 4 June 1979, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1979/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_hom\\_19790604\\_polonia-jasna-gora.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1979/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19790604_polonia-jasna-gora.html) (last accessed 9 September 2015).

<sup>337</sup> 'Na Jasnej Gorze, tu zawsze byliśmy wolni', homily at Częstochowa, 4 June 1979.

<sup>338</sup> 'Homilia Papieska: Tyś Wielką chlubą naszego narodu', in *Wytrwajcie w miłości i nadziei, Durga Pielgrzymka Jana Pawła II do Ojczyzny*, (Poznań, 1987), p. 102

that peace had to go hand in hand with freedom of conscience and justice, which implied freedom for the public involvement of Catholic Churches.<sup>339</sup> According to Timothy A. Byrnes, the pope effectively imagined the effective end of the concept of 'Eastern Europe.'<sup>340</sup> His vision was of an alternative cultural system, one which would not be based on two alternative ideological systems and confrontation between East and West.

This was, of course, a vision very different from the communist notion of a distinctive Eastern Europe carrying the progressive antifascist legacy under the leadership of the Soviet Union. The papal vision challenged the exclusive right of the state to construct national narrative and the centrality of statehood to this national narrative. The pope imagined the Church as creating nationalised culture in unity with the nation rather than the state. He effectively called on Churches to abandon the socialist patriotic vision of the national Church, both in structural and cultural terms. Indeed, implicit to this call was an image of a strong Church attached to the society, or, in the pope's terms, the nation. Furthermore, for Pope John Paul II the fact that individual Catholics were counted as citizens sharing the same rights as other socialist citizens did not seem to be enough. He called on Catholics to engage in public life as nationally-minded Catholics.

It must, however, be emphasized that in doing so, the pope called on Catholics in Central and Eastern Europe to abandon any lingering attachments to pre-Communist political Catholic nationalism in which Catholics were involved in nation-building that was closely related to the state. They were called on to abandon pre-Communist preoccupation with securing good relations with the state and instead reach out to society. Furthermore, Catholics were encouraged to open up to non-Catholics and to members of neighbouring nations. They were called on to imagine their nations as not in conflict with other nations (in his speeches in Poland, the pope made distinctions between Nazis and Germans, Soviets and Russians), and to advocate for and cooperate in the project of a unified Christian Europe. The pope did not encourage chauvinist nationalism or political nationalism. The central instrument in this quest was supposed to be culture rather than politics. In other words, the pope wanted to put ethnicity into the service of Catholicism.

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<sup>339</sup> Luxmoore and Babiuch, *The Vatican and the Red Flag*, p. 235.

<sup>340</sup> Byrnes, *Transnational Catholicism*, p. 1.

The new pope did not abandon completely the conciliatory approach maintained by the two previous popes and continued to acknowledge the communist governments as legal representatives of the socialist states; the diplomatic negotiations with the Czechoslovak state went on as before. The pope, however, no longer saw these governments as the sole representatives of their nations. He also began to talk about those groups of Catholics which were excluded from the socialist patriotic project as 'true' representatives of the nation.' As he told Vatican-accredited diplomats shortly after his election, the Church 'remained open to every country and regime, in keeping with proven means of diplomacy and negotiation.' However, he suggested that these were not the exclusive-- and what is more, not the 'authentic representatives of nations.' At the meeting with diplomats, the pope recalled spokesmen for 'governments, regimes, and political structures' but he also spoke about 'authentic representatives of peoples and nations' on the other.<sup>341</sup> Who these authentic representatives were became clear in his new approach to émigrés and underground communities, especially in that he actively sought to involve these groups in the construction of a nationalised culture.

Pope John Paul II would promote these thoughts at different occasions during his numerous visits to European countries. For East European Catholic audiences, the most powerful were John Paul II's visits to Poland in 1979, 1983, and 1987. Some of the goals implicit in the papal vision had already been reached – albeit to different extent – by Catholic Churches across the region. The papal vision had different implications for individual Churches in the 'Catholic' countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, depending on how much they were able to capitalise on the post-Stalinist thaw. For Poland this was a mere description of the current situation. For Croatia, it was an encouragement to engage with other religions and other nations. In Czechoslovakia's case, it meant laying the groundwork – helping the Church hierarchy to become a national authority, to become independent from the state and to turn towards society. The pope effectively sent the message that if they considered the Catholic Church as the central source of their identity, national or otherwise, the socialist patriotic understanding of the Church was discriminating against them as Catholics; seeing as that for the pope, Catholic and national identity

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<sup>341</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano*, 19 October and 15 December, quoted in Luxmoore and Babiuch, *The Vatican and the Red Flag*, p. 208.

were united, the socialist 'discrimination' was also a national discrimination. In other words, according to the pope, they deserved to be part of the nation as Catholics, and not solely as 'Slovaks'; the Church was to be imagined as part of the nation.

For the Church in Czechoslovakia, the most important part of this new papal policy was the support of a hierarchical Church and abolishment of political involvement of clergy. The major blow the Vatican dealt to the Czechoslovak authorities was the issuing of the papal decree *Quidam Episcopi*, according to which the priesthood was incompatible with engagement in organisations openly identifying with political ideologies. This document effectively outlawed Czechoslovakia's *Pacem in Terris* priest association.<sup>342</sup> At the same time the document was intended to enhance the authority of the traditional hierarchy and encourage participation of the laity. John Paul II supported lay movements, especially those which were known for their loyalty to the papacy, as was the case of Slovakia's Lay Apostolate, the leading lay Catholic movement. In fact, this pope had been crucial for the emergence of the Slovak underground Church.<sup>343</sup> The 1983 journey of the Slovak Catholic laity to the pope's visit to Poland – which was vital to the self-confidence of the underground Church – did not happen solely on their own initiative. During his 1983 visit to Poland John Paul II 'invited' Vladimír Jukl and Silvester Krčméry to come to Poland.<sup>344</sup> Later, in 1987 these laymen would be invited to the Bishops' Synod held in Rome as representatives of the Slovak laity.<sup>345</sup> The pope not only encouraged Catholics to become involved in the creation of nationalised culture, but he himself engaged personally in creating this culture, in a sense showing these actors how to do it.

The pope also became personally involved in helping these segments of the Church in Czechoslovakia to become active creators of alternative nationalised public Catholic culture. He used various anniversaries to present the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia as an integral part of the nation and its history. In 1984 the pope announced 1985 as the year of St. Methodius, calling on Catholics across the region to celebrate this anniversary under the leadership of their Churches as a central event in their nations' histories. John Paul II proclaimed Cyril and Methodius as co-

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<sup>342</sup> Ramet, 'Christianity and National Heritage Among the Czechs and Slovaks', p. 279; Pešek, Barnovský, *V zovretí normalizácie, Cirkvi na Slovensku 1969-1989*, (Bratislava, 2004)

<sup>343</sup> Jukl, 'Gabriel', pp. 55-6.

<sup>344</sup> Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť*, p. 126.

<sup>345</sup> Pešek, Barnovský, *V zovretí*, p. 180.

patrons of Europe in 1980.<sup>346</sup> In 1985, a special encyclical letter about Cyril and Methodius, entitled *Slavorum Apostoli* (the Apostles of Slavs) followed at his issuance.<sup>347</sup> The pope saw this mission as a Christianising one and as an exemplary case of 'inculturation,' that is, the integration of Christianity with non-Catholic Churches could become creators of nationalised culture.<sup>348</sup> The pope used Cyril and Methodius to show how the Church could be made part of national as well as more broadly European history, how its symbols could be turned into national and supranational symbols. The pope used Cyril and Methodius to mobilise Catholic Churches as active creators of Catholic nationalised culture in their countries.

This anniversary was, of course, especially pertinent to Czechoslovakia, on whose territory Cyril and Methodius began their Christianising mission.<sup>349</sup> The Methodian anniversary, as a celebration of the first Archbishop of Pannonia, was an opportunity to present the hierarchy as the central creators of nationalised public Catholic culture, and to emphasize that this creation should be done in cooperation with Rome. The pope held up the first Archbishop of Pannonia Methodius as an ideal for the Church hierarchy in Czechoslovakia. He spoke of Methodius' assertive Church leadership and 'willingness to suffer for the Church' and to preserve the local Church's unity with Rome.<sup>350</sup> The pope emphasized the role of the papacy in the mission of Cyril and Methodius and in this case of enculturation of Christianity. Pope Hadrian allowed Cyril and Methodius to use the Slavonic language (an early Slavonic language) as a liturgical language. This permission to use Slavonic language, in the pope's view, prepared the ground for building of the individual nations' 'national and cultural identity'.<sup>351</sup> A couple of years before the anniversary, the pope had been sending signals to the Slovak hierarchy to assert themselves as active participants in creation of nationalised culture. In 1982 he sent a letter to Bishop Ján Pásztor of Nitra to celebrate 1,100 years from the establishment of the Nitra diocese, the oldest

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<sup>346</sup> Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, p. 408.

<sup>347</sup> John Paul II, *Slavorum Apostoli*, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_19850602\\_slavorum-apostoli.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_19850602_slavorum-apostoli.html) (last accessed 10 July 2014); Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, p. 523.; See also, Patrick Michel, *Politics and Religion in Eastern Europe* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 156-61.

<sup>348</sup> Llywelyn, *Toward a Catholic Theology*, pp. 159-166.

<sup>349</sup> Agostino Cassaroli, *Třýzeň Trpělivosti, Svatý stolec a komunistické země (1963-1989)* (Prague, 2001), pp. 180-3.

<sup>350</sup> 'Kázeň sv. Otca Jána Pavla II.: "Otcovia viery a učitelia kultúry", ktorú predniesol 14 Februára 1985 v bazilike Sv. Klimenta v Ríme,' in Ján Hnilica, *Svätí Cyril a Metod, Horliví hlásatelia Božieho Slova a verní pastieri cirkvi* (Bratislava, 1990), p.182.

<sup>351</sup> 'Kázeň sv. Otca Jána Pavla II', p. 182.

diocese in Central Europe.<sup>352</sup> At the time, as will be explained in the next paragraph, this papal initiative did not seem to reinforce the role of the hierarchy in the construction of a nationalised culture and enhance the position of the Catholic Church in relation to the official nationalised culture. However, it did mark the first time under Communism that the official Church in Slovakia attempted to imagine the Catholic Church as a part of the national narrative.

The association of priests loyal to the state used the papal initiative to interpret papal thoughts to fit official national narrative, which cast the nationalised culture and its development as a secular phenomenon. In response to the letter, the *Pacem in Terris* association published a collection of materials and essays which did not present the Church as a constitutive element of the nationalised culture. Rather the contributions in the collection talked about Christianity as merely one of the factors contributing to development of secular nationalised culture. Christianity played a role mainly in the development of language.<sup>353</sup> Nonetheless, this was the beginning of a broader involvement of these clergy in the creation of the nationalised culture. This construction would be distinctive in its attachment to state socialism and would not follow the papal call for greater engagement with nations. Nonetheless, as it would turn out during the next several years, the papal initiative would also encourage public mobilisation of the nationalised culture at the grassroots level. Moreover, the creators of official nationalised culture would also, if perhaps not intentionally, contribute to the construction of a nationalised public Catholic culture.

### 3. The Methodian Year

The main event which brought Catholic culture closer to the nationalising public culture and saw a variety of actors involved (directly or indirectly) in establishing the Catholic Church as an integral part of the nation was the year-long commemoration known as the Methodian year.<sup>354</sup> In 1984 Pope John Paul II announced the beginning of the Methodian Year to commemorate the 1100th anniversary of the death of St. Methodius. Although the celebration of this year was intended by the pope as a common celebration of all Slavic nations, he focused especially on Czechoslovakia.

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<sup>352</sup> *Nitra 880-1980, Zborník z príležitosti 1100. Výročia Založenia Nitrianskeho Biskupstva* (Bratislava, 1980).

<sup>353</sup> See e.g. 'K počiatkom Nitrianskeho biskupstva'; 'Pastiersky List biskupov a ordinárov Slovenska,' in *Nitra 880-1980*, 12-19, 42-5.

<sup>354</sup> 'The Methodian Anniversary in Eastern Europe,' *Religion in Communist Lands*, 13 (1985), 261-8.

He planned to pay an official visit to Czechoslovakia to celebrate the ninth-century mission as a 'Christianising' mission.<sup>355</sup> Official authorities in Czechoslovakia reacted by mobilising their ideological, cultural, and academic production (including its nationalising segment) to present a different, 'secular' understanding of Methodius and the whole early medieval period.<sup>356</sup> The papal announcement also activated the Church in Czechoslovakia, both its official and unofficial factions. At the same time, bishop Julius Gábriš of the Trnava diocese was planning the year as preparation for a 'consecration of the nation,' which would be realised on the Methodian anniversary in July 1985.<sup>357</sup> The underground communities also came up with a programme of 'national renewal', which will be described in greater detail in the following pages. All of these initiatives and their authors would from now on play a role in the creation of a nationalised public Catholic culture. Some of them, the official authorities in particular, did not intend to create an alternative culture; however, they nonetheless did contribute to its creation, as will be analysed in the next section. Others, such as the underground community, were not initially interested in questions of the national past, an issue that would be at the core of this newly created culture. In the following section I will seek to analyse the various ways and the extent to which these agents contributed to representing the Church as an integral part of the nation.

These responses to the pope would crucially contribute to constructing the Church as an integral part of the nation and prepare the ground for a rise in the nationalised culture. First, in its response to the papal initiative the state rather unwittingly moved the Church closer to the centre of official national memory. It needs to be noted that this was done at a time when official 'historical consciousness' was becoming increasingly ethnicised. Second, the event saw public emergence of underground Church communities, which began to revive the construct of a 'suffering Catholic nation' through the revival of the Cult of the National Patroness, Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows. Following the initial papal impulse, these first parts of the nationalised culture emerged and evolved during encounters between different

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<sup>355</sup> Jozef Haľko, 'Nemohol som k vám prísť... (O Pokusoch Pozvať Pápeža Jána Pavla II. do komunistického Československa,' *Pamäť národa*, 3(2011), 44-9.

<sup>356</sup> 'Pre Informáciu, Informácia o plnení politicko-organizačných opatrení prijatých v súvislosti s 1100 výročím úmrtia Metoda', 27 June 1985, Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia, Slovak National Archive, (henceforth SNA) 1512/13.; Ondrej Danyi, 'Kriesenie netradicných tradícií,' undated, Institute of Scientific Atheism, Central Archive Slovak Academy of Sciences (henceforth CA SAV), 70/20, 1987.

<sup>357</sup> 'Šastínsky Príhovor Otca Biskupa Gábriša', *Náboženstvo a Súčasnosť*, 5 (1984), 8. LP.

groups: the official authorities, the official state-sponsored Catholic Church and, crucially, the underground Church which emerged in the 1980s.

### 3. 1. Spiritual Cultural Nationalism

The group in Slovakia which attempted to follow the pope most consistently was the underground Catholic community. Before I describe this community in greater detail, I will briefly state how this community reacted to the announcement of the Methodian year. In 1983 this community began preparation of a 'national consecration'<sup>358</sup> to the National Patroness, Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows. This initiative was an attempt to revive the 'national' character of the Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows popular devotion, to turn it from a diocesan pilgrimage to a national pilgrimage, and to elevate a local patron to a National Patroness. They also began to understand the Catholic Church as 'suffering' and the suffering of the Church as 'the suffering of the nation.' These Catholics revived the symbol of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows as well as those national narratives which explained the history of the Slovak nation through the suffering of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, the pre-communist Catholic national narratives in particular. However, their identification with this nationalist Catholic understanding of the Catholic Church was not a result of links with pre-communist Catholicism. Indeed, they started off as a group focused on 'spiritual renewal,' with no special relationship to pre-communist Slovak nationalism. Support of individual and collective spiritual and moral development had been one of the constituting principles of the underground Church. This principle remained central even as the underground Church began to participate in pilgrimages. To better understand how and why this turn toward cultural nationalism took place, here follows a brief overview of the origins of these lay groups and their development in the 1970s.

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<sup>358</sup> Consecration of a nation is the ritualized use of a religious symbol. The ritual of 'national consecration' was a reaction to the creation of nation states and secularisation. Beginning in the 19th century this ritual served as the ultimate confirmation of the supposed bond between the Church and the nation and was typically a reaction to supposedly increased threats to either Catholic faith or "Catholic" nation from the newly secularized state. Most notably, in the aftermath of the French Revolution, the French hierarchy called for consecration of France to the Sacred Heart as a way to strengthen what the hierarchy presented as an ancient alliance between the homeland and religion, severed by the secularism of the Revolutionaries. After the dismemberment of the multinational Habsburg Empire and with the onset of nationalization of Catholic Churches, this ritual was widely practiced as a ritual manifestation of newfound Catholic loyalty to nations in Central Eastern Europe. See. Rémond, *Religion and Society in Modern Europe*, pp. 114-5

The origins of the underground Church date to the late 1940s and 1950, to the period when the Catholic Church in Slovakia was undergoing the harshest persecution by the communist state. The underground Church of the 1940s and 1950s was led by secretly ordained Bishops and clergy.<sup>359</sup> At the time the communist state had incarcerated most members of the Czechoslovak episcopate, and the Vatican decided to ordain these Bishops to make sure that the Church in Czechoslovakia would not be left without a hierarchy. Besides this hierarchy, the laity also played an important role in this underground community, which had been active in the pre-communist Catholic Action.<sup>360</sup> The communist state banned Catholic associations, but many laymen and laywomen continued to meet in secret. Most of them were eventually detained and sentenced to long-term imprisonment. During the 1960s these Catholics were released and assumed leading positions in the reform of the Church during the Prague Spring, focusing especially on de-politicisation of the Church.

With the end of the Prague Spring, these Catholics were forced back to the 'underground', where they focused on expanding the underground Church among the Catholic laity.<sup>361</sup> Silvester Krčméry and Vladimír Jukl, the lay leaders of the underground community, had done this primarily through forging personal relationships with students studying in Bratislava, who after returning to their home towns built up new communities. This entire mobilisation happened clandestinely, outside of the official Church. The Slovak underground Church developed a structure with many different branches or movements that offered Slovak Catholics of all ages and needs various activities and programs for the spiritual development they could not pursue in the official Catholic Church or in the public sphere more generally.<sup>362</sup> The community included the Lay Apostolate, the Fatima Movement, the Movement of Christian Families, the Focolare Movement, the Movement of Christian Youth Associations, as well as clandestinely organised communities of male religious orders (Salesians, Franciscans, Jesuits, etc.) and female religious orders. The

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<sup>359</sup> Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť*, pp. 62-7.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 159-61.

<sup>361</sup> Vladimír Jukl, Interview with the author, 7 January 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.; František Mikloško, interview with the author, 13 July 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia; Ján Čarnogurský, interview with the author, 11 November 2011. Bratislava, Slovakia.

<sup>362</sup> For Rodinné Spoločenstvo (Family Fellowship) see. Milan Hromník, 'Hnutie Kresťanských Rodín na Slovensku,' *Viera a Život*, 3(July 1991), 208-210.

leaders of these movements estimated membership in the 1970s at around 2000 members; by the 1980s this number had grown to 5000, making the underground Church the largest non-communist independent association in the country.<sup>363</sup> By the mid-1970s the growing 'underground Church' organised meetings nationwide and its leaders began to think about public engagement of these communities.<sup>364</sup> After 'minor work' in secret in the 1970s, the goal of the underground Church in the 1980s, according to Jukl, became to 'appeal to the masses.'<sup>365</sup>

Towards the end of the 1970s, as the Catholic Churches in the wider region, particularly in Poland, were increasingly involved with their nations and began to make contacts with the independent associations, it was clear to the underground Catholics in Slovakia that the Czechoslovak state was not going to allow the emergence of alternative public cultures and that the Slovak Church hierarchy was not going to abandon its support for the state in this regard.<sup>366</sup> This became clear after the emergence of Charter 77 in 1977. Encouraged by the fact that the Czechoslovak government had signed the Helsinki Accords, the final act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which among other things stipulated a respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and belief, the Charter 77 movement began to monitor the observance of these rights by the Czechoslovak state and criticise any shortcomings.<sup>367</sup> Inspired by the emergence of Charter 77, the underground Slovak Catholics attempted the first grassroots mobilisation of Catholics, focusing on religious rights. The lay leaders of underground Church communities, Jukl and Krčméry, composed a 'memorandum' criticising the current situation of the churches, especially the strict official control of their public activities and suppression of any activities which were not allowed by the state.<sup>368</sup> In the late 1970s, they began to gather signatures in support of their memorandum.<sup>369</sup> The memorandum turned out

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<sup>363</sup> Vladimír Jukl, Interview with the author, 7 January 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.; František Mikloško, interview with the author, 13 July 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.; Ján Čarnogurský, Interview with the author, 11 November 2011. Bratislava, Slovakia.

<sup>364</sup> Jukl, Interview with the author.

<sup>365</sup> Jukl, Interview with the author.

<sup>366</sup> See Petr Blažek (ed.), *Opozice a odpor proti komunistickému režimu v Československu, 1968-1989* (Praha, 2005).

<sup>367</sup> For full text of the Final Accords see <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/osce/basics/finact75.htm> (last accessed 5 September 2015).

<sup>368</sup> Ján Letz, 'Prenasledovanie Kresťanov na Slovensku', in František Mikloško, Peter Smolik, Gabriela Smolikova (eds.), *Zločiny Komunizmu na Slovensku*, (Prešov, 2001), pp. 267-335.

<sup>369</sup> Jukl, Interview with the author.

to be a failure – some underground Church members rejected it as an ‘unnecessary provocation.’<sup>370</sup> Jukl and Krčméry understood this rejection as a signal that the underground Church was not strong enough to mobilise on its own in public.<sup>371</sup> Not only was the hierarchy unsupportive of independent Catholic mobilisation, but the underground Catholic leaders did not seem to have enough support within their own communities. However, at about the same time another event took place that would have major ramifications in Czechoslovakia and elsewhere: Karol Józef Wojtyła was elected pope – taking the name John Paul II. This election was crucial in encouraging wider segments of the underground Church to get involved in the public life of the official Church and to try to encourage the leaders of the official Church to weaken their links with the state and to support grassroots Catholic mobilisation.

The main impulse for this activation of the underground Church was papal support of the Catholic hierarchy (exemplified especially in *Quidam Episcopi* and letters to the local hierarchy) as central leaders of the Church autonomous from the state on one hand and rejection of the current leading role of *Pacem in Terris* on the other. In the early 1980s, the underground Church leaders sent a letter to members of *Pacem in Terris* and to the Slovak episcopate (undated letter) in which they protested against *Pacem in Terris* (ZKD PiT), complaining that the current level and form of involvement of the Catholic Church in public life in Czechoslovakia was not satisfactory. They condemned the fact that the laity was not allowed to play any role in the public engagement of the Church.<sup>372</sup> Clearly influenced by the pope and his understanding of national history, these laity assumed that since priests had been connected ‘...with their nations and their histories, with the society in which they live...It is therefore legitimate to ask whether their [public] work...addresses the real problems of society in which we live and reflects the responsibility we as Catholics have for its present and future.’<sup>373</sup> They did not protest the *PiT*’s engagement for ‘peace’ or for that matter the ‘building of the socialist system’, but the way this was done, especially the fact that its public involvement reflected the ideology of the ruling Communist Party rather than the current teachings of the Catholic Church.<sup>374</sup> Peace,

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<sup>370</sup> Jukl, Interview with the author.

<sup>371</sup> Šimulčík, *Zápas o nádej*, pp. 76-7.

<sup>372</sup> ‘Dokument č. 6., Združenie katolíckych duchovných Pacem in Terris a katolícki laici’, in Šimulčík, *Združenie katolíckych duchovných*, pp. 93-102., 101-2.

<sup>373</sup> ‘Dokument č. 6.’, p. 94.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

they felt, could not be separated from justice (a respect for human rights), and it was 'fair', according to these Catholics, that in its public life the Church should be free from the state. They also believed that not only *PiT* but also other segments of the Church should be involved in this public life and accordingly in the creation of nationalised culture. They felt that the current level of public engagement of the Catholic hierarchy and *PiT* did not sufficiently reflect 'the needs of the faithful' and more broadly the nation. The Church in their view was supposed to 'bring the Christian spirit into societal thought, morals, laws, and the structure of society.'<sup>375</sup> The papal call for mobilisation of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia during the Methodian year was seen by many of these underground Catholics as a call to engage in the life of the nation and in the creation of a nationalised culture in more active ways.

They responded to the papal announcement of the Methodian year by mobilising in the spaces of the official Church with a programme which may be best defined as an instance of 'spiritual' cultural nationalism. On the day of the national pilgrimage in 1983, a group of pilgrims from the underground Lay Apostolate community distributed a leaflet encouraging pilgrims to see the event as a preparation for a 'national consecration' to Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows in preparation for celebration of the 1100th anniversary of the death of Methodius.<sup>376</sup> These underground Catholics in Slovakia used this consecration in 1983 to reinforce the public position of the official Church and to strengthen its attachment to the papacy and eventually also to the nation. They hoped that the ritual of consecration would be done by Pope John Paul II, during his (planned) visit to Czechoslovakia on the commemoration of the 1100th anniversary of the death of St. Methodius.<sup>377</sup>

The central space for this programme was the national pilgrimage site dedicated to Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows in Šaštín. The authors of the programme used the fact that this pilgrimage site had not been monitored by officials, who, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, saw pilgrimages as harmless in the sense

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<sup>375</sup> Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť*, p. 131.

<sup>376</sup> Consecration, in general, is an act by which a thing is separated from a common and profane to a sacred use, or by which a person or thing is dedicated to the service and worship of God by prayers, rites, and ceremonies. Over centuries Catholics had consecrated buildings, parishes, dioceses and countries to different saints and formulas of devotion and nation was only one of many objects. For further information on consecration see: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04276a.htm>

<sup>377</sup> Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť*, p. 126; 'Pozvanie sv. Otca do Československa,' *Náboženstvo a Súčasnosť* (henceforth NaS), 3(1984), 17-18.

that they did not expect that they could become spaces of wider mobilisation.<sup>378</sup> But their choice of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, of Marian popular devotion, was also determined by the popularity of Marian devotion in the underground community. The first major *samizdat* journal in Slovakia, *Náboženstvo a Súčasnosť*, was devoted to Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows.<sup>379</sup> Marian devotion was central to the spirituality of the leading group in the underground community, the Secular Institute of Fatima (named after the alleged apparition of the Virgin Mary in the Portuguese village of Fatima). These Catholics believed that popular Marian devotion could be effectively used for public mobilisation of Catholics. They also saw Marian devotion as a potentially unifying culture because of its mobilising role throughout Slovak history.<sup>380</sup> However, in their use of this symbol they did not look back to pre-communist political nationalist uses of the symbol of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows. Overall, at this point, their choice of this official National Patroness stemmed from their focus on spirituality rather than on Slovak nationalism. They did not seek to imagine Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows as a symbol of national political autonomy. Rather, the main goal for these underground Catholics was to imagine the Church as being related to the nation. Even though Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows was at the centre of the programme of national consecration, the underground Catholics intended to include other Marian pilgrimage sites as well and to turn these pilgrimages into an integrated system of public mobilisation. It was the ambition of these activists to spread this programme to other pilgrimage sites in Slovakia, such as Marianka, Levoča, Gaboltov, or Staré Hory. Interestingly, except for Šaštín these sites had no special meaning in the history of nationalised culture and Catholic nationalism. The underground community was clearly driven by the desire to gain a mass following rather than mobilise beyond a distinctively Slovak Catholic public culture. The underground Church's use was dissimilar from its pre-communist uses and from its use by pre-communist political nationalists in several other respects.

At this point these new 'underground' Catholics did not associate Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, as the pre-communist nationalists had, with a narrative of Slovak history which saw 'suffering' and oppression by various enemies as being the central state of the Slovak nation. These Catholics protested against the current position of

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<sup>378</sup> Jukl, 'Gabriel,' p. 58.

<sup>379</sup> Šaštínsky Príhovor Otca Biskupa Gábriša', *NaS*, 5 (1984), 8.

<sup>380</sup> Interview with Vladimír Jukl, 7 January 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.

the Church, but at the beginning of their programme they did not associate the communist state, as the Polish Church had done, with historical national 'enemies.' Indeed, even if they talked about pre-communist Catholicism and the interwar construction of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows as the National Patroness, they did not pay attention to interwar Catholic nationalism. *Samizdat* journals reproduced the papal decree from 1927, by which Pope Pius XI elevated the devotional formula of Mary, Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, to the status of National Patroness of the Slovaks,<sup>381</sup> but they did not draw any further parallels between the situation of the Church during the interwar period and now. In short, they did not draw any discursive parallels between secularisation during the interwar period and during communism and between the 'suffering' of the Church and the 'suffering' of the nation, as the pre-communist nationalists had done. This identification with the nation would appear during the Methodian year as a result of their encounter with official cultural nationalism, which defined the Slovak nation and its identity against ethnic others. However, at this point, their main aim was to Catholicize the nation rather than to Slovakize the nation.

These Catholics sought to respond to the pope, but they seemed to have understood his message primarily as a moral one. Central to the national consecration programme was a 'prayer of national consecration,' and the underground Catholics envisioned that this prayer would be created by Slovak Catholics during the Methodian year and then used in ceremonial national consecration. The first draft of the consecratory prayer was published in the major samizdat journal *NaS*. The central idea of the prayer was to encourage moral self-reflection. 'We got into this situation through our own sins, due to our own character flaws...: inclination towards disunity...envy, greed, lack of courage, and servility

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<sup>381</sup> 'At that time the Catholic hierarchy, alarmed by the secularising policies of the interwar state and use of the Czech Reformer Jan Hus as the central figure of official memory, asked the Vatican to acknowledge the Slovak nation's veneration of the Seven Sorrows and proclaim the Seven Sorrows as the National Patroness. The bishops chose the formula for devotion to the *Mater dolorosa*, which emphasizes the suffering of Mary. A cult dating back to pre-reformation Europe, this choice reflected both one of the most persistent Slovak nationalist myths: that of suffering as the basic condition of the Slovak nation. The Vatican, which had only recently interrupted diplomatic ties with the Czechoslovak state in reaction to the government's elevation of Hus, was ready to assign this cult to the Slovak nation as a way of mobilisation against interwar secularisation. See Paces, *Prague Panoramas*, pp. 100-38; However, after the 1920s the situation changed and with the changes of the Second Vatican Council, which brought a more open attitude to other Christian and non-Christian religions, calling Protestantism a 'plague' in an official Church document would be most probably qualified as at best ultra-conservatism. 15. Septembra si pripomenieme dekrét Svätej Stolice o Sedembolestnej' *Výber* 4(1984), 23; 'Sedembolestná', *NaS*, 3(1984), 2-3.

towards those in power.<sup>382</sup> The authors of the prayer encouraged Slovak Catholics to edit the prayer but emphasized that the prayer should address the 'character flaws of the Slovak nation.'<sup>383</sup> At this point, their programme emerged in isolation from official nationalised culture and was pre-occupied with renewal of the structures of the Church and the moral character of the nation. The underground Church assumed that the nation and the Church were unified, but they did not seek to explore their Slovak ethnic identity.

The underground Catholics claimed that they were inspired by the Polish consecratory prayer written by Polish Primate Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński in 1956. The underground Church disagreed with the regime-supported patriotic Church and looked instead to the 'unified' and assertive Polish Church. But unlike the Polish Church these Catholics in Slovakia did not develop a narrative similar to the Polish national Catholic narrative. True, the clerical leader of the secret Church, bishop Korec, presented the Cyrilomethodian mission as the 'baptism of the Slovak nation' but he did not develop this idea any further.<sup>384</sup> Two important events changed this situation and reinforced the ethnic identification of the underground Church. Both came from the 'official sphere.' First, at a 1984 pilgrimage to Šaštín bishop Gábriš gave a sermon which fused the past and the present situation of the Catholic Church with the story of ethno-genesis of the Slovak nation. Second, during the pilgrimage to Velehrad, which was organised by the patriotic Church and official authorities, the official authorities identified the Cyrilomethodian mission as an important part of official historical narrative. In doing so they made the Cyrilomethodian mission a part of the public discourse, which was being increasingly ethnicised, i.e. centred around the question of Slovak ethnogenesis.

### **3.2. Official Catholic Nationalism**

Bishop Július Gábriš of the Trnava diocese planned to use the Methodian year as a preparation for consecration to Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows. The act of consecration would be done on the feast of Cyril and Methodius in July 1985. On 16 September 1984, Gábriš addressed a congregation of more than 50,000 (mainly) young people, describing, as he saw it, the 'vital' role of Marian devotion in the past,

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<sup>382</sup> 'Utielajme sa k patrónke nášho národa, Sedembolestnej', *NaS*, 3(1983), 9.

<sup>383</sup> 'Utielajme sa k patrónke', 9.

<sup>384</sup> (J. Ch Korec), 'Slovensko čo robíš so svojím krstom?', *NaS*, 3(1983), 2-3.

present and future of the Slovak nation.<sup>385</sup> According to the bishop 'Christianity gave birth to our nation...[and] the Marian Cult allowed for happy historical evolution...'<sup>386</sup> Therefore, he told the audience, 'We are a Marian nation!' He then went on to present the fate of the Slovak nation as being closely interrelated with the fate of the Catholic Church. According to Gábriš, Marian devotion grew during times when 'our people were endangered,' whether the 'threat' was the fall of the first common state of Great Moravia, the Tatar or Turkish invasions, the Reformation or Magyarisation. 'Our nation', the bishop claimed, 'survived the harsh times and was saved only because it has relied on Marian devotion.' The bishop also hinted that the Slovak nation was now again endangered. This state of the nation, according to the bishop, was reflected in the increasing popularity of Marian devotion with the Slovak nation.<sup>387</sup> This was not far from the official interpretation, in which the focus was on Marianism as a basis for cooperation between the Latin and Orthodox Churches and which was central for the socialist understanding of cooperation between Christian Churches.<sup>388</sup>

For bishop Gábriš, Slovak distinctiveness had been forged by Christianity, and vice versa, since the very beginning of Slovak history. He claimed that the 'Slovak nation had become the owner of the devotion' since the fall of Great Moravia. This self-perception echoed that of the Polish nation as 'Christ among European nations.' This Slovak claim to main cultural primacy of Slovaks in the region, as presented by Gábriš, was informed primarily by religious identity. This self-perception was constructed against the Hungarians as the main other. Following the myth of Slovak cultural superiority to the Hungarians, perpetuated also in the official nationalist history, Gábriš claimed that the Slovaks converted the Hungarians thanks to Marian devotion. The Hungarians, Gábriš maintained, had not initially had much 'religious sense and religious potential.'<sup>389</sup> He claimed that the Slovak nation was instrumental in the Christianisation of Hungarians and more specifically in the first consecration of

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<sup>385</sup> 'Šastínsky Príhovor Otca Biskupa Gábriša', *Náboženstvo a Súčasnosť*, 5 (1984), 8.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> Anton Bagin, 'Sv. Cyril a Metod a Mariánska úcta,' *Duchovný pastier*, 1(January 1985), 30-2.

<sup>389</sup> 'Šastínsky príhovor', 8.

Hungary to the Virgin Mary by the first Hungarian King, St. Stephen; this was the only way that consecration could be explained.<sup>390</sup>

In some respects, the bishop followed the papal call for hierarchies to engage in the public revival of nationalised culture, but in several important respects, he did not follow the papal interpretation of national histories. For example, Gábriš did not give any special role to the Vatican in this narrative, as emphasized by John Paul II. Nor did he place the Slovak nation within the broader programme of European unification, the key motivation behind the papal interpretation. The sermon was nonetheless popular even among the underground Catholics, who strongly pushed for loyalty to the papacy in the Church.<sup>391</sup> This sermon was embraced by these Slovak Catholics as the authentic history of the Slovak nation and became central to their understanding of the current situation of the Slovak Church, for their construction of national Catholic narrative, and ultimately for their creation of a nationalised public Catholic culture. For underground Catholics this was the first time the Church had been placed into the broader narrative of Slovak history. From this point on these Catholics began to reproduce this national Catholic narrative as an important part of their involvement with the official nationalised culture.<sup>392</sup> This identification of underground Catholics of the Catholic Church with the Slovak nation through suffering was unwittingly supported by the official authorities.

### **3.3. Methodius as Part of Official 'Historical Consciousness'**

The reaction of Czechoslovak official authorities to the Methodian anniversary revealed that they were not willing to allow the Catholic Church to become an independent co-creator of an official nationalised culture, not to mention present an alternative understanding of the nationalised culture. The official authorities reacted to this activation of Catholics in Slovakia by placing the Cyrilomethodian past into

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<sup>390</sup> [Mikloško], 'Cesta národa s jeho patrónkou', 2.

<sup>391</sup> Július Brocka, interview with the author, 13 July 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.; Vladimír Jukl, Interview with the author, 7 January 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.; František Mikloško, interview with the author, 13 July 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.; Pavol Abrhan, Interview with the author, 23 July 2010, Nové Zámky, Slovakia.

<sup>392</sup> Korec, 'Slovensko čo robíš', 2-3; 'Mária v dejinách spásy' *Rodinné Spoločenstvo* (henceforth RoS), 4 (1985), 2-6.; 'Cesta národa s jeho Patrónkou', *Náboženstvo a Súčasnosť*, 3 (1985), 2.; 'Sedembolestná', 2-3.; 'Zasvätenie Slovenského národa Panne Márii, Matke Sedembolestnej', 9. 'Mariánska tradícia v našom národe', *Pokoj a Dobro*, 1985(?), 10.

the template provided by their histories of Great Moravia.<sup>393</sup> The official authorities rejected 'faith' as the central element of the Cyrilomethodian legacy and instead located Cyril and Methodius in the narrative of Czechoslovak history which emphasized political development and presented culture as a secular phenomenon. Thus, Cyril and Methodius were placed within the narrative of Great Moravia as the first state of the Czechs and Slovaks and presented as 'harbingers of peace' and authors of the first Slavic script. More generally, official authorities refused the notion that religion could play a central role in the creation of culture in the past or in the present. However, in giving even this much attention to the Catholic Church, they helped it to assume a privileged position within the consistently secular 'historical consciousness.' Indeed, by the mid-1980s Cyril and Methodius did not play any role in official collective memory. As will be developed later in this section, in reaction to the Methodian anniversary the Czechoslovak official authorities began to integrate the 'Cyrilomethodian' tradition into state-socialist official memory officially referred to as 'historical consciousness.'

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia charged the Ministry of Education to instruct teachers to emphasize the official reading of the anniversary; the Czechoslovak and Slovak Academies of Science were charged to organize a conference and an exhibition on the beginnings of Czechoslovak statehood in Great Moravia; the Section for Propaganda and Agitation secured publication of materials 'unmasking the goals of clericalism,' and major media aired documentaries and discussions presenting the official version.<sup>394</sup> Official authorities decided to co-organise the first public commemoration of Cyril and Methodius together with the Catholic Church, the first such commemoration since 1948,<sup>395</sup> and they also made sure to involve the official Church in these celebrations. First, several Catholic publications related to the topic presented a patriotic Catholic understanding of the celebration of the Methodian anniversary.<sup>396</sup> Bishops and Ordinaries (interim

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<sup>393</sup> 'Pre Informáciu, Informácia o plnení politicko-organizačných opatrení,' 27 June 1985, Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia, SNA, 1512/13.

<sup>394</sup> 'Pre Informáciu, Informácia o plnení politicko-organizačných opatrení,' 27 June 1985, Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia, SNA, 1512/13.

<sup>395</sup> 'Pre Informáciu, Informácia o plnení politicko-organizačných opatrení,' 27 June 1985, Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia, SNA, 1512/13.

<sup>396</sup> Anton Bagin, *Apoštolé Slovanů* (Prague, 1985).

administrators of vacant bishoprics) issued a pastoral letter on the occasion.<sup>397</sup> The topic was also covered in *Pacem in Terris*, the controlled major Catholic paper *Katolícke Noviny* [Catholic News], and *Duchovný Pastier* [Spiritual Sheppard], a journal for priests.<sup>398</sup> The commemoration at Velehrad was being prepared by the socialist state in conjunction with the official Catholic Church, especially from patriotic clergy openly loyal to the state. This event, officially referred to as a 'peace gathering,' was intended to make clear that as far as the nationalised culture was concerned, the Church was subordinated to the socialist state.

Official authorities took great care not to allow the pope to become directly involved in the organisation of a strong public nationalised Catholic event in Czechoslovakia. The pope was not invited to Czechoslovakia. In fact, since the early 1980s all the initiatives of the pope had been presented as part of 'anti-communist imperialism.' With the end of *deténte*, i.e. the end of a period of general easing of geo-political tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, the Czechoslovak state returned to its anti-Western rhetoric and saw any initiatives coming from 'the West' as part of a Western 'anti-communist conspiracy.' The Czechoslovak authorities linked any Western activities, especially those increasing Western pressure on communist authorities to observe basic human rights, as manifestations of Western imperialism and a legacy of Western fascism.<sup>399</sup> Soon after the election of John Paul II, the Communists began to see the Vatican as part of this 'conspiracy'. A 1982 Czechoslovak *Pravda* article condemned John Paul II, together with the Polish Cardinal Wyszyński, as fascists and Nazi collaborators during World War II.<sup>400</sup> By mid-1985, the official authorities saw the émigrés and the underground Church communities in Slovakia as part of this campaign.<sup>401</sup> In their response to the Methodian year, they therefore focused on preventing these new forces from coming into the open and influencing the official Church and more

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<sup>397</sup> Jubilejný rok Metodov, Pastiersky list slovenských biskupov a ordinárov k 1100 výročiu smrti Svätého Metoda,' *Slovenské Hlasy z Ríma*, 10 October 1984, 2-4.

<sup>398</sup> Anton Bagin, 'Otázka Metodovho hrobu,' *Katolícke Noviny*, 31 March 1985, 4.; 'Metodovo prepustenie z väzenia,' *Katolícke noviny*, 14, Veľká Noc 1985, 4. ; 'Arcibiskup Metod,' *Katolícke noviny*, 14 April 1985, 4.; 'Velehrad a cyrilometodská tradícia,' *Katolícke noviny*, 14 April 1985, 3.; 'Sv. Metod organizuje cirkevnú správu,' *Katolícke noviny*, 5 May 1985, 4.

<sup>399</sup> 'Proti duchu záverečného aktu,' *Nové Slovo*, 17 February 1977, 2.

<sup>400</sup> Ladislav Nižňanský, 'Slovak daily attacks Pope, Links Wyszyński with Fascism,' *RFE/RL*, 12 October 1982; See also Ladislav Nižňanský, 'Another Attack on the Vatican and the Pope, 17 August 1982,' *RFE/RL Background Report*, 17 August 1982.

<sup>401</sup> 'Pre Informáciu, Informácia o plnení politicko-organizačných opatrení,' 27 June 1985, Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia, SNA, 1512/13.

broadly the public culture in Czechoslovakia. In doing so, they rejected the papal self-presentation of such initiatives as purely cultural – they insisted that his understanding of religion was not progressive, that it was deeply political and directed against communist countries.

Official authorities sought to present Cyril and Methodius as part of the secular national narrative. For the Czechoslovak state, the main event from the medieval past was the establishment of Great Moravia, now considered to be the first common state of the Czechs and Slovaks and a predecessor of the current federation. During the Methodian anniversary, official authorities sought to ‘purify’ the Cyrilomethodian tradition ‘from pseudo-historical and un-scientific sediments, prominent among which were’ according to the official authorities ‘clerical misinterpretations.’<sup>402</sup> As a guidebook published for Socialist Academy instructors stated, ‘the clerical recourse to Cyrilomethodian traditions are too often connected with open or hidden provocations against the socialist state, misinterpreting laws and constitutional principles in the matter of its relation to Churches and religious people.’<sup>403</sup> On the pages of the leading cultural-political monthly *Nové Slovo*, widely considered as the platform where the views of General Secretary Gustáv Husák were presented, the task was defined more positively as an attempt to ‘organically integrate this anniversary into the history of cultural-political and statehood-making efforts of the predecessors of our nations.’<sup>404</sup> It was fitting that in August 1984, shortly after the commencement of the Methodian year, the Czechoslovak state celebrated the 40th anniversary of the anti-fascist Slovak National Uprising, the key event of late socialist public Slovak ‘historical consciousness’ and national consciousness.<sup>405</sup>

During the Methodian year Cyril and Methodius began to be integrated into an increasingly Slovakized understanding of the past. The Methodian year saw the first public emergence of a nationalising trend within the field of ‘historical consciousness’ in Czechoslovakia.<sup>406</sup> This was also the first time that these cultural elites attempted

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<sup>402</sup> Dupkala, Sidor, *Cyrlometodská tradícia*, p. 4.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>404</sup> Jozef Vladár, ‘Veľká Morava: tradície a súčasnosť,’ *Nové Slovo*, 19 December 1985, 6-7.

<sup>405</sup> Viliam Plevza, Jozef Bob, *Povstalecká história* (Bratislava, 1985).

<sup>406</sup> Jozef Poulík, ‘Predslov’, in J. Poulík, Bohuslav Chropovský, eds., *Veľká Morava a Počátky československé štátnosti* (Prague and Bratislava, 1985); Matúš Kučera, ‘Veľká Morava a slovenské dejiny’ in J. Poulík, Bohuslav Chropovský (eds.), *Veľká Morava a Počátky československé štátnosti* (Prague and Bratislava, 1985); Kučera, *Postavy Velkomoravskej Historie*.

to integrate Cyril and Methodius into a narrative of the development of Slovak statehood and of Slovak ethnogenesis. The increasingly nationalist Slovak cultural elites used the opportunity to make their current understanding of Slovak national consciousness and culture public. Michal Pullmann's observation about the dynamic within the field of authoritative discourse during late socialism also seems valid for 'historical consciousness' in Czechoslovakia. If people used ideological terminology (the ideology of 'developed' or 'real' socialism) to support their views and thus publically confirmed 'their adherence to the ideals of a happy and de-politicised society, then they could count on gaining a new space for realisation of various (non-conformist even) needs and interests.'<sup>407</sup> Cyril and Methodius thus remained secular in the interpretation of most Slovak nationalist cultural elites.<sup>408</sup> However, some Slovak cultural elites went even further, explicitly integrating 'Christianisation' into the official narrative of Slovak ethnogenesis.

The first official press organ to emphasize the Christianising aspect of the mission as part of public history was the major weekly *Nové Slovo*.<sup>409</sup> This understanding of Cyril and Methodius was, in fact, promoted by Husák's 'court historian'<sup>410</sup> Vladimír Plevza, the head of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism. Plevza was the first leading official figure to claim that Cyril and Methodius contributed to the construction of culture not only in terms of development of secular culture but also in initiating the 'great work of Christianisation' on Czechoslovak territory. In a similar vein, Marián Skladaný, a leading philosopher, historian, and author at *Nové Slovo*, maintained that '---it cannot be claimed that the importance [of the mission of Cyril and Methodius] was reserved to education and a cultural-political mission...that Christianisation was not the central aspect of their mission...that the brothers of Salonika did not bring to Great Moravia 'Scripture' but first of all [only] 'script.' Such a claim is ahistorical...it conflates the meaning of the historical event with its historical interpretation.'<sup>411</sup> Similarly, leading archaeologist Jozef Vladár argued that those research results which clearly show the importance of the Christianising aspect of the

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<sup>407</sup> Michal Pullmann, *Konec Experimentu, Přestavba a pád komunismu v Československu* (Prague 2011), p. 21.

<sup>408</sup> Kružliak, *Cyrlometodská tradícia*, pp. 196-197.

<sup>409</sup> Vladár, 'Veľká Morava', 7.; 'Jubilejný rok Metodov,' 2-4.

<sup>410</sup> Jozef Jablonický, 'Predsudky a mystifikácie na pokračovanie,' in Jozef Jablonický, *Fragment of histórii* (Bratislava, 2009), pp. 89-91.

<sup>411</sup> Marián Skladaný, 'Nad jedným výročím, *Nové Slovo*, 28 August 1985, 12.; Quote from Milan Sidor and Rudolf Dupkala, *Zakladatelia slovanskej vzdelanosti, Nedel'a, Príloha Nového Slova, Nové Slovo*, 28 February 1985, 23.

Cyrilomethodian mission should be taken into account in construction of the official narrative.<sup>412</sup> As they emphasized, the Cyrilomethodian mission needed to be understood in the broader context of Slovak ethnogenesis and development of Slovak statehood. Later that year, *Matica Slovenská* published texts which made direct links between religion and national emancipation. Among others, the collection included the founding memorandum of *Matica*, which read (and was quoted in samizdat), 'to the nation which by the acceptance and spread of Christianity 1000 years ago had come into existence.'<sup>413</sup> In post-socialist Slovakia these ideas about Slovak culture would play a crucial role in the mobilisation of nationalised public Catholic culture in support of Slovak political autonomy. Going back to the mid-1980s, this change in official 'historical consciousness' was noticed by underground Catholics who had just begun to get involved in construction of a nationalised culture. As will be explored in the next section, for these Catholics this was another opportunity to understand Catholic symbols as part of national history and in relation to Slovak ethnogenesis and the development of Slovak statehood.

### **3.4. The Making of a 'Suffering' Catholic Nation**

By the mid-1980s, many underground Catholics were beginning to understand their own mobilisation as part of a new nationwide religious movement in which the Church was a creator of a new nationalised public Catholic culture. On one hand, this was a product of the authoritative rejection of the 'patriotic Church' by the pope, which had convinced many to question the official narratives that had dominated the official culture since the Prague Spring. On the other hand, it was the product of a mass Catholic revival which had also been promoted by the socialist state to renew the nationalised public Catholic identity of Catholics on official patriotic terms. However, quite contrary to the official plans, this authorized construction of national identity created space for new oppositional discourses around nation and Church to emerge, which were to lead to confrontation with the socialist state.

As I will elaborate in the following pages, the officially organised commemoration at Velehrad in particular was experienced as a confrontation between the Catholic Church and the communist state, and the very fact that

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<sup>412</sup> Vladár, 'Velká Morava', 7.

<sup>413</sup> A.S. Radoslav, 'Ešte k žatve Metodovskeho roku', *RoS* 10/5(1986), 18-20.

underground Catholics experienced this anniversary as a face-off between the Catholic and the communist interpretation was because the main event was organised by the state as both a secular *and* a Catholic ritual. In reacting against the state's socialist understanding, which downplayed the religious significance of the event, these Catholics were mobilised by the papal vision of the early medieval past. In effect, the late socialist state prepared the ground for the assertion of the Cyrilomethodian mission as a Catholic symbol. Reaction against state policies was an important part of the Methodian year, but it was also the first time when such protests were allowed to take place. Furthermore, thanks to the involvement of a growing band of religious nationalists, these Catholics began to think not only about Catholic distinctiveness but also about Slovak distinctiveness. Radio Vatican leaked official instructions issued by the Party with the intention to 'limit or minimize the effects of actions realized abroad and by the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia,'<sup>414</sup> a document which energised many to come to Velehrad and encouraged them to see the demonstration as misinterpreting the one 'true' Christian interpretation.<sup>415</sup> The confrontational nature of this exchange was further intensified by the increasingly assertive leader of the Catholic Church in the Czech Lands, Archbishop of Prague Cardinal František Tomášek. Tomášek, who was very much supported by many Czech and Slovak Catholics, sent a letter to *Tribúna* in reaction to an article published by the weekly earlier that year which rejected Christianity (i.e. its non-socialist interpretation) as a positive force in Czechoslovak history. The letter was duly aired by Voice of America.<sup>416</sup>

The commemoration at Velehrad saw the 'first open mass public protest against Church policies.'<sup>417</sup> A group of about 5000 laypersons from Catholic lay fellowships in Slovakia came to the pilgrimage site in Velehrad the day before the main celebration. The Slovak underground Church leaders had arranged for them to be 'invited' by 'young Moravian Catholics' to 'pray for the unity of the Church, for the pope, for bishops...but most of all for the young people of our nations so that we

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<sup>414</sup> 'Vnútorne inštrukcie KSČ,' 3.; See also, 'Otec Petr Kolář v českom vysielaní Vatikánskeho rozhlasu hovorí na tému Manipulovanie dejinami v Československu, boj o pravdu, *Výber*, 3(1985), 5-6.

<sup>415</sup> 'Boli sme na Velehrade,' *RoS*, 5(1985), 5-10. See also Ján Ch. Koreç, 'List biskupa J. Ch. Korca Katolíckym novinám k 40-ročnej činnosti mierového hnutia kňazov,' in Šimulčík, *Združenie*, pp. 103-58., p. 155.

<sup>416</sup> František Tomášek, 'Viedenský pracovník Hlasu Ameriky Ivan Medek nás oboznámi s obsahom listu...', *RoS*, 5(1985).

<sup>417</sup> Ján Letz, 'Prenasledovanie Kresťanov,' p. 326. See also Jaroslav Cuhra, *Československo-vatikánska jednaní, 1968-89* (Prague, 2001), pp. 168-75.; Cassaroli, *Třýzeň Trpělivosti*, pp. 180-3.

would...carry our faith into the third millennium.<sup>418</sup> The underground and the official estimates of the turnout at the commemoration differ. According to official figures, up to 60% of approximately 100,000 pilgrims at Velehrad in 1985 were young people,<sup>419</sup> while the underground Church estimated about 300,000 thousand pilgrims, two-thirds from Slovakia. No matter which of these estimates is closer to the truth, the pilgrimage at Velehrad was the first mass gathering during the normalisation era that was not organised solely by the Communist Party.

During the commemoration a small group began to protest against religious policies, shouting the slogans 'We want Bishops' and 'We want religious freedom.'<sup>420</sup> According to several witnesses, the chants were started by the Czech or Moravian part of the audience, with the Slovaks joining in later.<sup>421</sup> Jukl stated that the original intention of the underground Church's leadership was to manifest 'faith and fidelity to the pope'<sup>422</sup> by the large attendance and a programme of prayer, meditation, and singing, and thus the open demonstrations for religious freedom started by young members was a 'pleasant surprise' to the older leaders of the underground Church.<sup>423</sup> As mentioned, Slovak Catholics had already mobilised before Velehrad at pilgrimages to Levoča, Gaboltov, and Šaštín as part of the Slovak programme of national consecration in preparation for the Methodian year.<sup>424</sup> Pilgrimages in 1984 had already seen demonstrations of discontent with the current religious policies. Yet the discontent at these pilgrimages was shown in a less manifest way, and dignitaries who professed greater loyalty to the current pope (such as Gábriš) were given long-lasting applause after their sermons.<sup>425</sup> Velehrad was understood by underground Church members as the beginning of a re-assertion of the Church as imagined by the pope, as an assertion of the Church as a creator of an autonomous nationalised public Catholic culture.

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<sup>418</sup> 'Naši mladí bratia a sestry zo Slovenska a Čiech', *Výber*, 3(1985), missing pagination.

<sup>419</sup> 'Pre Informáciu: Informácia o zhromaždení na Velehrade dňa 7 Júla 1985 a Mariánskej púti v Levoči 6.-7. Júla 1985,' 15 July 1985, Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia, SNA, 1541/Sz.

<sup>420</sup> 'Boli sme na Velehrade', *NaS*, 5(1985), 5-11.

<sup>421</sup> 'Šaštín 1985', *NaS*, 4(1985), 24-27, See also Interview with František Mikloško, Interview with Pavol Abrhan, Interview with Vladimír and Maria Durikovičovi, Interview with Julius Brocka,

<sup>422</sup> Jukl, 'Gabriel', p. 61

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.* p. 61.

<sup>424</sup> 'Velehrad 1985', *NaS*, 3(1985), 18-21

<sup>425</sup> Mikloško, interview with the author, Abrhan, interview with the author, Durikovičovi, interview with the author, Brocka interview with the author.

Several samizdat journals in Slovakia published an article by Czech Catholic dissident and signatory of Charter 77 Václav Benda, who wrote that Velehrad was a signal that 'next time we will attack and...[they] (the party) will have to retreat.'<sup>426</sup> The participation at the Velehrad pilgrimage was understood to be 'proof that the Cyrilomethodian legacy lives on and wants to be active in the formation of nations which have a 'Slavic soul' and feel a responsibility to contribute to today's civilisation and culture.'<sup>427</sup> These Catholics clearly understood Cyril and Methodius as part of a newly emerging nationalised public Catholic culture. Following the pope, they thus understood this culture as being interrelated with religion. The samizdat reporter saw the event as a demonstration that 'a new generation has come of age...the number of witnesses who take their faith seriously and are not afraid to step out from...anonymity is growing.' According to this report, 'Velehrad was proof that young people are coming to realise that...the 1100 years old legacy of faith is the greatest gift which our nations could ever get and which needs to be defended, maintained, and passed on to the next generation.'<sup>428</sup>

Furthermore, from this time on, pilgrimages in Slovakia became a space where the insufficient involvement of the Church in the creation of nationalised culture and, relatedly, its incomplete nature was recalled repeatedly. At the same time this situation was understood within the broader context of Slovak history. The pilgrimages, the ways in which they were re-constructed in the Catholic samizdat related to this topic, made these expressions of ecclesiastical traditions formative for the underground Church's identity. They were presented as something the papacy, the leading members of the hierarchy, and the engaged underground Catholics, especially the younger generation, stood for, thus helping to forge a unity between the Catholic and the national identity.

These pilgrimages were a regular reminder of the persistence of the 'patriotic Church' being closely related to the state in its construction. Nonetheless, underground Catholics began to turn the pilgrimage site of Šaštín into the first public space where a nationalised public Catholic culture was created independently of the state. This happened at annual pilgrimages on the feast of Our Lady of the Seven

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<sup>426</sup> Václav Benda, 'Ako ďalej po Velehrade?', *NaS*, 2(1986), 2-5.

<sup>427</sup> 'Boli sme na Velehrade', *NaS*, 5(1985), 10.

<sup>428</sup> 'Boli sme na Velehrade', 8.

Sorrows, on 15 September. Underground Catholics started off the pilgrimage programme the night before the main pilgrimage Mass with an all-night event held at the basilica. On the next day they prepared a special programme that continued during the main Mass service. They prayed for ‘the loyalty of Slovak priests to Rome’ and ‘the people to the Holy Father.’<sup>429</sup> The youth also – very symbolically – responded to the official authorities’ resolute ‘no’ to a papal visit in Czechoslovakia. Gathered around the altar they held up portrait of John Paul II with a large letter M for Mary (The Church secretary interpreted this as an M for *Mládež*, or *youth* in Slovak).<sup>430</sup> The papal personal motto *Totus Tuus* was written underneath. The response to this was a long-lasting chant ‘Long live the Holy Father.’ The portrait was held up for almost the whole two days of the national pilgrimage, right in the centre of the national shrine. There were also banners reading ‘Mary will never let us down,’ placing hope in the Catholic patron saint. During the main Mass service at the Šaštín pilgrimage in 1985, youth from underground communities entered the national shrine in procession, carrying Vatican and Marian flags. As Bishop Gábriš entered with the procession, the shrine sounded out with applause and chants ‘Long live Father Bishop,’ but again in conjunction with ‘Long live the holy Father.’<sup>431</sup> In general, all manifestations of Marian devotion were done with a reference to Pope John Paul II, who was not only the most popular, but also the most unifying symbol across the various segments of the Church in Slovakia. The underground Church saw helping to unify the Church in Slovakia under the leadership of the papacy as its mission.<sup>432</sup> Various demonstrations of loyalty to Pope John Paul II and to the Vatican were an important way of protesting against the patriotic vision of Catholic Church laid out in *Pacem in Terris*. The pilgrims chanted only the names of those dignitaries who openly declared loyalty to the pope.<sup>433</sup> The Slovak Papal Anthem was the single most frequent song sung at pilgrimages, and it was always followed by applause.<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>429</sup> ‘Šaštín 1985’, 24-27.

<sup>430</sup> ‘Informácia okresneho cirkevneho tajomnika o puti v Šaštine-Strážoch z 15. Septembra 1985 Church Department, Regional National Committee, State Archive Bratislava (henceforth STA), 5 (1985-1986), 1.; ‘Šaštín 1985’, 25.

<sup>431</sup> Brocka, Brocková, *Kým prišiel November*, pp. 31-3.

<sup>432</sup> ‘Určite Vás niekedy trápi stav našich kňazov...’, *Serafínsky svet*, 3(1984), 6.

<sup>433</sup> Revealing a clear strategy, the written plans of the group from *Nové Zámky* contain “applause” or “chant” instructions. “Applause” was included after the papal anthem, each reference to Pope John Paul II in the main sermon and dignitaries loyal to the pope, such as Cardinal František Tomášek or Bishop Július Gábriš. PCPA, ‘Šaštín ‘85, ‘86, ‘87, ‘89’.

<sup>434</sup> See ‘Velehrad 1985,’ 19.; Gaboltov ‘85’, *NaS*, 3(1985), 19.

At the pilgrimages the underground Church demanded greater institutional freedom for the Church and greater space for Catholics in the public sphere. During all-night programmes they demanded that the state allow ordination of new Bishops for vacant bishoprics (three out of six bishoprics were vacant).<sup>435</sup> They also protested the state's ban on religious orders; there was a group of young secretly ordained Franciscans, who were, according to the state, illegal since the Catholic order had been prohibited to receive novices since the 1950s.<sup>436</sup> Indeed, some of its secret members had even been imprisoned in 1983.<sup>437</sup> This group of Franciscans appeared dressed in their habits in Velehrad and then again in Levoča and Šaštín. Showing their discontent with the priest association *Pacem in Terris*, a group of mothers appeared at the 1984 Šaštín pilgrimage and protested the expulsion of their sons from seminary in Bratislava after they refused to join the priest association *Pacem in Terris*.<sup>438</sup> The Catholics continued to demand that the official authorities allow a visit by John Paul II.<sup>439</sup>

In 1986 a campaign against the abortion code became their important new agenda, alongside the cause of institutional autonomy of the Church. The campaign was presented in terms which clearly showed an increased embeddedness of their cultural nationalism in the ethnic understanding of the nation. These Catholics wrote a letter to the Slovak National Assembly, in which they stated that they saw the proposed abortion code as an 'abolition of legal protection of conceived life' which 'will have a serious effect on societal relations, will lead to an even less responsible attitude to sexual life, will lead to a loss of respect for life...which will in future lead to the moral destruction of our national and state community.'<sup>440</sup> Those who signed the letter were seen as people who 'felt responsible for the future of the nation.'<sup>441</sup> The letter was followed by 6518 signatures. They also demanded a referendum on the issue, clearly believing that the Catholic nation would vote against it.<sup>442</sup> When the letter was presented at the Šaštín pilgrimage, the symbols were not simply those of

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<sup>435</sup> 'Šaštín 1985,' 24-27. PRIVATE COLLECTION PAVOL ABRHAN (PCPA), Programmes at pilgrimages 'Šaštín '85, '86.

<sup>436</sup> Letz, 'Prenasledovanie', p. 220.

<sup>437</sup> 'Velehrad '85,' 18.

<sup>438</sup> 'List Prezidentovi', *NaS*, 5(1986), 9-10.

<sup>439</sup> Abrhan, interview with the author.

<sup>440</sup> 'List predsedovi vlady SSR a Predsednictvu SNR,' *RoS*, 3(1988), 18-20.

<sup>441</sup> 'Pripravuje sa nový zákon o interrupcii,' *RoS* 3(1988), 15-18.

<sup>442</sup> 'Súdrh Máčovský, generalny riaditeľ pre veci cirkevne pri ministerstve kultury SSR v Košiciach dňa 19. Novembra 1986 o náboženskej politike,' *Serafinsky Svet*, 1-2.

the Church (pope and Mary), but also those of Catholicity of the nation (the national symbol of a double cross). This issue dominated the all-night programme in Šaštín.<sup>443</sup>

Official authorities tolerated these protests as long as the underground Church did not engage in open criticism of the state. In reports the protests were sometimes presented as manifestations of political clericalism, but pilgrimages were still not seen as a major threat.<sup>444</sup> State officials were content that there was no spill-over into other spheres of society. According to the head of the Office of Religious Affairs, Vincent Máčovský, 'religious circles had been here for a long time, but they do not have any serious impact on societal questions. When we issued the new law about 'artificial interruption of pregnancy,' the underground Church protested, but the law was passed without any disturbance...Indeed, the circles have been functioning for over thirty years, but they have failed to have any influence on the development of society.'<sup>445</sup> For Máčovský these groups were harmless, because in his view, their main pre-occupation was merely the singing of songs at pilgrimages.<sup>446</sup> This approach was not unjustified. Although underground Catholics had begun to shape a nationalised public Catholic culture which saw the Church as an integral part of the nation, their appeal to the broader society remained limited. Nevertheless, the Methodian year and the programme of national consecration increased the self-confidence of the underground community and was at the beginning of its broader public functioning first within and later (in late 1980s) outside of the Catholic Church.

The programme of national consecration spread outside of western Slovakia. In 1985, several rituals of national consecration were performed through the public reading of consecratory prayers at pilgrimages across Slovakia. While some consecration prayers were rather vague, referring to 'difficult times', others openly and directly demanded the clergy's fidelity to the pope, the unity of the Church, and 'protection from the enemies of the Church.'<sup>447</sup> The most critical prayer was said in 1985 in Gaboltov, an increasingly popular pilgrimage site in eastern Slovakia. A prayer which was read to the congregation of more than 100,000 stated: 'We promise that we will remain loyal to the Holy Father John Paul [II], united with him, [and with

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<sup>443</sup> 'Noc v Saštine, Mini-Reportáž mladej účastníčky,' *NaS*, 4(1986), 23-24.

<sup>444</sup> 'Pre Informáciu: Informácia o zhromaždení na Velehrade,' Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia, SNA, 1541/Sz.

<sup>445</sup> 'Súdruh Máčovský,' 2.

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>447</sup> 'Gaboltov 1985', 21.

those] bishops and priests, who are united with him and that we will create a barrier against the decomposing misuse of the Magisterium of the Church [an allusion to *Pacem in Terris*], which threatens the very foundations of the Church'<sup>448</sup> and asking for courage to 'avoid all compromises with this world and enemies of our holy Church.'<sup>449</sup> The programme of national consecration was thus embraced by participants at both newer and older pilgrimages.

The leading underground journal saw these consecrations and the pilgrimages as expressions of a 'nation that wishes to consecrate itself to the Virgin Mary.' Based on these prayers, they believed that consecration has become the 'desire of the nation.'<sup>450</sup> Although the secret Church was conscious of the fact that none of these pilgrimages could be truly nationwide, they were convinced that they were 'national.' They were also able to maintain this attitude because they could ascribe any failures to poor co-operation on the part of the official Church, rather than lack of interest of the nation. The major samizdat journal, *NaS*, blamed the poor participation on poor organisation on the side of the official Church and ascribed responsibility especially to patriotic priests at *ZKD PiT*, which controlled all official Catholic communication channels. A dignitary who could consecrate the nation (according to the Catholic tradition this could be done only by an archbishop or by the pope) was not available, as the Communist Party did not allow the former to be ordained and the latter to make an apostolic visit.<sup>451</sup> In December 1985 the official Church eventually did prepare a consecration ritual, but to the Immaculate Conception, not to the national patroness (Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows). This consecration was criticized in the underground press as formal and disregarding of the official patroness saint.<sup>452</sup> Although underground Catholics may have seemed to be acting against the official understanding of religion's place in culture and politics, it began unwittingly to engage in the official discourse. Rather than becoming a spring-board for broader engagement with society, as they had imagined it in the early 1980s, their engagement led to greater involvement with the state and building a new vision for the Church.

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<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>449</sup> 'Gabolto'v '85', 21.; 'Mária v dejinách spásy,' 6.

<sup>450</sup> 'Gabolto'v '85,' 21.

<sup>451</sup> 'Šaštín 1985', 26.

<sup>452</sup> 'Sme zasvätení', 13.

These experiences within the Church were continually informed by official, especially nationalist, official cultural production. This became clear especially in their involvement with official public memory. An author in a major samizdat journal (*Náboženstvo a Súčasnosť*), in an article entitled 'Our Past,' encouraged Slovaks to become engaged in the construction of a national historical narrative. He argued that 'We Catholic Christians in Slovakia must ask: 'What was our past like, what has its influence been on our present, and what lessons can we derive from it for our future? The Holy Brothers from Thessaloniki brought us Holy Scripture. The question is what has happened to this blessed work on our territory? How have our predecessors managed to apply (this legacy) into their personal and societal life? In what sense has it changed the morality of our nation?''<sup>453</sup> The focus of the author was clearly on the morality of the Slovak nation, but she already talked about 'Our Past' and the effects of the legacy on 'our territory.' They understood this past increasingly in ethnic terms, engaged in re-constructing the connection between the Church and the nation through reclaiming the ethnic dimension.

### **3.5. Ethnicisation of the 'Marian nation'**

As the underground Catholics constructed the 'Marian nation,' they were continually informed about the official ethnicisation of 'historical consciousness'. Catholics reproduced parts of this official discourse in samizdat form. In doing so they prepared the ground for full identification with the ethnic understanding of Slovak statehood in the post-socialist period. In the late 1980s parts of this nationalist official discourse were presented at public pilgrimages. The Cyrilomethodian anniversary was one of the major moments when these new tendencies to ethnicise the idea of Slovak medieval statehood became apparent. The Catholic Church continued to be excluded from the official national narrative (Velehrad was an exception), but parts of this official narrative were instrumental in enabling these underground Catholics to see this 'Marian nation' as being a distinctly 'Slovak nation.' As will be explained in what follows, Catholics did not yet fully identify with the ethnicisation of statehood, i.e. with imagining statehood as part of the ethnogenesis of the nation. But they identified with the tendency to imagine a process of ethnogenesis as the main line of development of the Slovak nation.

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<sup>453</sup> 'Naša minulosť', *NaS*, 3(1985), 9-10.

The clerical leader of the underground Church, Bishop Ján Ch. Korec, presented the Catholic Church in Slovakia as an integral part of the national history. As he said, 'Our nation not only respects the Church, it loves her. We have been born through [the church] as a nation; she has sustained us through centuries even in the hardest of times. The Church talked to us in sermons and in 'confessionaries' in our own language; maintained schools for us; gave us universities in Trnava and Košice; her priests defended and led the nation and gave it literature....She gave us writers and poets...educated many literati. The nation lived in Christianity, Christianity lived in the nation...It is our task to remind young people that which is being muted – the existence of the nation from the moment of its birth during the Cyrilomethodian times through the Church and its Gospel. This consciousness needs to be spread and deepened. The Church is very closely related to the nation and the nation to the Church. And history cannot be changed or re-written.'<sup>454</sup> This understanding of the role of the Church in the Slovak past resembled the Polish Catholic national Catholic narrative. But unlike the Polish Catholics, the underground Catholics in Slovakia did not construct this narrative from their own sources. They were largely inspired by the pope, but they also began to draw on official nationalist public histories.

After having been moved closer to the official collective memory ('historical consciousness') and at the same time assured of the Catholic distinctiveness in the relation to this consciousness, the underground Catholics got inspired by this official cultural production. Towards the end of 1985 and the beginning of 1986, the leading samizdat journal *Rodinne Spolocenstvo* published several lengthy accounts detailing the 'good' contributions made by the official historical discourse to the celebration of the Methodian year.<sup>455</sup> They covered official literature, reports from exhibitions, TV series, radio broadcasts, and journal articles. This official construction was referred to as 'the cultural harvest of the Methodian year.'<sup>456</sup> A major review article was entitled 'What made us happy about [official production] during the Methodian year.' The underground Catholics were also interested in the year's official commemoration of Ján Hollý (see above).<sup>457</sup> The samizdat studies drew on history and popular historical

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<sup>454</sup> '35 rokov od biskupskej,' *NaS*, 3(1986), 10-15; See also, 'Pri šesťdesiatke Biskupa Korca', *Hlas Slovenska*, 1(1988), 6-8.

<sup>455</sup> 'Čím nás v kultúrnej oblasti potešil Metodovský rok,' *RoS* 4(1986), 20-4.; A.S. Radoslav, 'Ešte k žatve Metodovského roku', *RoS* 10/5(1986), 18-20; 'Sv. Metod vo Filatelii', *RoS*, 6(1986).

<sup>456</sup> Radoslav, 'Ešte k žatve,' 18-20.

<sup>457</sup> 'Čím nás v kultúrnej oblasti,' 20-4.; 'Hollíada', *RoS*, 4(1985), 9.

accounts produced on this occasion.<sup>458</sup> A pilgrimage to Šaštín was accompanied by a visit to the birthplace of Ján Hollý, which was also the site of official commemorations.<sup>459</sup> Catholics noticed and appreciated the emphasis on figures of the 18th and 19th century national movement and identified with the official focus on the Slovak nation as a historical self-standing nation, and to an extent also on the understanding of Slovak history as a struggle against the Hungarians. As will be explained later, they did not show much interest in identifying against the Czechs, however.

Official production was crucial in increasing the underground Church's identification with an ethnic understanding of the Slovak nation. The central Catholic samizdat journal *Náboženstvo a Súčasnosť* published an exchange between Slovak and Moravian amateur historians in which they argued about who was first on the current Slovak territory and where the centre of Great Moravia was located.<sup>460</sup> The Slovak author drew widely on official nationalist sources and claimed that Slovaks were the first nation on the current Slovak territory, that it played the central role in the establishment of Great Moravia, and that this centre was in Nitra. Located in southern Slovakia, Nitra is claimed to be the centre of the Pribina chiefdom which predated Great Moravia. Nitra was imagined by interwar Catholic nationalists as the symbol of the ecclesiastical and political primacy of the Slovaks and therefore as evidence of the right of the Slovak nation to an independent Slovak state.<sup>461</sup> In the 1980s these thoughts were revived by official Slovak nationalist historians,<sup>462</sup> and it was from these historians that the underground Church members now took inspiration. When Bishop Korec, the clerical leader of the underground community and the central 'moral' authority of early post-socialist Slovakia, began to write his history of the Catholic Church in Slovakia, he drew widely on these official sources. Bishop Ján Ch. Korec quoted extensively official historian Matúš Kučera, who was at the centre of the changes within 'historical consciousness' and who claimed that

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<sup>458</sup> 'Hollíada', 7-14.

<sup>459</sup> Prítomný, 'Zo Slovenska: na Šaštínskej púti,' *Hlasy z Ríma*, 11 November 1985, 19.

<sup>460</sup> 'Pozdvihnime záclonu Slovenskej histórie,' *NaS* 4(1985), 2-11.; Ad. 'Pozdvihnime záclonu Slovenskej histórie...Reakcia Moravského historika na článok "Pozdvihnime záclonu..."' *NaS* 4(1986), 6-9; 'Odpoveď autora článku "Pozdvihnime záclonu..."' *NaS*, 3(1987), 5-7.

<sup>461</sup> Zajonc, 'Prečo je Nitra staroslávne mesto', p. 139.

<sup>462</sup> Matúš Kučera, 'Veľká Morava a slovenské dejiny' in J. Poulík, Bohuslav Chropovský (eds.), *Veľka Morava a počatky československé štátnosti*, (Prague and Bratislava, 1985).

Christianity formed a unity of thinking on which a new Europe was built after the demise of the ancient world.<sup>463</sup>

The underground Church's interpretations shared the conviction that the Cyrilomethodian mission made Slovaks distinctive among other nations; they claimed that they were one of the first Slavic nations to be baptised by Cyril and Methodius and they therefore had a central role in Christianisation of other nations.<sup>464</sup> This assumption echoed the interpretation by Slovak Catholic émigrés based in Rome, who considered the Slovaks to be 'direct heirs of this tradition.'<sup>465</sup> The underground Catholics noticed the shift in official discourse that now included 'Christianity' as an important force in the ethnogenesis of the Slovak nation. In fact, they liberally borrowed from official histories of the 19th century national emancipation to assert the idea of the relationship between Catholicism and nation building. An author writing for the major samizdat *Rodinné Spoločenstvo* praised the contribution of the Romanticist poet Ján Hollý to the maintenance of Cyrilomethodian tradition and the fact that he anchored his 'own national consciousness in the baptism of all the Slavic people occupying the territory of contemporary Slovakia' and Hollý's view that Christianisation and 'Christianising' mission were central to the 'Cyrilomethodian legacy.'

The underground Slovak Catholics benefited from the changes in official memory, but they stopped short of identifying with the ethnicisation of statehood. The chief reason may have been that the idea of statehood was mobilised against the Church. An underground Church author criticized Romanticist Catholic nationalists for their attempts to merge Christianising narratives with those of statehood. She criticized this attempt to make the Cyrilomethodian mission part of the story of Slovak statehood, to reconcile the Cyrilomethodian myth and the Svätoplukian myth, as historically inaccurate.<sup>466</sup> The reason she rejected Svätopluk was the fact that Svätopluk ousted the disciples of Cyril and Methodius from Great Moravia.<sup>467</sup> Indeed, as the author stressed, Christianity rather than statehood was 'the most significant unifying element of Slovaks, and the strongest motive for...a new national

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<sup>463</sup> Korec, *Cirkev v Dejínach Slovenska*, p. 152.

<sup>464</sup> (J. Ch Korec?), 'Slovensko čo robíš,' 2-3.

<sup>465</sup> Kardinál Jozef Tomko, *Vatikánsky Rozhlas*, 19 July 1984, Slovak Section, *Výber*, 2(1985); *Náboženstvo a Súčasnosť*, 1989.

<sup>466</sup> 'Holliáda', 9.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*, 9

tradition.<sup>468</sup> Another samizdat author sensed the attempts of nationalist Communists to imagine Slovak history as entirely independent from Czech history. The author, however, argued that such a step also meant the erasure of the Czech contribution to the Christianisation of Slovakia.<sup>469</sup> Official ethnicisation was thus taken with restraint, because it did not consider religion as an important historical agent, but also because the underground Catholics were not interested in these questions: they were clearly not yet interested in the question of statehood in general. Until 1988 the current state of Czechoslovak federation and the role of Slovaks in this state were not even mentioned in samizdat publications.<sup>470</sup> Czechoslovak identity was not particularly promoted in any of the events of the underground Church, but nor was it openly challenged.

In the longer term, this new ethnic reading would exclude other groups from what was increasingly a Slovak national movement. It did not seem this way at first, however: Slovak distinctiveness did not initially seem to challenge identification with the Czechoslovak state. Czechoslovak statehood was not questioned in samizdat journals or at pilgrimages. More positively, the underground Catholics in Slovakia were connected to the Czechs in important ways. Both felt themselves to be members of one 'persecuted' Catholic Church. Czech Cardinal Tomášek<sup>471</sup> enjoyed great authority among Slovaks,<sup>472</sup> and the cooperation between the Slovak and the Czech secret Church leaders was, according to Czech historian Jaroslav Cuhra, '[i]n the whole spectrum of anti-regime resistance...one of the most intensive.'<sup>473</sup> Yet there were many reasons why such alliances were weak and diminishing.

Indeed, religious events became more and more Slovak in focus. Velehrad was, indeed, the last joint pilgrimage of Czechs, Moravians, and Slovaks. As the importance of religion in Slovak cultural life increased, so the divergent levels of religiosity in the two parts of the country increasingly came to define a cultural divide.

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<sup>468</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>469</sup> 'Čím nás v kultúrnej', missing pagination

<sup>470</sup> For a comprehensive survey of samizdat production see Rudolf Lesňák, *Svetlo z podzemia* (Bratislava, 1997).

<sup>471</sup> PCPA, *Šaštín 1985, Šaštín 1986, Trnavská Novéna 1986, Šaštín 1987, Šaštín 1989*

<sup>472</sup> Július Brocka, interview with the author, 13 July 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.; Vladimír Jukl, Interview with the author, 7 January 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.; František Mikloško, interview with the author, 13 July 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.; Pavol Abrhan, Interview with the author, 23 July 2010, Nové Zámky, Slovakia.

<sup>473</sup> Jaroslav Cuhra, 'Katolícka cirkev a odpor vuci "normalizacnemu" režimu', in Peter Blažek, ed, *Opozice a odpor proti komunistickému režimu v Československu 1968-1989* (Prague 2005), p. 78

According to official government statistics released in the 1980s, 71.6% of children in Slovakia in 1984 were baptised compared with 31.2 percent in the Czech lands and Moravia.<sup>474</sup> Even though the Catholic Church strengthened its authority during the communist regime, the interest of Czech Catholics in public gatherings, as Cuhra points out, was much lower than Slovak Catholics.<sup>475</sup> Nonetheless, the underground Catholics understood themselves as building not simply a Catholic culture, but a Slovak Catholic culture. This became clear especially in their relation to Charter 77. The relationship of most Slovak Catholics to Charter 77 is perhaps best captured in one of the most popular samizdat texts of the mid-1980s, the interview with Bishop Korec conducted on the 35th anniversary of his appointment as Bishop.<sup>476</sup> In it he said that although he respected the work of Charter 77, 'Slovak history' pre-determined Slovak Catholics to focus more on religious national activism rather than 'purely human issues.'<sup>477</sup> Additionally, Slovak Catholics did not keep in touch with the Hungarian dissent and Catholic communities.<sup>478</sup> While the Hungarians were, according to Slovak underground activists, welcome at Slovak pilgrimages, the programme at pilgrimages was in Slovak and was thus limited to those Hungarians who could speak the Slovak language.<sup>479</sup>

Official production was also instrumental in supplying Catholics with nationalist songs which would become an important material for construction of Catholic national narrative. This was the case of the Church's song 'Bože čos ráčil' (God, what thou hast given). *Bože čos ráčil* was written by Catholic nationalist priest Tichomir Milkin (pseudonym of Jan Donoval) together with the previously left out verses echoing interwar and wartime Catholic political nationalism. The text was written in 1917 as a Slovak replacement for the Hungarian nationalist 'Anthem for the King,' which had been sung in churches across Slovakia during the last decades of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Milkin's song was written as an anticipation of Slovak national liberation, and later, during the interwar period, it would be used as call to arms in

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<sup>474</sup> Sabrina Ramet, *Nihil Obstat, Religion Politics and Social Change in East-Central Europe and Russia*, (Durham, 1998), p. 119.

<sup>475</sup> Cuhra, 'Katolícka cirkev a odpor,' p. 75.

<sup>476</sup> Apart from being read on Radio Free Europe and republished in samizdat, this text was also read at the all-night programmes during pilgrimages. Čarnogurský, *Videné*, p. 56.

<sup>477</sup> '35 Rokov od biskupskej vysviacky otca biskupa', *Náboženstvo a Súčasnosť* 3 (1986), 11.

<sup>478</sup> Vladimír Jukl, Interview with the author, 7 January 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.; František Mikloško, interview with the author, 13 July 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia; Pavol Abrhan, Interview with the author, 23 July 2010, Nové Zámky, Slovakia.

<sup>479</sup> Gabriela Petříkova, Interview with the author, 23 July 2010, Nové Zámky, Slovakia.

support of Slovak autonomy. It presented freedom as a reward for 'a thousand years of suppression' by the Hungarian neighbour. The song was sung at the height of Catholic nationalism during the interwar and wartime period and became central to the repertoire of public nationalised public Catholic culture. It was sung at Catholic nationalist events, pilgrimages and commemorations, and at Mass services.<sup>480</sup> As well as other Catholic authors, Milkin believed in the self-standing nature of the Slovak nation and saw it as his mission to protect this character. Similarly to the much better known Polish song 'Boże coś Polske,' written during the time of partitions, this Slovak hymn expressed a fusion of Catholic and national identity, asking for preservation of both 'moral' and territorial integrity and sovereignty.<sup>481</sup> Reflecting the difference between Polish and Czechoslovak socialist patriotism and relatedly the strength of the Catholic Church *vis a vis* the state, by the late 1970s the full version of the Polish song would be sung regularly at church gatherings. In Slovakia this was not the case. Since the late socialist state considered itself the only author and creator of nationalised culture, those passages which referred to national autonomy were left out, and only those parts which referred to the past suffering of the Slovak nation remained. However, now in mid-1980s, the song was again allowed to be published in its original form.

In 1985 the leading official publishing house Tatran published a full version of the song. The lyrics of the song now included the following verses:

The murderers of our nation wanted to kill the Slovak nation  
And its sweet language  
Forcing the nation to die in the world catastrophe  
As their their endeavour vanished in smoke

In the beautiful valleys of Subcarpathian lands  
The Slovak nation, the master, ploughs its lands  
From the Danube to the streams of Sajov

....

You, Lord, hath given us this land forever

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<sup>480</sup> See e.g. *Slovák*, 1 September 1936.

<sup>481</sup> Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz*, pp. 45-6.

In return for faithfulness

Not for villainy murders

Shortly after its official publication in 1985, the *Rodinne Spolocenstvo* samizdat journal published the full version of this Slovak church anthem. The song was presented in the samizdat journal as an evidence of the Catholic Church's involvement in the nation's development. From 1985 this song would be one of the central parts of the underground Catholic community's cultural repertoire of public nationalised culture at pilgrimages to the Šaštín shrine of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows. Illustrating the trajectory of the ethnicisation of the nationalised public Catholic culture, the text was first published in a major publishing house, was then reproduced in an underground samizdat journal, and the next year it would appear at pilgrimages.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter started in the late 1960s, when nationalism gained new importance for the communist project in Eastern Europe as part of de-Stalinisation. At that time, the ground was prepared for the late socialist re-imagination of the Catholic Church as a national Church. Yet, whilst nationalism and a public nationalised culture became important for the re-invigoration of real socialism in this period, the Catholic Church as an institution was excluded from this project. The Communist Party-state remained the only nationwide system of national mobilisation. Within this nationalist culture individual Catholics had a role only to the extent to which they were deemed progressive, i.e. instrumental in developing the socialist Slovak nation. Within this vision the late socialist state contributed to the creation of an independent ecclesiastical province but used this as a confirmation of its own national legitimacy. Only a select group of clergy and laity were allowed to speak in national terms – according to the rules of socialist patriotism – but nevertheless, many had access to its products and were influenced by them. In comparison to the Stalinist period, Catholicism was included into the national narrative on a much broader scale. Late socialist 'national consciousness' and 'historical consciousness' thus made nationality an important part of the real socialist universe – whilst at the same time restricting Catholics from accessing this realm as distinctly Slovak (i.e national) Catholics.

By the late 1970s a new cultural nationalism had emerged which challenged this subordinate position of the Church. John Paul II laid the foundation for activation of Catholics as independent of a nationalised public Catholic culture. John Paul II also came to be the major impulse behind these Catholics' engagement at public pilgrimages and their deepening interest in history. The pope was instrumental in leading these Catholics to understand the limited role of Catholics in the construction of nationalised culture as a form of 'suffering,' and this 'suffering' into suffering for the nation and the suffering of the nation. Official state socialism responded to this initiative by seeking to build a Catholic nationalised culture based around 'socialist patriotism.' In doing so it in fact opened the door to, and provided space for, oppositional Catholics to anchor their essentially moral protest in historical narratives and symbols, which had been partly provided by the new religious production of the state. Catholicity, considered in its traditional terms, thus gained new relevance, anticipating the post-socialist role of the Catholic Church as a symbol of 'national suffering' under communism, and this milieu nourished some of the leading figures of the post-communism Church. From the mid-1980s, the underground Church began to build a more exclusively Slovak nationalised public Catholic culture. As it did so, it found increasingly common ground with the official communist nationalised culture and came to know its cultural production better and better. As we will see in the following chapter, in the late 1980s the mutual identification between these groups continued. These new alliances, which created a new mainstream Catholic nationalised culture around the idea of suffering, would then have significant consequences in the post-communist period. However, this did not mean that the cultural nationalism of the underground community in the 1980s became supportive of the Communist Party and its policies. Rather, as will be explored in the next chapter, over the last two years before the fall of state socialism this cultural nationalism became increasingly oriented towards civic dissent. Thus, despite their identification with aspects of emerging official Slovak nationalism, the underground Church did not fully turn away from its engagement with broader society, civic opposition, and collaboration with Czech Catholics. Over the next two years this increasingly civic orientation of the underground church would crucially influence their role in the shaping of nationalised public Catholic culture in Slovakia.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A Divided 'Marian Nation'

#### Nationalised Public Catholic Culture during Perestroika

On 15 September 1989, the feast of the National Patroness Our Lady of Sorrows, the annual pilgrimage to the national shrine took place. At first glance, this last pilgrimage that occurred during state socialism may have appeared to be another manifestation of an increasingly visible Catholic culture, anticipating the political changes to come in less than two months. It was certainly the case that this pilgrimage had the highest turnout of pilgrims at Šaštín pilgrimage under Communism (around 10,000), coming from all across Slovakia, had the most well-organised programme yet, and on the night before the main service on Sunday, had not only one, but two parallel all-night programmes of songs, prayers, and lectures. The first, held inside the shrine, was organised by the official Church, while the other, organised by the underground communities, was held in the nearby park. The main Mass was presided over by the newly appointed archbishop of Trnava, Ján Sokol. It may appear that this unprecedented interest in this historically central symbol of nationalised public Catholic culture was the result of the activities of increasingly assertive and unified segments of the Catholic Church. However, upon closer examination it becomes clear that this emergence of nationalised public Catholic culture was due rather to much more complex developments that had been taking place over the last two years. These included changes in the positions of both the underground and the official Church vis-à-vis the state and society. These developments had a significant effect on the way the various segments of the Catholic Church shaped this Catholic culture, and on the meanings they ascribed to its symbols, collective memories, and events. Although these two groups were shaping this culture together in 1989, their individual contributions differed in important respects. This became clear in their approach to several developments which occurred in the late 1980s. The national pilgrimage occurred at the height of the semi-public discussion about a Czechoslovak constitutional reform. The limited concession to the reform programme of perestroika, started by the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, was made public in autumn 1988. Dissidents and other independent groups (including the underground Church) immediately noticed this change and began calling for the democratisation of the

public sphere. The official authorities, however, were not planning on giving more space to alternative voices in this reform. While seeking to suppress groups that had formed as independent from the state, they also tried to co-opt non-communist groups as supporters of the Communist state.

By the time of the 1989 Šaštín pilgrimage, this division was also clear within the Catholic Church. The all-night programme organised by the official Church presented the Catholic national symbol of Our Lady of Sorrows as a symbol of 'national unity' and the maintenance of the status quo as far as the current political system was concerned, while the programme organised by the underground community advocated change. Similar to the programmes organised over the last five years, the content of this year's programme was not limited to spirituality but also addressed current issues and demanded change. This chapter explores how the nationalised public Catholic culture was shaped on the eve of the fall of state socialism. It observes that in the two years before the fall of state socialism, nationalised public Catholic culture continued to be shaped by both the underground Catholic community as well as by the official Church sponsored by official authorities. Both these groups saw the Church as an integral part of the nation, but for different reasons. The central argument of this chapter is that nationalised culture was the product of both the underground Church's increasing focus on civic cultural nationalism, as well as the official nationalism that sought to preserve state socialism.

This chapter further explores the powerful, nationalised public Catholic culture that continued to be shaped by these various groups in the mid-1980s. To understand how and why this culture developed in the latter years of state socialism, we need to read the histories of both the official and the Catholic nationalism together. It is assumed that by looking at Catholic mobilisation in this way, we can better understand the post-1989 restoration of the Catholic Church as the central symbol of national unity, identity, and autonomy. This chapter follows how this identification was reached through the complex development of two processes: the institutional and cultural reconstruction of the Catholic Church by future Catholic elite on the one hand, and the construction of the ethnic state and culture by the official cultural and political elites on the other. This integration was not simply a result of the

growing assertiveness of society, nor a sign of the diminishing influence of the state as is typically assumed by church historians.<sup>482</sup>

The following analysis of the development of a nationalised public Catholic culture is divided into two parts. The first part of this chapter analyses the mobilisation of underground Catholics during the Marian year - roughly spanning the period from June 1987 to August 1988. This part addresses how and why underground Catholics continued to build nationalised public Catholic culture as part of their mobilisation, and how the building of this culture was affected by certain changes in the character of Catholic mobilisation. It analyses how these Catholics strengthened their understanding of the Catholic Church as an integral part of their nation through the wider use of symbols, rituals, events, and the fusion of Catholic and nationalist memories. The shaping of this culture was supported by the papacy and its continued encouragement of the bottom-up mobilisation through nationalised public Catholic culture, the identification of underground Catholics with broader democratising currents, and, relatedly to, their new understanding of their mobilisation at pilgrimages as a value in itself (rather than simply an activity complementing the official Church). Nationalised public Catholic culture continued to be shaped as Catholics abandoned their narrow focus on winning greater rights for the Church and began to focus on campaigning for human rights. This trend, combined with the increasingly trans-national nature of Catholic mobilisation, was aided by the support of Catholics from outside Slovakia. At around the same time, nationalised public Catholic culture began to be built by the official state-supported Church. In the second phase, the official authorities began to change the position of the Church *vis a vis* the state — Catholic symbols and collective memories were increasingly promoted as a symbol of national unity. This change occurred as part of the broader campaign to strengthen national official culture and was intended to strengthen the power of the state. Both the official authorities and official Church members presented it as an official initiative that brought together the state and the patriotic Church as the fulfilment of the country's 'Cyrilomethodian heritage' interpreted in terms of close co-operation between church and state. A growing gulf began to emerge between those Catholics within the official Church who understood nationalised public Catholic culture as being related to the state, and those who

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<sup>482</sup> See e.g. Pešek and Barnovský, *V zovretí normalizácie*.

understood Catholic culture as being related to the nation through participation in civic society, in the sense promoted by the Second Vatican Council. We can only speculate how the shaping of nationalised public Catholic culture would have developed in this situation. In November 1989 state socialism fell.

## **1. Catholic Mobilisation during the Marian year**

### **1.1. An impulse from the pope**

During 1987–88, nationalised public Catholic culture centred around Marian devotion was created by both the official Church and the underground communities.<sup>483</sup> The initial impulse for this construction was the papal announcement of a Church-wide celebration of a special ‘Marian year’, which was to be inaugurated on 7 June 1987 and completed on 15 August 1988.<sup>484</sup> This year would be devoted to Mary, ‘Mother of God and Mother of the Church,’ and would mark the 2,000th anniversary of the birth of Mary. Similar to the Methodian year, the Marian year was intended to be a preparation for the 2,000th anniversary of the birth of Christ. In accounts written by underground Catholics, the Marian year is presented as the ‘resurrection of the Church’ and at the same time the culmination of the ‘national awakening’ of Catholics that was encouraged by John Paul II.<sup>485</sup> In Slovakia, there was indeed an unprecedented increase in pilgrimages organised by both the official Church and the underground Church. The number of attendees grew and the network of pilgrimages was expanded. The result, however, was not the straightforward and unproblematic unification of the various segments of the Catholic Church on a national level. The rise of pilgrimages would be the result of various, often unintended, encounters between various strategies of national mobilisation, both by different Catholic groups—those within the hierarchy as well as those underground—and from other actors such as the Communist authorities.

The papal intention for the Marian year was to encourage grassroots mobilisation. The theological and pastoral framework for the Marian year was created through two papal documents: John Paul II’s sixth encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* [The Mother of the Saviour], issued on 25 March 1987, and his apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* [The Dignity of Women] issued on 15 August 1988. The first of the letters

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<sup>483</sup> ‘Levočská púť 1987’, *NaS*, 4(1987), 5-7.; ‘Šaštín—September 1987,’ *NaS* 5(1987), 10-11.

<sup>484</sup> Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, p. 527.

<sup>485</sup> Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť*, p. 138.

is interpreted by John Paul II's biographer George Weigel as an encouragement of bottom-up mobilisation. The pope had already supported bottom-up mobilisation (through official Church structures) during the Methodian year, but at that time his main focus was on the reinforcement of the position of hierarchy (hence the focus on Archbishop St. Methodius). During the Marian year, the pope would often refer to Mary as the 'Mother of the Church,' a title that had profound implications for how Catholics should understand the Church. According to Weigel, this understanding of the relationship between Mary and the Church challenged the way many Catholic leaders had come to think of themselves and their authority. If during 1985 John Paul II emphasized the role of the hierarchy, he now put emphasis on bottom-up mobilisation. As Weigel argues, "the 'Marian profile' in the Church is, John Paul II suggested, even 'more...fundamental' than the 'Petrine profile (the curia and the hierarchy)." Without being divided from it, the "Marian church"—the church of disciples—preceded and made possible the "Petrine Church"—the church of office and authority.<sup>486</sup> According to Weigel, this was not Mariology in the service of traditionalism. Rather 'discipleship' came before authority in the Church. The expressions of the Petrine Church-- hierarchical elements of the Church (i.e. the curia and the hierarchy) -- existed because of the 'Marian Church of disciples.'<sup>487</sup> No evidence can be found in the Slovak Catholic samizdat that would suggest that Slovak underground Catholics noticed these nuances. Nonetheless, they were clearly mobilised by papal support of the creation of popular Catholic cultures, which had by now become the preserve of the underground Catholic communities in Slovakia.

The leading underground Catholic samizdat journal *Náboženstvo a Súčasnosť*<sup>488</sup> gave special attention to the following quote from the encyclical letter *Redemptoris Mater* in which the pope placed pilgrimage at the centre of Catholic action:

This presence of Mary finds many different expressions in our day... It also has a wide field of action. Through the faith and piety of individual believers; through the traditions of Christian families or 'domestic churches', of parish and missionary communities, religious institutes and dioceses; through the radiance and attraction of the great shrines where not only individuals or local

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<sup>486</sup> Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, p. 576.

<sup>487</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 577.

<sup>488</sup> 'Mariánsky rok', *NaS*, 3(1987), 6-8.

groups, but sometimes whole nations and societies, even whole continents, seek to meet the Mother of the Lord.<sup>489</sup>

The samizdat author especially appreciated the focus on pilgrimage sites as important spaces of Catholic mobilisation. Revealing the Pope's continued focus on connecting these popular devotions transnationally, the pope then joined pilgrimages together in one 'geography of faith and Marian devotion,' centred around 'the Land of Palestine, the spiritual homeland of all Christians,' through the 'many churches in Rome and throughout the world centres like 'Guadalupe, Lourdes, Fatima, and the others situated in the various countries...[and]...the one in my own native land, Jasna Góra,' 'raised up in the course of the centuries by the faith of Christians.'<sup>490</sup> All of this was a great encouragement for underground Catholics who had since at least 1982 made pilgrimages the central spaces of shaping nationalised public Catholic culture. But these underground communities were not the only ones who shaped a nationalised public Catholic culture during the Marian year. Indeed, the Marian year marked an increased involvement of the official Church in the shaping of this nationalised culture, specifically through supporting mobilisation around nationalised public Catholic symbols. To fully understand how Catholic nationalised culture and the relationship between Catholic and national identity developed during this Marian year, more generally during the period of the three years before November 1989, the Marian year needs to be placed into its current political context. The central development that influenced the shaping of nationalised public Catholic culture was the change in the attitude of official authorities towards public religion, including the expansion of the official shaping nationalised culture.

## **1.2. Nationalised Public Catholic Culture during Perestroika**

This period saw changes in the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Communist state, which would significantly affect the construction of nationalised culture. First and foremost, by this time the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev sought to co-opt Christian churches as partners in shaping nationalised culture. In 1987, Gorbachev indicated that he now saw religious people as 'natural supporters' of his

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<sup>489</sup> 'Mariánsky rok', *NaS*, 3(1987), 6-8.

<sup>490</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_25031987\\_redemptoris-mater.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031987_redemptoris-mater.html) (last accessed 11 July 2014)

'new thinking,'<sup>491</sup> of perestroika and *glasnost*. Since 1986, Gorbachev had begun to realise that, if perestroika was to be successful, he needed the support of as many citizens as possible. He was also aware that he needed to improve the reputation of the Soviet government in the West. This new approach was further prompted by an event which dealt a serious blow to USSR's reputation. First, during 1986, Gorbachev struggled to maintain support for perestroika. After the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe, the centralism of the communist system of communication was exposed as a major obstacle to effective communication and the USSR got much unwanted attention. This catastrophe also dealt a major blow to the legitimacy of the communist states. There was thus a clear need to introduce a new style of communication—Gorbachev turned to *glasnost*. While *glasnost* was initially intended to encourage the public sharing of information to prevent corruption, it soon encouraged Soviet citizens to talk about other issues unrelated to corruption or economic reform. *Glasnost* also provided fertile ground for the promotion of religious nationalist ideas.

Furthermore, as Gorbachev pondered new ways of promoting the socialist system locally and internationally, the millennial celebrations of the first Christening of the Russian people, referred to as the 'Christening of Russia', were about to culminate. The occasion saw a public promotion of Orthodox symbols as national symbols, the merging of official Soviet history and history of the Orthodox Church as part of the official Soviet collective memory, all of which celebrated the Orthodox Church as an integral part of the Russian nation.<sup>492</sup> These celebrations, organised under the auspices of the Communist Party, revealed that the Russian Orthodox Church was a highly popular force capable of winning support both at home and abroad. The Russian Orthodox Church had enjoyed greater freedom since the 1960s and subsequently had become an important supporter of Soviet foreign policies. Since the early 1980s, the patriarchs of Moscow played a key role in promoting the idea that the socialist culture was not based on crude materialism—but had an important spiritual dimension. This was, in fact, the message Russian patriarch Filaret brought to Velehrad in Czechoslovakia during the Methodian year.<sup>493</sup> The Russian Orthodox Church thus proved to be an irreplaceable mobilising force. Yet, it

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<sup>491</sup> Luxmoore and Babiuch, *Vatican and the Red Flag*, p. 290.

<sup>492</sup> See *Religion in Communist Lands*, Vol. 15, 3(1987), special issue dedicated to the (988-1988) Baptism of Rus. See especially pages, 242-311.

<sup>493</sup> 'The Methodian Anniversary in Eastern Europe,' *Religion in Communist Lands*, 3(1985), 263.

was clear that if socialist states wanted to involve as many believers in reforms as possible, they needed to seek ways to engage the Catholic Church, both as a national and as a transnational actor. The Soviet authorities, with other Eastern European leaders in their wake, thus moved from restricting local hierarchies to helping build up the churches so that they would become more effective spaces for the national and international legitimisation of state reforms. By 1987, the creation of a nationalised public Catholic culture would no longer be advocated solely by the papacy as part of the programme for a unified Christian Europe. In that year, the situation of the Catholic Church began to change across the Central and Eastern European regions. The Communist states no longer saw them as subversive, but rather as potentially important partners in their own legitimisation on a local, regional, and global level.

By mid-1988, the authorities at the Ministry of Culture's Office for Religious Affairs, which had been instituted to ensure that religion, and especially Catholicism, would not become a mobilising force in society, changed their rhetoric. 'It is absurd to claim,' maintained the newly appointed head of the office Matej Lúčan, that 'socialist society and the KSČ see believers as political enemies and that it would seek the suppression of religion and churches.'<sup>494</sup> Although, as he maintained, 'our society derives its building of socialism from a scientific world view,' he claimed that 'our society is not an atheistic society.'<sup>495</sup> Accordingly, in Czechoslovakia the official authorities returned to negotiations with the Vatican and began to re-establish the Catholic Church as a nationally functional institution. The first changes were of administrative character. In 1988, the Vatican and Czechoslovak diplomats negotiated the appointment of two bishops (Ján Sokol, Bishop of Trnava and František Tondra, Bishop of Spiš). Even more importantly, by 1989, Bishop Sokol was promoted to be Archbishop of the Trnava Archdiocese. The independent ecclesiastical Slovak province, the highest administrative unit of the Church in Slovakia, now had its leader.<sup>496</sup> The official authorities had taken the first steps in this direction already in 1973, when three bishops were named, and later in 1977, when the Church on current Slovak territory formed an independent ecclesiastical province.

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<sup>494</sup> Jaroslav Cuhra, 'KSČ, stát a Římskokatolická církev (1948-1989),' *Soudobé Dějiny*, 8 (2001), 231; Pešek and Barnovský, *V zovretí*, p. 155

<sup>495</sup> SNA. f UVKSS, kart. 1787, ref. 357.

<sup>496</sup> Pešek and Barnovský, *V zovretí normalizácie*, pp. 135-44.

However, until 1989, the Church was not capable of functioning nationally. Without an archbishop, the Church could be best described as an aggregate of more or less isolated dioceses. But now that the Church had its leader it could begin to work as a nationally functional institution. As far as Church administration was concerned, its current state began to resemble those in Poland, Hungary and Croatia in the 1960s, where the churches were institutionally reconstructed. In fact, the official authorities also began to support the official Church in organisation of national pilgrimages.<sup>497</sup> For example, the official authorities helped individual parishes transport pilgrims to the pilgrimage sites; at the pilgrimage sites the VB (the Police) helped co-ordinate the crowds.<sup>498</sup> There were, however, limits to these changes. The Communists in Slovakia were not interested in encouraging nationalised public Catholic mobilisation for independence of the state.

The official authorities did not intend these changes to enable a greater autonomy of the Church from the state as had been the case in Poland, and as the underground communities had imagined it since the 1960s. For reasons which will be explained in what follows, it is more probable that the official authorities were aiming to encourage creation of nationalised public Catholic culture as a part of official nationalised culture. The nationalised public Catholic culture would thus be created in close connection with the socialist state. The shaping of nationalised public Catholic culture would involve strengthening of the *Pacem in Terris* association, on the one hand, and the gradual edging out of the underground Catholic communities from this construction on the other.<sup>499</sup> Following the model of the Orthodox Church, the Communists in Czechoslovakia supported the local Church hierarchy but at the same time sought to maintain her connection with the state. The reconstruction of nationalised public Catholic culture was thus accompanied and preconditioned by strengthening the position of *Pacem in Terris*, the association of priests openly loyal to the socialist state. *Pacem in Terris* would remain in place to maintain the Church as related to state socialism.<sup>500</sup>

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<sup>497</sup> Ibid., pp. 144-58.

<sup>498</sup> Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>500</sup> 'Zasadanie predsednictva UV KSČ 13. 5. 1988.' List Frantiska Tomaska vlade CSSR k rukam predsedu Dr. Lubomira Strougala, Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, State Central Archive Prague (henceforth SUA), 70/80, Quoted in Pešek and Barnovský, *V zovreti*, p. 153.

This greater but still limited official support of nationalised public Catholic culture translated into a careful and selective approach to cultural repertoires that could encourage the creation of an independent Catholic culture. As far as events and popular mobilisation was concerned, the official authorities used the Marian year to strengthen the hierarchy, allow greater space for Catholic mobilisation within official spaces, but at the same time roll back the underground Church.<sup>501</sup> The goal of these authorities was to prevent the underground Church from ‘misusing’ official Church events as displays of ‘Catholic triumphalism’ and public chanting of demands for the change of religious policies.<sup>502</sup> As I will explore below, this strategy was successful only to a point. Indeed, by November 1989 the Catholic Church in Slovakia looked rather different from what was planned. By this time, there was not only, as the official authorities planned, a more complete episcopate, but there was also a strong underground Church closely connected to civic opposition in Slovakia and in the Czech lands. To understand why and how these changes shaped the construction of a nationalised public Catholic culture, a more general overview of the specifics of Czechoslovak perestroika follows. I will focus especially on the official construction of a Slovak ‘national consciousness’ by Slovak (mostly cultural) elites. As I will describe later in this chapter, the cultural elites also began to sponsor the construction of a nationalised public Catholic culture as part of this new national consciousness. To understand how and why this happened, and what effects this state-sponsored construction had on the underground community’s construction of nationalised public Catholic culture, I will first explore the construction of the ‘national consciousness.’ It is important to attend to this official construction because it affected the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture not only before 1989 but also after 1989.

### **1.3. Popular ‘national consciousness’**

During late 1980s, the Communist elites in the Slovak Socialist Republic began to promote nationalised culture and its further expansion (which included a greater public emphasis on an ethnic understanding of the nation) as an important part and manifestation of Czechoslovak perestroika. The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia

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<sup>501</sup> Miroslav Válek, ‘Pre Informáciu, Informácia o priebehu púťí na rok 1987 a návrh opatrení pre rok 1988, 16 May 1988, Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia,’ SNA, 794/11.

<sup>502</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

formally accepted the reform programme of perestroika in 1986. The Czechoslovak elites planned to focus on re-writing the Czechoslovak constitution. Unlike the USSR, where perestroika began as an effort to improve economic effectiveness, the elites in Czechoslovakia, and especially in Slovakia, understood perestroika as a chance to complete their nation-building. More specifically, they intended to focus on the furthering of federalisation, which was left unfinished after the abrupt end of the Prague Spring. Now the Communist elites in the Slovak socialist republic again sought to devolve power from the federation.<sup>503</sup> In 1986, several deputies of the Slovak National Council spoke out against the centralised constitution and argued that, instead of reforming the federal constitution, the enactment of constitutions of the national republics should be the priority.<sup>504</sup> At the same time, and similarly to the 1960s, the official, especially cultural, elites in Slovakia began to talk especially about the issues of 'national consciousness' and national history. Slovak cultural elites played an important role in the promotion of this agenda. In September 1988, the *Literárny Týždenník* weekly was started by the Slovak Writers Council and became the central platform through which these changes were promoted. The weekly brought together official cultural elites.<sup>505</sup> These late socialist Slovak nationalists were clearly convinced that perestroika was an opportunity to strengthen the focus on national identity, which they referred to as 'national consciousness,' as the central element of 'real socialist consciousness.' The first major changes that began to happen concerned the development of the Slovak 'national consciousness' through the promotion of 'historical' national symbols, and the differentiation of Slovak history as something separate from Czechoslovak history and as a story of the development of a 'self-standing' Slovak nation. These changes were, however, not confined to the elites.

During late 1980s, the Slovak cultural elites intensified their efforts, which had already begun at the beginning of the 1980s, to strengthen a 'national consciousness' of the Slovak population. They now sought to promote 'historical' symbols in public, organising public commemorations of figures, and events deemed to represent the Slovak national identity as something independent from the Czech

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<sup>503</sup> Jozef Žatkuliak, 'Spory o novú ústavu česko-slovenskej federácie v druhej polovici. 80. rokov XX. Storočia,' *Historický časopis*, 56(2008), 161-90.

<sup>504</sup> Žatkuliak, 'Spory o novú ústavu česko-slovenskej federácie,' 161-90.

<sup>505</sup> Jozef Žatkuliak et al. *November 89, Medzník vo vývoji slovenskej spoločnosti a jeho medzinárodný kontext* (Bratislava, 2008), pp. 45-6.

and Czechoslovak identity. The Ministry of Culture continued the work on the first national historic film, the production of which had begun in 1984, ahead of the Methodian year (1985). Now they placed an even greater emphasis on Slovak distinctiveness. If before, according to the 1985 plans, the starting point of Slovak history would be the late 9th century establishment of Great Moravia,—officially considered the first common state of the Czechs and Slovaks—now this history would begin before Great Moravia in the early 9th century chiefdom of Prince Pribina. Prince Pribina of Nitra would appear in the film as the leader of the first Slovak state.<sup>506</sup>

This nationalised culture was not promoted only through film production. The city of Nitra, the historically documented centre of the Pribina chiefdom, was being turned into a symbol of the origins of Slovak statehood. Nitra Castle, which so far had been used as a research centre, was to be turned into a commemorative space; at the centre of the castle a large square for mass gatherings was being built, with a large statue of Prince Pribina erected in its centre.<sup>507</sup> In their endeavour to portray the Slovak nation and state as developing independently from Czechoslovakia, the Slovak official nationalists sought to 'slovakise' more contemporary events. On the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the first Czechoslovak Republic, the heritage organisation *Matica Slovenská*, the Ministry of Culture, and the government organised a commemoration of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik, the only one of the founding fathers of the first Czechoslovak Republic of Slovak origin.<sup>508</sup> Official socialist patriotic memory was now a memory of the development of the Slovak nation as an independent nation and an independent state. These changes were not restricted to changing official national narrative.

The official nationalists also began to promote the return of national symbols which they presented as 'historical national symbols'. In summer 1989, the cultural elites presented a proposal to the central committee of the Party to replace the current state emblem of the Slovak Socialist Republic (a fire on a mountaintop,

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<sup>506</sup> Kučera, Ideové otázky prípravy trojdielneho filmového projektu z doby Veľkej Moravy, Bratislava, 13 February 1986, Unfinished Films, SFÚ, unprocessed materials, 9

<sup>507</sup> Juraj Chovan Rehák, Interview with the author, 14 April 2015, Hubová, Slovakia. 'Sochy,' <http://www.nitra.sk/stranka.php?cat.226>

<sup>508</sup> 'Spomienková slávnosť na Štefánikovom bradle,' *Bratislavské Listy*, 2(1989), 12-3.; See also Jozef Jablonický, 'Glosa o Štefánikovi', *Samizdat o Disente, Záznamy a písomnosti III* (Bratislava, 2007), p. 368.

symbolising the Slovak National Uprising) with the 'historical' Slovak nationalist emblem, the double cross on three hills. This 'historical' national emblem was removed at the height of the centralisation of the Czechoslovak state in the late 1950s and this removal was criticised by emerging Communist nationalists in Slovakia. The Communist nationalists, led by Gustáv Husák, tried to change this symbol in the 1960s but did not succeed. Now, at the end of the 1980s, the nationalist Slovak Communists made another attempt. The main advocate for this change was Viliam Plevza, the head of the Institute of Marxism Leninism and the 'court historian' of Husák. Plevza presented the proposal to change the national emblem to the Central Committee in July 1989.<sup>509</sup> But before doing so, the issue was discussed on the pages of *Literárny Týždenník* by cultural elites including members of *Matica*.<sup>510</sup> *Matica* played a specific role in the construction of this new 'national consciousness,' and was tasked to spearhead a public 'discussion' about the symbol. Vladimír Mináč, head of *Matica*, was convinced that the return to the 'historical' coat of arms would strengthen the 'national consciousness' of Slovak citizens. He claimed that '...only a profound and serious relation to state and national symbols can strengthen the state and national consciousness of citizens.'<sup>511</sup> The official elites were thus preparing to engage a broader segment of society in the creation of nationalised culture.

But even as the cultural elites sought to popularise these national memories and symbols, and broaden the appeal of this culture to a broader segment of society, they did not intend to democratise the construction of this nationalised culture. The official authorities were determined to retain full control of the creation of nationalised culture and took care to contain and repress any groups which had created or had the potential to create nationalised culture autonomous of the state. The party leadership was determined to keep the creation of this nationalised culture firmly at the hands of the party and institutions closely related to the party. The major reason for the restrictive character of the official construction of nationalised culture was to prevent this nationalisation of the official culture from turning into calls for

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<sup>509</sup> Žatkuliak et al, *November 89*, p. 95.

<sup>510</sup> Ladislav Vrteľ, 'Korene národného symbolu', *Literárny Týždenník*, 21 April 1989, 13.; Pavol Vongrej, 'Nová ústava pre Slovensko, O Slovenskom národnom symbole', *Literárny Týždenník*, 26 May 1989, 11; Jozef Novák, 'Aký bude štátny znak' *Literárny Týždenník*, 9 June 1989, 13.

<sup>511</sup> Vladimír Mináč, *Literárny Týždenník*, 4(1989), 12-13.; Vladimír Mináč as quoted in PAPA, Šaštin '89'.

democratisation as had happened during the Prague Spring in 1968. The 1980s party leadership based its legitimacy on its claims that, by suppressing the Prague Spring, the party had, with the 'brotherly help' of Warsaw pact armies, protected Czechoslovakia from a return to 'reactionary right-wing nationalism'.<sup>512</sup> Now, in the late 1980s, as the party leadership began to create nationalised culture, it made sure to prevent any alternative nationalist undercurrents from surfacing. The Czechoslovak 'perestroika' was thus accompanied by a continued repression of those nationalists and civic dissidents who advocated a different understanding of the nation and polity, and especially those who openly called for a change of political system. The party was especially careful to suppress any popular remembrance of the Prague Spring on its 20th anniversary in 1988.

The strategy of the official authorities was to isolate various dissenting groups from each other and from the population at large. This aspect of Czechoslovak 'perestroika' became apparent first in the Czech lands, where civic dissent was increasingly active and emboldened by the changes in the USSR and the Soviet Union, and also by support from the West. Beginning in 1987, Czech dissidents organised increasingly successful demonstrations in Prague. When, in October 1988, a group of an estimated 5,000 dissidents in the Czech Republic filled the square chanting 'Freedom! Freedom!' and 'Masaryk' (the founding president of the first republic), and waved the national colours in defiance of the authorities, the police responded with force. This demonstration was preceded by one in August 1988, on the occasion of twentieth anniversary of the Soviet-led invasion, where an estimated 10,000 demonstrators, chiefly students and young people, filled Prague's central Wenceslas Square and demanded that the regime publicly acknowledge that the invasion was a criminal act.

In Slovakia, the repression focused on the underground Church, especially after the underground Church intensified its contact with civic dissidents in Slovakia and the Czech lands.<sup>513</sup> I will expand on its interconnections with Czech dissidents in greater detail below. Despite the increased pressure from the official authorities, the underground Church continued to create nationalised public Catholic culture.

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<sup>512</sup> *Pravda* 6 September 1968, quoted in Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring and its aftermath: Czechoslovak politics, 1968-1970* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 40.

<sup>513</sup> František Mikloško, interview with the author, 13 July 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.; Ján Čarnogurský, Interview with the Author, 11. 11. 2011. Bratislava, Slovakia.

Although Pope John Paul II was less visibly present in promotion of Catholic mobilisation, Radio Vatican remained an important supporter of bottom-up mobilisation.<sup>514</sup> Radio stations sponsored by the US government continued to support grassroots religious mobilisation, and their networking with civic dissidents would have important consequences affecting the eventual outcomes of the new policy. In fact, since the mid-1980s, their involvement in connecting civic and religious dissidents on a local and transnational level became even more effective.<sup>515</sup> Since the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, the RFE and the RL developed a technique called 'cross-reporting', which aimed to improve informing each country in Eastern Europe of current events in the other states in the region.<sup>516</sup> These new connections helped not only to sustain the underground Church as a creator of nationalised public Catholic culture, but also changed the community's motivations for the construction of this culture. The largely spiritual and Slovak cultural nationalism of the underground community became more civic—the underground community was no longer interested solely in campaigning for the greater autonomy of the Church and religious freedom in Slovakia, but also began to support other rights and liberties. As I will explain in the next section, the community moved to a more civic and Europeanised understanding of national identity. The reconstruction of the official Church would in fact—contrary to the intentions of the Communist regime—be instrumental in the mobilisation of the underground Church.

## **2. The Underground Catholic Community during the Marian Year**

### **2.1. Pilgrimages during the Marian Year**

The programme the underground Church prepared for the Marian year signalled that the community was an increasingly effective creator of nationalised public Catholic culture.<sup>517</sup> The initial impulse for the underground Church's mobilisation came from

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<sup>514</sup> František Mikloško, interview with the author, 13 July 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.; Ján Čarnogurský, Interview with the Author, 11. 11. 2011. Bratislava, Slovakia.

<sup>515</sup> Jacques Sémelin, Liz Libbrecht, 'Communication and resistance. The instrumental role of Western radio stations in opening up Eastern Europe,' *Réseaux*, 2 (1994), 55-69.

<sup>516</sup> Sémelin, Libbrecht, 'Communication and resistance,' 55-69.

<sup>517</sup> Even if both samizdat reporters and official authorities gave slightly different numbers of pilgrims attending pilgrimages: For samizdat reports see, 'K Mariánskemu roku', *NaS* 4(1987), 2-5; 'Levočská púť 1987', *NaS*, 4(1987), 5-7.; 'Mariánsky rok 1987/88' *NaS* 3(1987), 2-3.; Peter Martin, 'The Pilgrimage to Levoča,' *RFE/RL*, 14 July 1988, 19.; 'Šaštín—September 1987,' *NaS* 5(1987), 11; 'Šaštín—'88,' *Katolícky mesačník*, 5(1988), 1. For official report see, 'Informácia o priebehu púťí v dňoch 13.-14. 8. 1988, 18 August 1988, Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia, SNA, 1789/24.

the pope and his encouragement, spelled out in *Redemptoris Mater*, to renew their faith through frequent visits to pilgrimage sites.<sup>518</sup> The pilgrimages were also planned to facilitate integration and co-operation among the various groups involved in the underground Church community. For the Marian year, the underground Church prepared a programme and actively supported participation in pilgrimages across Slovakia. In addition to regular reports, the underground community issued a bulletin with a short overview of pilgrimage sites.<sup>519</sup> The underground community used its network to invite Catholics to these pilgrimages.<sup>520</sup>

These underground Catholic communities continued to perceive the present and the future of the nation as being closely connected with the fate of the Church. A programme for the Marian year published in the major samizdat *Náboženstvo a Súčasnosť* (NaS) encouraged readers to maintain their Catholic faith so that '[this] most precious heritage [would be passed]...on to those who come after us...so that Slovakia [would] enter' the third millennium 'devoted to God through the Church.'<sup>521</sup> The nationalisation of the Catholic identity sometimes translated into understanding the Church as the embodiment of the nation. Activists increasingly conflated the Slovak nation with the Catholic Church in Slovakia, and talked in terms of the consecration of all of the nations 'constitutive groups: youth, families, clergy and hierarchy, religious orders, and lay orders, and other religious denominations.'<sup>522</sup> In this respect, the Marian year was a natural continuation of the nationalising tendencies of the Methodian year. According to Catholic activists, the Slovak nation needed to be 'saved' and this could only be done through the renewal of the Church and the subsequent renewal of society. For now, the underground Catholics remained focused on the revival of the official Church. However, by the beginning of the next year, the underground community had become engaged in two initiatives which further boosted its self-confidence to the point that they no longer saw the reconstruction of the official Church as a necessary pre-condition for the shaping of nationalised public Catholic culture and mobilisation for national renewal.

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<sup>518</sup> 'Mariánsky rok,' *NaS*, 5(1988), 2-6.

<sup>519</sup> 'Mariánsky rok,' 3.

<sup>520</sup> František Mikloško, interview with the author, 13 July 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.; Vladimír Jukl, interview with the author, 30 December 2009, Bratislava, Slovakia.

<sup>521</sup> 'K Mariánskemu roku', *NaS*, 4 (1987), 2-5. 2.

<sup>522</sup> 'Mariánsky rok 1987/88' *NaS*, 3(1987), 2-3.

The opening event of the Marian year, the pilgrimage to Šaštín on the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows in September 1987, helped to forge the still rather diverse underground community as a unified public community. According to samizdat reports, the event was attended by over 2,000 young people, who travelled to Šaštín from around Slovakia and organised an all-night programme in the basilica.<sup>523</sup> At this pilgrimage, the underground church leaders around Jukl, Mikloško and Krčméry organised the first nation-wide meeting of the various groups constituting the underground Church. A similar meeting took place in Levoča in July 1987. At the event the underground Church leaders openly presented themselves to the community. The clerical leader of the underground community, Bishop Korec, joined the underground Catholics during their programme for the first time. The lay leaders Vladimír Jukl, Silvester Krčméry, František Mikloško and Ján Čarnogurský also spoke during the all-night programme. Korec was thus for the first time present as a priest within a public space of the official Church—despite the fact that the official Church had not acknowledged him as a legitimate leader of the Church. The lay groups were, however, encouraged also by the leading members of the official church. The apostolic administrator Štefan Garaj delivered a sermon on the occasion of the Marian year, in which he told the congregation of more than 140,000 that ‘the love and loyalty of the Slovak nation to the Virgin Mary and her Son is a guarantee of the bright future of our people.’<sup>524</sup> This higher level of organisation was noticed also by the official authorities. In a marked difference from the 1986 official evaluation of the pilgrimage, which described the all-night programme as ‘harmless,’ the official authorities now noted that ‘Lay groups came with a [well] organised programme with which they managed to appeal to other pilgrims [who were not from the underground Church]. The all-night programme focused on the lay glorification of Bishop Korec directly inside the basilica.’<sup>525</sup>

The pilgrimages of the Marian year were perceived by the underground community as a great success. The Marian year of 1987 saw, according to both

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<sup>523</sup> Anton Hlinka, *Sila slabých a slabost' silných: cirkev na Slovensku v rokoch 1945-89* (Bratislava, 1990), p.305.

<sup>524</sup> ‘Levočská Púť 1987’, 5.

<sup>525</sup> SNA, f. UVKSS, kart. 1786, ref. 316.

underground and official sources, unprecedentedly high numbers of pilgrims.<sup>526</sup> The celebrations of the Marian year in Levoča with, according to a samizdat author, more than 200,000 pilgrims, amply illustrate the increase.<sup>527</sup> According to the samizdat, 40,000 attended the national pilgrimage to Šaštín and 100,000 attended the one in Gaboltov, in Eastern Slovakia.<sup>528</sup> Combined with their rapidly growing membership, the mass pilgrimages gave the Catholics of the underground Church much greater self-confidence and the inspiration to promote their agendas and push for further mobilisation from below. Catholic activists approvingly claimed that the pilgrimage to Levoča was a 'truly national pilgrimage.'<sup>529</sup> A Slovak Catholic youth samizdat *ZrNO* described the pilgrimages as a 'perennial framework for national communication.'<sup>530</sup> *NaS*, the mouthpiece of the secret Church, maintained that 'alongside their spiritual value...[pilgrimages] became places of self-assertion, places where our national-religious identity was formed...'<sup>531</sup> This perception was further reinforced by the pronouncements of some members of the official Church. A samizdat report approvingly quoted Štefan Garaj, the administrator of Spiš Diocese, who said that the high number of attendees was also a clear sign of the 'fidelity of the Slovak nation to our Heavenly Mother and her Son.'<sup>532</sup> The growing numbers at pilgrimages were seen by the secret Church as a sign of the re-emerging Catholicity of the Slovak nation and the self-assertion of the Church. The pilgrimages that were organised during the Marian year increased the self-confidence of the underground community. However, by the end of the Marian year, the underground Church would not be the only force using pilgrimages as tools for nation-wide mobilisation.

During this time, the official Church also began to emerge as a creator of a nationalised public Catholic culture. In September 1987, the official Church organised a night-long programme in the basilica. The programme was intended to reclaim the space that had, by now, been fully occupied by the underground Church. More positively, these were the first signs that the official authorities were assisting in the revitalisation of the Catholic Church and that this revitalisation was part of a

<sup>526</sup> 'Levočská púť,' 5-7.; 'Šaštín—September 1987,' *NaS* 5(1987), 11; 'Šaštín—'88,' *Katolícky mesačník*, 5(1988), 1.; Peter Martin, 'The Pilgrimage to Levoča,' *RFE/RL*, 14 July 1988, p. 19; 'Myšlienky z Levočskej púte,' *NaS*, 3(1988), 3.

<sup>527</sup> 'Levočská púť 1987,' 5-7.

<sup>528</sup> 'Levočská púť 1987,' 5-7. 'K Mariánskemu roku,' 2-5.

<sup>529</sup> 'Levočská púť 1987,' 5.

<sup>530</sup> 'Púte- Ako ďalej?: Anketa', *ZrNO*, 2 (1989), 24.

<sup>531</sup> 'Petícia za náboženskú slobodu', *NaS*, 2(1988), 3.

<sup>532</sup> 'Levočská púť 1987', 5.

broader programme of strengthening the legitimacy of the socialist project. The official authorities presented the Church as part of the vitality of the socialist programme of world-peace. In September, Mother Theresa visited Šaštín. The visit of this founder of the well-known charity in Delhi, India, was intended to showcase that the Catholic Church in Slovakia was connected and actively involved in the continuing socialist struggle for peace and social justice. The news was spread only among priests from the official Church and members of the underground Church learnt about this visit only at its very end.<sup>533</sup> Over the next two years, pilgrimages would also be attended by Slovak missionaries working in Third World countries. While these changes left the underground Church outside of the basilica, they did not seem to discourage them and they even seemed happy to see this new activity. The underground Church viewed the official programme as a partial fulfilment of their demands. Nonetheless, these underground Catholics were not prepared to stop their own programme. During the September 1987 pilgrimage, the underground Catholics organised their programme outside the basilica and managed to attract large crowds. Moreover, by the beginning of 1988, the underground Catholics took their shaping of a nationalised public Catholic culture to a new level.

## **2.2. The Candle Demonstration**

In March 1988, the underground Catholics organised the first public Catholic demonstration for religious freedom. This demonstration would be the central event mobilising in support of creation of a nationalised public Catholic culture. Once again, transnational support was crucial. Encouraged by the apparently highly functional underground information channels and success of mass pilgrimages, in March 1988, the underground community leaders organized the biggest public demonstration since the Prague Spring in Slovakia. Radio Free Europe and Voice of America perceived the situation of the religious as part of the broader assertion of civic society against 'oppressive' communist states and fully supported the demonstration.<sup>534</sup> Voice of America and Radio Free Europe filled the airwaves within two days, while in Slovakia announcements were posted on church notice boards instructing Catholics that 'we will express our support with these demands by holding a lit candle during

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<sup>533</sup> Brocka, Brocková, *Kým prišiel November*, pp. 51-2.

<sup>534</sup> Hall, 'Pope John Paul II,' pp. 27-56.

the gathering.<sup>535</sup> On the 25 March 1988 more than ten thousand Catholics assembled on Hviezdoslav Square in downtown Bratislava in defiance of a police ban.<sup>536</sup> Crucially for many of the Catholic participants, the demonstration fell on Good Friday, the major Catholic feast, commemorating the crucifixion of Jesus. The silent demonstration would become known as the ‘Candle Demonstration’. The underground Church activists called on the state to not only ‘...fill the vacant bishoprics in accordance with the decision of the Holy Father’ and grant ‘greater religious freedom in Czechoslovakia’, but also to instate ‘full observance of civil law in Czechoslovakia.’<sup>537</sup> The cultural nationalism of the underground Church had thus changed from being narrowly focused on national spiritual renewal, to supporting the broader cause of respect of human rights. As one samizdat author claimed ‘...as believers we are also citizens and we should therefore express our demands for the [recognition of the] rights of the Church in a civic way, appealing to our laws.’<sup>538</sup> The demonstration itself was organised in a more ‘civic’ space—a public square. However, reminiscent of the pilgrimages, they prayed and sang the papal anthem and national Marian songs.<sup>539</sup>

At about the same time, the underground Catholics were co-ordinating a state-wide petition for religious freedom, which had begun in autumn 1987. The petition originated among Catholic dissidents in Moravia and was authored by Moravian Catholic activist Augustin Navrátil. The general theme of the petition was made plain in its first point, ‘Our fundamental demand is the separation of the church from the state, which would mean that the state would not interfere in the organisation and activities of the Church. Through this fundamental demand, the majority of our remaining proposals can be fulfilled.’<sup>540</sup> The petition was a great success. Catholics in the Czech and Slovak republics gathered almost 300,000 signatures, two thirds of

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<sup>535</sup> ‘Verejné zhromaždenie’ *Bratislavské Listy*, 1(1988), 10.

<sup>536</sup> According to Čarnogurský, the demonstration was an attempt to ‘meld the religious and the civic dissent.’ While the crowd was overwhelmingly Catholic, there were a few civic activists such as Milan Šimečka or the environmental activist Marta Filková. But for the presence of civic activists and calls for civic freedom, it would be far-fetched to see this event as a definite end of isolation of different dissent groups and independent groups in Slovakia. Padraic Kenney, *The Carnival of Revolution, Central Europe in 1989* (Princeton, 2002), pp. 215-17.

<sup>537</sup> The text of this letter was republished in samizdat ‘Verejné zhromaždenie’ *Bratislavské Listy*, 1(1988), 10.

<sup>538</sup> ‘Bratislavský veľký piatok,’ *NaS* 2(1988), pp. 8-9, p. 8. LPPCR. See also, Hana Ponická, ‘Hodina Bratislavy, 25. 3. 1988,’ *Hlas Slovenska* 2(1988), pp. 15-8. LPPCR.

<sup>539</sup> ‘Bratislavský veľký piatok,’ 8-9,

<sup>540</sup> ‘Petícia za náboženskú slobodu,’ *NaS*, 2(1988), 3-8.

which were gathered thanks to the well-developed networks of the Slovak underground community. The petition gave an unprecedented boost to the self-confidence of these underground Catholics. The success of the petition was also due to the backing of Cardinal Tomášek. Tomášek provided official support to the petition as well as the demonstration. Radio Vatican, Radio Free Europe, and Voice of America were also a crucial help. Anton Hlinka at Voice of America broadcast regular updates on its progress.<sup>541</sup>

The reaction of the official authorities and the official Church in Czechoslovakia to the petition and the Candle Demonstration confirmed that the official authorities were not going to tolerate unsanctioned religious activities. The petition landed Navrátil in a psychiatric ward and the official propaganda launched a campaign against the petition.<sup>542</sup> At the Candle Demonstration, the police moved in with clubs, dogs, a water cannon, and tear gas, beating the demonstrators and arresting more than a hundred of them. Similarly, even though the petition was tolerated, several signature collectors were detained and beaten by the Secret Police (*ŠtB*).<sup>543</sup> The official authorities also sought to portray the underground community as related to the wartime Slovak Republic (1939-1945). The official authorities typically saw any unauthorised collective religious activity in this way. This framing was, however, also intended to isolate the underground Church both from civic dissidents and from the Western human rights organisations, both of which were careful not to lend support to any fundamentalist, not to mention neo-fascist, groups.<sup>544</sup> Shortly after the launching of the petition (January 1988) and before the demonstration, a series of articles (published in *Pravda*, 10-12 February 1988) identified Pavol Čarnogurský, father of activist Ján Čarnogurský and an MP in the supposedly 'reactionary' wartime Slovak Assembly, as the leader of the underground Church.<sup>545</sup> This framing was reiterated in commentaries on the Candle Demonstration, which was described as the work of 'Pavol Čarnogurský and his accomplices from the

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<sup>541</sup> Šimulčík, *Zápas o nádej*, pp. 179-82.

<sup>542</sup> *Ibid.* p. 37.

<sup>543</sup> 'Petícia za náboženskú slobodu', 8.

<sup>544</sup> František Mikloško, interview with the author, 13 July 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.; Ján Čarnogurský, Interview with the Author, 11. 11. 2011. Bratislava, Slovakia.

<sup>545</sup> Andrej Dobrý (pseudonym), 'Kto je Pavol Čarnogurský, 'Tajná cirkev' v službách antikomunizmu', *Pravda*, 11 February 1988, 4; 'Náš ľud rozpozná svetlo od tmy', *Pravda*, 12 February 1988, 4

illegal church structures and emigration working in the service of world reaction.<sup>546</sup> The author of a *Smena* article saw the Demonstration as a 'return' to the era before February 1948 (the date of the Communist takeover).<sup>547</sup> Pavol Čarnogurský was known to many members of the underground Church community and respected in a small circle around his son, Ján Čarnogurský, but he was certainly not the leader of the underground community.

This official strategy was not entirely unsuccessful. At the end of 1987, Ivan Polanský, one of the most prolific printers of samizdat, was detained on charges of 'promoting fascism'<sup>548</sup> after he edited and printed a samizdat compilation entitled *Historický Zápisník* (Historical Notebook), which, in effect, celebrated Jozef Tiso, the president of wartime Slovakia. This issue was part of a series, the first one of which had already been dedicated to the interwar Catholic nationalist leader of the Slovak People's Party, Andrej Hlinka. For some time the case was overlooked by human rights organisations.<sup>549</sup> Yet framing the demonstrators in Bratislava in this way did not bring similar results. These attempts to suppress and discredit the underground Church both internationally and in Czechoslovakia did not bring the effects the official authorities had expected.

### 2.3. The Aftermath of the Candle Demonstration

Following the demonstration, the underground Catholics received unprecedented support from across Czechoslovakia, the surrounding countries, and Europe more broadly. The underground community was openly supported by the most senior churchman in Czechoslovakia, Cardinal Tomášek. The Cardinal played a central role in maintaining this positive image of the underground Church. By this point, Tomášek used the official tolerance towards public Catholic worship but did not back down on his support of civic dissent. He supported the demonstration during the major Catholic feast of St. Vojtech at central Prague's Cathedral of St. Vitus, where he

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<sup>546</sup> 'Kto chce zneužiť veriacich?', *Večerník*, 24 March 1988, 1.; 'Kto stojí v pozadí?', *Večerník*, 25 March 1988, 1; 'Akcia nevyšla podľa scenára,' *Večerník*, 28 March 1988, 1.

<sup>547</sup> *Smena*, 24 March 1988, 1.

<sup>548</sup> *Historický zápisník*, 1 (1986). Copies of *Historický zápisník* are in the Slovak National Archives in Bratislava and in the National Library in Martin—I would like to thank James Mace Ward for this information.

<sup>549</sup> František Mikloško, interview with the author, 13 July 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.; Ján Čarnogurský, Interview with the Author, 11. 11. 2011. Bratislava, Slovakia. Petr Blažek, 'Výbor na obranu Ivana Polanského, Limity spolupráce českého a slovenského opozičního hnutí,' in J. Marušiak and N. Kmeť (eds.), *Slovensko a režim normalizácie*, (Prešov, 2001), p. 215.

claimed that these Catholics acted 'in unity with Christ,' hinting that, despite the lack of support from the Slovak hierarchy, these Catholics' protest happened in unity with the Church.<sup>550</sup> Cardinal Tomášek would remain an important supporter of the underground community in Slovakia and an important source of the intra-church legitimacy of the community. Tomášek's support was vital, especially since the Holy See did not lend any clear support to the demonstration. Following the demonstration, the pope publicly prayed for the 'Church in Czechoslovakia.'<sup>551</sup> This was a rather vaguely-phrased support. In fact it may have been the case that public support of the underground Church community as such was not among the Vatican's priorities, especially now when the Vatican was clearly careful not to disrupt contact with the Czechoslovak state, with which it was seeking to reach an agreement on the central position of the Bishop of Trnava.<sup>552</sup> This silence went unnoticed in the underground community. It might have been a serious blow to the underground community's self-confidence several years ago. Now the underground community felt supported by the church thanks to Tomášek, but also by broader and broader segments of civic dissent.

The extension of the underground community's activism from fighting for greater religious freedom to a broader interest in the defence of human rights won it support from civic dissidents, both in Slovakia, and in the Czech lands. Until the Candle Demonstration, civic dissidents in Slovakia were not interested in making contact with the underground Church. For instance, writer Hana Ponická, who had been purged from the Slovak Writers' Committee in the 1970s, wrote a report on the demonstration, and from then on became involved with underground Church.<sup>553</sup> Another leading figure of Slovak civic dissent, Ivan Hoffman, wrote that the demonstration 'confirmed that Christians, more specifically Catholics, are turning out to be the most compelling force capable of defending the traditional values of our nations, that they are a community that is able to make sacrifices for the renewal of public life.'<sup>554</sup> The underground Catholics were supported also by the major human rights movement Charter 77, based in the Czech lands. The Chartists wrote a protest

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<sup>550</sup> 'Ohlasy zahraničnej tlače', p. 245.

<sup>551</sup> 'Ohlasy zahraničnej tlače na Bratislavsky Veľký piatok,' *Hlas Ameriky*, (9 April 1988), in Korec, *Bratislavsky Veľký Piatok*, 25 March 1988 (Bratislava, 2008), pp. 243-6.

<sup>552</sup> Pešek and Barnovský, *V zovretí normalizácie*, pp. 136-9.

<sup>553</sup> Hana Ponická, 'Hodina Bratislavy,' 25. 3. 1988, *Hlas Slovenska*, 2(1988), 15-18.

<sup>554</sup> Ivan Hoffmann, 'Sviečková manifestácia,' *NaS*, 2(1988), 22-3.

letter in which they condemned the suppression of the Candle Demonstration. They argued that ‘this act of repression...is an attack on all honest efforts to find solutions to basic and pressing issues in our society. It is like a dark nightmare from the past and, before the world, it will remain a stain on our country.’<sup>555</sup> This was the first time the underground Church community in Slovakia was openly supported by Charter 77.<sup>556</sup> The Candle Demonstration helped the underground Church see its activism in terms of the broader struggle for human rights.

The radio stations broadcasting from the West amplified the self-confidence of the underground community and the awareness of growing solidarity. Given the RFE practice of cross-reporting, it was thanks to these stations that the underground Church could share the experience of the Candle Demonstration both in the region and in Western Europe. Voice of America and Radio Free Europe channels served to keep Slovak Catholics informed about the reaction of the international press.<sup>557</sup> At the same time they furthered the self-understanding of the underground community as a representative of the nation against the oppressive state. Although the exact vectors of this influence are difficult to reconstruct, in part because RFE and RL archived the recording for only six weeks, these channels were instrumental in strengthening the self-awareness of the underground community as part of growing civil society.<sup>558</sup>

Thanks to this solidarity amplified by Western radio channels, the official authorities eventually failed to present the underground church as an obscure group linked to Slovak state. In fact, even the case of Ivan Polanský began to attract more international attention and help. The main help for Polanský came from the Czech Charter 77. The Czech dissidents, especially the samizdat publishers, now saw Polanský’s trial as an attempt to silent illegal publishers. They consciously

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<sup>555</sup> ‘Charta 77 a Vybor na obranu nespravodlivo stihanych k zhromazdeniu veriacich v Bratislave (Zaznam z Hlasu Ameriky 6 April 1988), in Korec, *Bratislavsky Velky Piatok*, 25 March 1988 (Bratislava, 2008), pp. 239-42.

<sup>556</sup> ‘Charta 77 a Vybor na obranu,’ pp. 239-42.

<sup>557</sup> Vladimír Jukl, Interview with the author, 7 January 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia; Ján Čarnogurský, Interview with the Author, 11. 11. 2011. Bratislava, Slovakia.; Ján Ch. Korec, Interview with the author, 17 August 2012, Nitra, Slovakia; František Mikloško, interview with the author, 13 July 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia; Ján Sokol, Interview with the author, 29 May 2012, Trnava, Slovakia; Jozef Šulavík, Interview with the author, Bratislava 13 July 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia; Jozef Vlkovič, sr., Interview with the author, 14 July 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.

<sup>558</sup> Olga Kopecká, ‘Prínos Svobodné Evropy k české duchovní kontinuite,’ *Teologické Texty*, 2(2003), <http://www.teologicketexty.cz/casopis/2003-2/Prinos-Svobodne-Evropy-k-ceske-duhovni-kontinuite.html> (last accessed 6 February 2015).

disregarded Polansky's work on history and decided instead to defend him as a publisher of samizdat literature. In summer 1988, the *Committee for the Defence of Ivan Polanský* was established and a petition requesting Polanský's release was circulated throughout the Czech and Slovak underground. In a matter of days, Polanský had the support of the West, for which the 'recommendation' of Charter 77 was crucial. In the meantime, Cardinal Tomášek stepped in writing a public letter to Ivan Polanský's wife Ida Polanská, assuring her of his support. According to the Cardinal, the publishing activities of Ivan Polanský 'were protected by international agreements on civic rights, which Czechoslovakia had ratified.'<sup>559</sup> Although the charge was later changed to even more serious one of 'subversion of the Republic', Polanský was released on amnesty by the end of 1988.<sup>560</sup>

As a result of this intensifying co-operation with the civic dissent, the hitherto largely low-key, spiritual-cultural nationalism of the underground community in Slovakia was, during the Marian year, taken to a new level. Although these underground Catholics did not comprise the majority of Catholics in Slovakia and were not supported by the hierarchy, they now began to see themselves as legitimate representatives of the nation. A samizdat summary published in *NaS* asserted that all the activities, such as pilgrimages, the petition, and the demonstration, had 'formed our national-religious identity and deepened our consciousness of a shared responsibility.'<sup>561</sup> The petition was seen as 'perhaps the most important...nationwide referendum in our history.'<sup>562</sup> The samizdat author also claimed that through the petition, 'As a nation, we realized that we cannot be silent when the basic rights of the Church are not respected.'<sup>563</sup> The extent and the ways in which these events contributed to the nationalisation of their Catholic identity can be illustrated through an analysis of the pilgrimage to Nitra, long considered by Catholic nationalists as the place where national and Catholic identity fused for the first time in history.

#### **2.4. Pilgrimage to Nitra- 'National Awakening' of Catholics**

The pilgrimage to Nitra, at the culmination of the Marian year, showcased the extent to which the nationalisation of these Catholics and their self-identification as national

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<sup>559</sup> 'Vážená pani Polanská,' *Katolícky Mesečník*, 6(November 1988), 4.

<sup>560</sup> Letz, 'Prenasledovanie,' p. 231

<sup>561</sup> 'Petícia za náboženskú slobodu,' 3.

<sup>562</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

leaders had developed. Their identification with the nation continued to vacillate between 'suffering' and 'joy,' self-confidence and defensiveness. At the same time, they came even closer to the symbolic spaces of pre-communist Catholic nationalism. The underground Church used their alternative communication networks to invite other Catholics to 'ancient Nitra', through samizdats and Voice of America.<sup>564</sup> The official authorities sought to prevent the underground Catholics from gathering in Nitra for at least two reasons. First, during interwar and wartime period for Catholic nationalists coalescing around the Slovak People's Party Nitra became *the* site that symbolised the origins of Slovak political autonomy.<sup>565</sup> Second, the official authorities, as mentioned earlier, were planning to use Nitra as a site symbolising official nationalism.<sup>566</sup> Indeed when the authorities learnt that underground Catholics were preparing all-night programme for the pilgrimage, they began to prepare an alternative programme which would depict Nitra as the cradle of Slovak culture.<sup>567</sup> However this programme was not allowed by Bishop Pásztor.<sup>568</sup> Pásztor was, of course, not strong enough to prevent the official authorities from staging it, should they insist. The fact that the official authorities gave in so easily might suggest that they did not want to unsettle their relationship with an otherwise loyal churchman that Pásztor certainly was.

During the Nitra pilgrimage, the underground Church organised an all-night programme during which the underground community identified itself with the 19th-century national 'awakeners'. No longer did the underground Catholics understand themselves as symbolising solely the past and present 'suffering' of the Church.<sup>569</sup> The all-night programme was led by Catholic laity, and Bishop Ján Korec was at the centre of the gathering.<sup>570</sup> The speeches in the all-night programme were hitherto the most manifest. The Catholics did continue looking at the current situation as one

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<sup>564</sup> Mikloško, *Nebudete*, p. 138.

<sup>565</sup> In 1933, Nitra became the place of the Pribina festival, the celebration of the 1100th anniversary of the consecration of the first church on Slovak territory in 833, during the reign of duke Pribina of the Nitra Chiefdom. Zajonc, 'Prečo je Nitra staroslávne mesto,' p. 139.

<sup>566</sup> Juraj Chovan Rehák, Interview with the author, 14 April 2015, Hubová, Slovakia.; Matúš Kučera, Interview with the Author, 6 October 2011, Bratislava, Slovakia.

<sup>567</sup> See 'Informácia o priebehu púťí na v dňoch 13.-14. 8. 1988,' Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia, SNA, 1789/24.

<sup>568</sup> 'Informácia o priebehu púťí na v dňoch 13.-14. 8. 1988,' Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia, SNA, 1789/24.

<sup>569</sup> The most detailed description of parts of the programme can be found in a report by official authorities. See 'Informácia o priebehu púťí na v dňoch 13.-14. 8. 1988,' Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia, SNA, 1789/24.

<sup>570</sup> Hlinka, *Sila slabých*, p. 343.

of national suffering and evoked the suffering of the Church in the past. At Nitra pilgrimage they for the first time included those who had been persecuted in more recent history: youth groups from Bratislava, led by the priest Pavol Flajžík, talked about the persecution of the Church in 1950s and also about more problematic figures from that period of the Slovak state.<sup>571</sup> Striving to 'show that also, and perhaps first of all, churchmen were willing to suffer for the nation',<sup>572</sup> they read short biographies of Bishops Buzalka and Gojdič, who both died in Communist prisons. They also spoke of Bishop Karol Kmeťko of Nitra, who lived in interwar and wartime period, emphasizing his positive relationship with the Jewish community and the help he gave to his own religious community.<sup>573</sup> But at the same time they already began to portray the Catholic Church as an emancipatory force in Slovak history. They now not only looked to the 'martyrs', but also to the 19th century 'awakeners of the nation' and the 'great personalities' of the Catholic Church in Slovakia. Indeed, according to the leading underground Church activist František Mikloško, the pilgrimage to Nitra was a 'national awakening of Catholics'.<sup>574</sup>

Performances and ritual further reinforced the extent to which, for some underground Catholics, the fate of the Catholic Church was fused with that of the nation. One of the central moments of the pilgrimage was the singing of *Kto za pravdu horí*. (Who Burns for the Truth). The lyrics of the song read, 'To those who are consumed by the fire of Holy offering, To those who give their lives for the rights of mankind, To those who shed a tear for the grievances of the poor, To them my song goes.' The song was written in the 19th century at the height of 1848 revolution by the Slovak nationalist Lutheran priest Karol Kuzmány at the height of the political emancipatory struggles of Slovak nationalists during the 1848 revolution.<sup>575</sup>

The Catholic activists did not present a new programme, but their cultural nationalism took on a new form. A young Catholic activist from the southern Slovak town of Nové Zámky, Pavol Abrhan brought a Slovak flag with his group.<sup>576</sup> The

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<sup>571</sup> Jozef Vlkovič, jr., Interview with the author, 14 July 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia

<sup>572</sup> Vlkovič, jr. Interview with the author.

<sup>573</sup> For Kmeťko's role in the Slovak state See James Mace Ward, Priest, Politician, Collaborator and Stanislav J Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival* (New York, 1995), p. 199.

<sup>574</sup> Mikloško, *Nebudete*, p. 138.

<sup>575</sup> 'Kto za pravdu horí,' *Katolícky Mesacník*, 6(November, 1988), 1.

<sup>576</sup> 'Informácia o priebehu púťi na v dňoch 13.-14. 8. 1988,' Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia, SNA, 1789/24; Pavol Abrhan, Interview with the author, 12 July 2012, Nové Zámky, Slovakia.

gathering sung the Slovak part of the Czechoslovak anthem independently from the Czech part (The Czechoslovak anthem consisted of two parts, Czech and Slovak. These were always sung together). This Slovak part of the anthem was the most often sung song at the pilgrimage. A group of young Catholics from Nové Zámky also sang, *Hej Slováci*, the official anthem of the Slovak Republic (1939-1945), 'Ho Slovaks, Our language lives, as long as our faithful hearts beat, The Slovak spirit lives, and it will live forever, Thunder and Hell, your anger against us is in vain.' It should be noted that despite the lyrics of the song, Catholics did not yet demand a change of language laws, nor did they express support for the late 1970s laws proposed by official Slovak nationalists to restrict the use of minority languages and reinforce the position of Slovak as the state language.

Despite the fact that the underground Catholics did this without consent of the official Church, they also openly identified with the first three Slovak bishops ordained after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and establishment of Czechoslovakia. At the pilgrimage the biographies of these first three Slovak bishops (Ján Vojtaššák, Pavol Gojdič and Michal Buzalka) were read.<sup>577</sup> At the end of the pilgrimage, these Catholics sang the Slovak part of the Czechoslovak anthem including the last verse (which was not part of this official Czechoslovak anthem), 'Slovakia rises, tearing off its chains.'<sup>578</sup>

Nitra was central in forging an even greater identification between the underground Church and the nation. This commemoration at Nitra broke new ground, expressing this link through nationalist songs and the singing of anthems. Symbols and songs at the Šaštín pilgrimage were confined to religious figures and symbols, and only indirectly reminded the audience of the fusion between the Catholic Church and the nation. The demonstration and a petition in 1987-88 marked a turning point for the underground Church in Slovakia. They now felt they had a mandate to speak in the name of the nation. The identification of the underground Catholic with the nation further deepened after the official authorities intensified their efforts to edge out the underground Church from the official church spaces. .

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<sup>577</sup> Hlinka, *Sila slabých*, p. 343.

<sup>578</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 343.

The Institute of Scientific Atheism began preparations for its first conference about Marian pilgrimages, entitled 'Marian Pilgrimages as an Expression of Political Clericalism.'<sup>579</sup> The official media began to publish articles discrediting the pilgrimages. In *Hlas Ľudu*, the pilgrimage to Levoča was presented as an attempt to 'renew clerical fascist ideals in Slovakia.'<sup>580</sup> The officials focused especially on young pilgrims, the number of which, as they often noted, increased each year. A local weekly in eastern Slovakia warned parents before the Levoča pilgrimage that at pilgrimages young people may encounter drug dealers.<sup>581</sup> Similarly, in *Práca*, an anonymous author claimed that pilgrimages attracted 'alcoholics, drug addicts, and prostitutes.'<sup>582</sup> The youth monthly, *Mladé rozlety*, portrayed the young pilgrims as misguided 'religious fanatics.'<sup>583</sup> All of these official attacks on pilgrimages contributed to further mobilisation of the underground church, especially its increasingly assertive young members.

After *Mladé rozlety* published a critical article about pilgrimages, over sixty young Catholics wrote in protest.<sup>584</sup> They refused the official claim that pilgrimages attracted 'alcoholics, drug addicts, and prostitutes.'<sup>585</sup> Given the high numbers of people at pilgrimages, they argued, that such an unfavourable portrayal of pilgrimages could be easily qualified as a crime of 'discriminating against the nation, race, and religious conviction' and may result in a complaint in court.<sup>586</sup> The secretly ordained Bishop Ján Korec echoed this idea in a separate protest letter to the General Secretary of the Communist Party Gustáv Husák. According to Korec, by demonising these young people, the monthly journal was tarring those 300,000 citizens who signed the petition with the same brush.<sup>587</sup> Furthermore, Korec claimed, the article was an attack on the whole tradition of 'Christian national emancipators from Ss. Cyril and Methodius to Cardinal Jozef Tomko'-based prefect for evangelisation.<sup>588</sup> In his letter

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<sup>579</sup> Rudolf Dupkala, *Klerikalizmus a Mariánsky kult* (Bratislava 1989).

<sup>580</sup> Andrej Dobry, *Hlas Ľudu*,

<sup>581</sup> Štefan Dub, Milan Kováč, 'K otázke vzniku a vývoja cirkevnej púte v Levoči', *Spišské Hlasy*, 25(1987), 5.

<sup>582</sup> 'Rub a Líce Púti' *Práca*, 22 February 1989, 3.

<sup>583</sup> Peter Kasalovský, Václav Hák, 'Vec súkromná,' *Mladé Rozlety*, 11 October 1988, 12-13.

<sup>584</sup> Peter Kasalovský, '...a už sme odpísaní! (O listoch ad Vec súkromná), 22 November 1988, 4-5., Peter Kasalovský, 'Ad vec súkromná,' *Mladé Rozlety*, 17 January 1989, 1.

<sup>586</sup> A letter to *Práca* published in *Katolícky Mesačník*, 'Mládež reaguje na článok v "Práci", *Katolícky Mesačník*, 4(1989), 39.

<sup>587</sup> Korec, 'List šéfredaktorovi,' 38.

<sup>588</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

Korec alluded to increasing attempts to frame emerging national Catholic narrative as an instance of ‘clerical fascism.’

## 2.5. Defending the Church, Defending the Nation

Over the last year preceding the fall of state socialism, the leading figures of the underground church became involved in newly intensified construction of religious national narrative – often in response to official attempts to connect unsanctioned Catholic mobilisation with wartime Catholic nationalism of the Hlinka Slovak People’s Party and with Fascism. In this sense, the year 1988 saw the intensification of a battle between the authorities and the underground Church over how the role of the Catholic Church in national life was to be understood. Most notably, Bishop Korec assumed a role of central authority on the history of the ‘Slovak’ Catholic Church. For instance: in March 1989, on the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak State, Czechoslovak Television broadcast *The Crucifix in the Snares of Power*. The serial depicted the Catholic Church as the sole reason behind all the problems and crimes of the interwar period, and claimed it had undermined the very Slovak nation it sought to represent. It was at its most criminal, the serial contended, in its complicity with the Slovak state during the wartime period. Prepared by the Institute of Scientific Atheism, the film portrayed the Slovak state as culmination of Catholic Church’s negative role in Slovak history.<sup>589</sup>

Bishop Korec wrote a protest letter to Czechoslovak Television that was published in every major Catholic samizdat. The letter was the first substantial attempt by an underground Church clerical leader to publicly read his understanding of the Church into the contemporary history of the Slovak nation. In doing so Korec continued in his project of constructing a new Catholic nationalist narrative of the Slovak nation, a personal project he had begun during the Methodian year. Korec claimed that ‘the Catholic Church and Catholic priests played a crucial role in the national emancipation’<sup>590</sup> and thus ‘...all those who have trampled down Slovak Catholicism have performed, and still perform, a poor service to the Slovak

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<sup>589</sup> Ján Ch. Korec, *Križ vo svetle pravdy* (Bratislava, 1991).

<sup>590</sup> ‘Križ v osídlach moci’, *Katolícky Mesačník*, 5(1989), 4-5; ‘List otca biskupa J. Ch. Korca cs. Televízii k relácii Križ v osídlach moci’, *Príloha Rodinneho Spolocenstva*, 3(1989), missing pagination.

nation...<sup>591</sup> Korec protested at the description of the life in the Slovak state as being managed by 'criminals' who, with the assistance of the Church, 'plundered and dragged the nation to the bottom.'<sup>592</sup> Paraphrasing probably one of his favourite quotes by John Paul II, he claimed that, 'Slovak history cannot be complete without a chapter about the faithful, the Christians, and the Church...'<sup>593</sup> The letter was seen as a crucial public defence of Catholics; this defence was conducted in terms of placing the Catholic Church into the broader national Catholic narrative. He reversed the Communists' interpretation: Catholicism had been vital to the development of the nation; the Catholic clergy had played vital roles in its national emancipation; and it was the Communist state that was the main danger for the Slovak nation - exactly because of its persecution of those who supported the true nation, such as the Church. He also mounted a defence of the role of religious believers in the Slovak National Uprising, noting how Communist public histories disregarded their role by associating them solely with the then-crumbling Slovak Republic (1939-1945). These attacks, wrote Korec, had for 40 years 'overshadowed the positive beliefs of many SNP participants, which had, in fact, led them to fight against the ideology of Nazism.'<sup>594</sup> Drawing on the views of émigré historians, he argued that the SNP expressed the generally 'widespread resistance-defiance of Slovakia against the ideology and inhuman practice of Nazism, and as such it is known in the world.'<sup>595</sup> Korec for the first time mobilised wartime history in support of the idea that Catholicism was a major force behind the maintenance of morality of the Catholic nation.

This letter had an important mobilising effect on dissenting Catholic Slovak voices. Sections of it were published in all major samizdat papers both in *NaS* and *RoS* and separately as a samizdat leaflet.<sup>596</sup> The letter got a positive review from František Mikloško, who publicised it to support his view of the anti-Nazi orientation of the Catholic Church; Mikloško quoted a part of the letter which 'proved' the 'clearly anti-Nazi orientation of Catholic clergy and Catholic students' even during the Slovak

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<sup>591</sup> Korec, *Kříž vo svetle*, p. 149

<sup>592</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132

<sup>593</sup> Ján Ch. Korec, *Od Barbarskej Noci, Na Slobode* (Bratislava, 1993), p. 450

<sup>594</sup> Korec, *Od Barbarskej Noci, Na Slobode*, pp. 448-9.

<sup>595</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 447.

<sup>596</sup> 'List otca biskupa J. Ch. Korca', missing pagination; 'Kříž v osídlech moci', 4-5.

state period.<sup>597</sup> Vladimír Jukl, who was much more critical of the Slovak state, supported it too, and believed that the letter broke an important taboo in that it started discussion about the role of the Church in the first Slovak Republic (1939-1945).<sup>598</sup> These Catholics all had different views on the Slovak state, but they nonetheless welcomed Korec's initiative. The Communist state thus unwittingly forced the underground Catholics (or perhaps rather gave them the opportunity) to reflect on the most political parts of pre-communist Catholic nationalism. Now members of the underground Church were reviving Catholicism as a central part of the nation's history and telling stories that undermined the state's account of the Church's role as a reactionary force. However, despite the fact that in the process they looked to a past that saw the rise of political Catholic nationalism, the nationalism of these Catholics was not turning towards separatist nationalism. Rather, the fact that the underground Catholics were anchored in the civic dissident movement encouraged a more open cultural nationalism.

### 3. The Origins of Catholic Civic Cultural Nationalism

Underground Catholics began to find common cause with dissenting voices who were both civic in orientation and from outside Slovakia. In so doing, they began to embrace the ideals of democratic pluralism and started to become better connected with civic dissidents and non-Slovak activists. This translated into their increasing openness towards construction of a democratic nationalised public Catholic narrative. A major initiative in this spirit emerged on 28 October 1988, the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the first common state of Czechs and Slovaks. That month, Czech and Slovak Catholics published one of their best-known initiatives—the *Declaration of the Czech and Slovak Catholics on the 70th Anniversary of Establishment of Czechoslovak Republic*.<sup>599</sup> At the end of 1988, a group of Slovak Catholics led by Ján Čarnogurský joined Czech Catholics to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the first Czechoslovak Republic. Unlike the Slovak population at large, this group of Slovak Catholics was the only group to commemorate the anniversary. The occasion and its commemoration was, among

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<sup>597</sup> o-f, (František Mikloško), 'Kříž v osídlech moci', *Katolícky Mesačník*, 5(1989), 4-5.

<sup>598</sup> o-f, 'Kříž v osídlech moci', 5.

<sup>599</sup> 'Vyhlásenie českých a slovenských katolíkov k 70. Výročiu vzniku Československej republiky,' *NaS*, 4(1988), 14-6; 'Prohlášení českých a slovenských katolíků k 70. výročí vzniku Československé republiky (28. 10. 1918),' *Informace o Církvi*, 12(1988), 5-6.

Czech dissidents, the central element of democratic national identity before and after 1989. Composed by a Czech Catholic dissident Tomáš Halík, Slovak signatories included Jukl, the publisher of the political Christian democratic samizdat *Bratislavské Listy*, Čarnogurský as well as the wife of Ivan Polanský, Ida Polanská.<sup>600</sup> Čarnogurský co-authored this declaration in which Czech and Slovak Catholics showed support for the democratic ideals of first Czechoslovak republic. As well as editing the whole text, Čarnogurský also wrote passages about Slovak history.<sup>601</sup>

The goal of the declaration was to provide Catholic support for the idea of Czecho-Slovak mutuality through remembering historical moments of Czechoslovak co-operation, seeking reconciliation and showing support for democracy. The Czech and Slovak Catholics wanted to help facilitate a renewal based on support for democracy and on what they called 'ecumenical patriotism.' In their view, renewal was not supposed to be about and for Catholics only, but they wanted to pursue this renewal in co-operation with other religions. Declaring adherence to the 'values of democracy', the underground Czech and Slovak Catholics showed appreciation for T. G. Masaryk and his 'democratism and humanism based on authentic religious values'<sup>602</sup> and, in line with Catholic social teaching following John Paul II, they proclaimed their support for the principles of 'democratic plurality in political, cultural and civic life,' and for a state that respects 'human rights, which are based on the dignity of the human person.'<sup>603</sup> They claimed that, in the struggle for religious freedom, 'we do not ask for any special privileges for the Catholic Church...the respect for the rights of the religious and the free life of our church will allow us to develop fully our service to the common good...'<sup>604</sup> This declaration signalled that Slovak Catholics moved from establishing links with the civic dissent and showing concern over human rights to the promotion of a democratic political culture. It also showed that in this concern they also identified with Czech Catholics.

The underground Catholics were no longer only receivers of help from the civic dissent movement but had also begun to show their open support for non-religious civic dissent. In April 1989, a group of underground Church leaders—

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<sup>600</sup> 'Vyhlásenie českých a slovenských katolíkov,' 16.

<sup>601</sup> Ján Čarnogurský, Interview with the Author, 11 November 2011, Bratislava, Slovakia.

<sup>602</sup> 'Vyhlásenie českých a slovenských katolíkov,' 15.

<sup>603</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>604</sup> Ibid, 15.

including Bishop Korec, Ján Čarnogurský, Mikloško, and Ivan Hoffman—wrote a letter to Tomášek in which they reported that believers in Slovakia showed great solidarity with Václav Havel and other political prisoners.<sup>605</sup> As the official authorities in Slovakia negotiated the strengthening of the official Church during 1987–88, the underground Church, supported by civic dissidents both in Slovakia and in the Czech lands, began to become a self-confident national community threatening to challenge the new position of the official Church as an aide in the creation of official culture. By the time the official authorities in Slovakia began to promote greater sovereignty for the Slovak socialist republic and were in need of a loyal Catholic Church, the underground community could no longer be held at bay. Indeed, as will be analysed in the next section, when the official authorities began to publicise their plans to rewrite the Czechoslovak constitution, the underground Church acted as an independent force within both the official Church and society at large. In doing so, the underground Church threatened both the plans to conduct the changes without interventions from civic dissidents, as well as those to instrumentalise the Catholic Church in the process.

### **3.1. Underground Catholics and the Reform of the Constitution**

The underground Church imagined Catholic involvement in broader societal reforms in terms of a bottom-up mobilisation of independent Catholic associations. In this, they followed Cardinal Tomášek, who reacted to the news about the prepared reform of the Czechoslovak constitution by calling on the official authorities to observe the right to freedom of assembly. He wrote to the Czechoslovak president (at this point no longer the General Secretary) Gustáv Husák, asking for ‘freedom of expression and freedom of assembly for religious communities.’<sup>606</sup> Indeed, the underground Catholics utilised the official nationalist campaign to promote a democratic political system. In addition, some of the leading figures of the underground Church, such as Čarnogurský and Mikloško, were now focused on mobilisation for broader democratic changes. These Catholics led Slovak civic dissidents to support the first major pro-democratic Czechoslovakia-wide initiative, to connect Charter 77 with the population

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<sup>605</sup> ‘Slovenski katolíci sú solidárni s Václavom Havlom a ďalšími väzňami, Bratislava 10. 4. 1989,’ *Katolícky Mesačník*, 4(1989), 5.

<sup>606</sup> ‘Katolícka cirkev a príprava novej ústavy,’ *NaS*, 23-30.; ‘Ako si predstavujeme Novú ústavu,’ *Katolícky Mesačník*, 10(1989), 3-4.; ‘Otvorený list kardinála Tomáška,’ *Katolícky Mesačník*, 10(1989), 5.

at large. Alongside their continued interest in greater religious freedom and moral renewal of the nation, a growing number of Catholics were attracted to different themes emerging in the official, as well as underground, discourse, especially those of democratisation (this issue was more prominent among dissidents) and the future of the Czechoslovak federation (a theme more prominent among official elites.) As an act of appreciation of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the First Czechoslovak Republic, the Initiative issued a manifesto entitled *Democracy for Everyone*, in which they presented politics as a place of expression and assertion of the true interests of society. The authors also rejected the leading role of the Communist Party and class division of society, and said that the new constitution should, in their view, 'secure state sovereignty, the plurality of ownership forms and the establishment of independent unions.'<sup>607</sup> In October 1988, a group of about one hundred leading underground Catholics joined the Czechoslovakia-wide *Hnutie za Občiansku Slobodu* (Movement of Civic Freedom, HOS). Catholics including Čarnogurský (who became the leader of the Slovak section), Anton Selecký, Ján Langoš, Vladimír Palko, and Ján Hoffman, joined together with members of the civic dissent movement, including Hana Ponická, ex-Marxist Miroslav Kusý, historian Jozef Jablonický, and Milan Šimečka.<sup>608</sup>

The main intention behind the initiative was to overcome the societal isolation of Charter 77 and further integration of dissent. The immediate impulse for the establishment of HOS was the official dispersion of the historical third gathering (so-called *fórum* [forum]) of signatories of Charter 77 in January 1988. Although the movement was started as a federation-wide one, the Slovak members soon established their own organisation.<sup>609</sup> Shortly after its establishment, the fact that HOS was a loose association of political groups and clubs, without any unifying centre, showed in gradual demarcation of different political orientations with the Christian Democratic orientation led by the Czech Catholic dissident Václav Benda, being the one closest to Slovak Catholics.<sup>610</sup>

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<sup>607</sup> Milan Otáhal, 'Programová orientace disentu 1969-1989,' In Petr Blažek, (ed.) *Opozice a odpor proti komunistickému režimu v Československu, 1968-1989* (Prague, 2005). p. 39

<sup>608</sup> Anton Selecký, 'Iniciatíva protikomunistickej opozície v ČSSR', <http://www.magnificat.sk/archiv-antona-seleckeho/iniciatíva-protikomunistickej-opozície-v-cssr/> (last accessed 23 July 2014)

<sup>609</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215.

<sup>610</sup> Otáhal, 'Programová orientace disentu,' p. 39.

The Slovak members of the Movement for Democracy, with Catholics at their helm, were also beginning to form a distinctive group within the Movement for Democracy. Most Slovak members were interested in official nation-building, especially now that nation building had become an important element of the official discourse and politics. But even if they in this respect turned to the official discourse, they continued to share the civic dissent's focus on democracy. For these Slovak Catholics, Slovak sovereignty could only be fully realised within a democratic political system. This support for democracy was a natural continuation of their 1988 mobilisation, which was conceived in civic terms. Nonetheless, their appreciation of nation-building meant that despite these reservations, these Catholics were mobilised by the broader official discourse on Slovak cultural sovereignty.

The underground Catholics became involved in the official discourse on greater cultural sovereignty for Slovakia under the leadership of Čarnogurský. Čarnogurský attempted to create a group based on Christian Democratic principles in 1988, but did not find supporters. Čarnogurský would become the political leader of Catholics in the final days of the communist regime, the negotiator with Communist officials and, after 1989, the leader of the Christian Democratic Movement, the major Christian party in early post-communist Slovakia. During the last three years of state socialism, some of the basic tenets of future Christian Democratic national ideology would emerge. One of them was the dual support for democracy and at the same time for nation-building. During the last years of communism this meant engagement in both official and civic dissent discourses. .

The Catholic dissent began to participate in official construction of the national narrative. On May 4th, 1989, the 70th anniversary of Štefánik's tragic death, HOS published a manifesto in memory of M. R. Štefánik, a supporter of 'Czecho-Slovak mutuality.' The manifesto was read at a public commemoration at Bradlo, which followed an official commemoration organised by Matica Slovenská and the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Socialist Republic. The underground Catholics and civic dissidents clearly identified with the idea of greater Slovak sovereignty. This idea would propel these Catholics into post-socialist politics, in which Slovak independence would become one of the central issues. The idea of Slovak sovereignty would also remain an important common ground for Catholics and Communist nationalists even after the fall of state socialism.

The manifesto issued by HOS celebrated Štefánik not only as an important figure of Slovak history but also as a representative of the first Czechoslovakia, the first democratic common state of Czechs and Slovaks. It celebrated Štefánik as 'the co-founder of the Czechoslovak Republic, which provided basic civil rights, pluralist democracy, religious freedom and other rights.'<sup>611</sup> The democratic interwar state which guaranteed the rights they were now lacking was juxtaposed with the current state. The manifesto criticized the official neglect of this personality and saw it as a reflection of the regime's undemocratic character. They complained that the memory of Štefánik and his role in history having been belittled and twisted, his monuments removed and destroyed.'<sup>612</sup> Čarnogurský suggested 'full rehabilitation' of Štefánik, by which he meant the renewal of his monuments and the return of his name to those streets in Slovakia which, before the 1950s, had been named in Štefánik's memory. Then the manifesto supported the proposed change of the national emblem, and the request was received with applause. A Lutheran writer, Hana Ponická, was asked to present this request to the Slovak government and the Committee for the new ČSFR Constitution. Before that, a reporter from Czechoslovak Television had an interview with Hana Ponická. The group around Čarnogurský sang *Hej Slováci* and the complete Slovak part of the Czechoslovak anthem, *Nad Tatrou sa blýska* (only the first verse was part of the official Czechoslovak anthem).<sup>613</sup> The official authorities tolerated this alternative commemoration. There were no sanctions in its aftermath. The only intervention came after someone from Čarnogurský's group put up the 'historical Slovak state emblem.' The symbol was confiscated by an official standing nearby.<sup>614</sup> At this point the official authorities were already preparing to detain Čarnogurský. But they did so only after Čarnogurský moved to challenge the core of the legitimacy of the socialist state.

By spring 1989, underground Catholics around Čarnogurský moved to challenge the official interpretation of the Slovak National Uprising and the Prague Spring. The commemoration of Štefánik expanded the boundaries of officially allowed discourse, but Čarnogurský began to challenge the core of the state socialist 'national/historical consciousness' when he questioned the accuracy of the current

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<sup>611</sup> Selecký, *Iniciatíva protikomunistickej opozície v ČSSR*.

<sup>612</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>614</sup> 'Spomienková slávnosť,' 12.

interpretation of the SNP. This understanding of the Uprising was advanced especially by the former general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and president, Husák, who wrote his memoir in the 1960s and revisited the view that the Communist Party was the inspiration, organiser and leading force in the Uprising.<sup>615</sup> This view was challenged by historian Jozef Jablonický in a work published in 1969 as one of the last remnants of the 1960s thaw. The book cost Jablonický his academic career. But Jablonický was now returning and *Bratislavské Listy* was one of the platforms where he began to publish.<sup>616</sup> The journal was thus giving space to a view that had emerged and was suppressed during the Prague Spring. Intending to bring up the officially forgotten democratic leaders of the 1944 Uprising, Čarnogurský, Hana Ponická, Anton Selecký and Vladimír Maňák requested permission to commemorate generals Rudolf Viest and Ján Golian —the main (non-Communist) commanders of the SNP who were executed by the Nazis in 1945. At the beginning of August they wanted to gather at the site where a memorial to these men was erected in 1948 but was taken down soon after in the Stalinist years. Their request was denied by the official authorities.<sup>617</sup> This way of commemorating the Uprising challenged the Communist version of the SNP as key for re-emerging Communist nationalists. It was also a reminder of the Prague Spring, since similar re-evaluations of the SNP had first emerged during the reform period. The official nationalists were not willing to accept non-socialist interpretations of this still core event of the 'national/historical consciousness.'<sup>618</sup>

This official rejection did not stop Čarnogurský, and by the end of the summer he set out to question the very source of legitimacy of the normalisation regime. When the 20th anniversary of the 1968 occupation came, five leading activists, including Čarnogurský, sent a letter to the Czechoslovak National Assembly and *Literárny Týždenník*.<sup>619</sup> In it they demanded 'rehabilitation' of the Prague Spring and its leading figures. By this time, the neighbouring states of Czechoslovakia began to reconsider the participation of their individual armies in the 1968 occupation of Czechoslovakia. While the gradually democratising Hungary and Poland denounced

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<sup>615</sup> Jozef Jablonický, 'Už bez legend,' in *Fragment of histórii* (Bratislava, 2009), p. 46.

<sup>616</sup> Jablonický, 'Už bez legend,' p. 46.

<sup>617</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>618</sup> Anton Hrnko, 'Medzi dvomi povstaniami,' *Literárny Týždeník*, 25 August 1989, 10.

<sup>619</sup> Ján Čarnogurský, Interview with the Author, 11. 11. 2011. Bratislava, Slovakia

the occupation, Bulgaria and the GDR, Czechoslovakia's co-members in the orthodox bloc, stuck to a hard-line approach.<sup>620</sup> These changes emboldened and created space for the leaders of the Prague Spring in Slovakia who had been purged in the wake of the occupation and had remained silent for almost twenty years. On April 4, the Hungarian television show Panorama aired a long and detailed interview with Alexander Dubček, which could be easily picked up in southern Slovakia. RFE re-broadcast it over the entire country. The Czechoslovak government denounced the recent developments in Hungary, including the rehabilitation by the regime of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, and the re-burial in a place of honor of Imre Nagy, the reform Communist associated with it. The Communist state had already violently suppressed the first commemoration of 1968 in August 1988. The Czech human rights movement's Charter 77, České Děti (Czech Children) and Klub Johna Lennona (The Society of John Lennon) recommended that no demonstrations be held on 21 August, but the five Slovak activists sent letters encouraging peaceful commemorations at the places where two young victims of the 1968 suppression had been shot.<sup>621</sup> This would be the first such commemoration in Slovakia.

The reforming spirit from Moscow or domestic attempts to commemorate the Prague Spring was hardly welcomed by the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, whose authority stemmed directly from the Soviet occupation in 1968, and which the new Soviet leader pointedly refrained from endorsing when he visited Prague in 1987. Importantly, 1968 was left untouched by Moscow. Official Soviet commentaries on the 20th anniversary of the invasion were largely unrepentant, although this can be explained by their concern not to embarrass the Husák-Jakeš regime in Prague.<sup>622</sup> In mid-August, the activists around Čarnogurský were detained as a 'representative sample' of Slovak dissent, the so-called 'Bratislava Five.' Čarnogurský and Anton Selecký represented Catholic dissent; the writer Hana Ponická represented Lutheran activists, and civic activists Miroslav Kusý and Vladimír Maňák the former reform Communists. Fearing a spill-over from neighbouring countries, the officials apparently wanted to discourage opposition circles from following the example of the opposition in Poland, Hungary and GDR. Indeed, the opposition circles in Slovakia were already coming together. Together

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<sup>620</sup> Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence*, p. 99.

<sup>621</sup> Žatkuliak, *November 89*, pp. 98-9.

<sup>622</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, *Uses of Adversity* (London, 1989), p. 222.

with the civic dissidents, the Slovak Catholics campaigned for the release of Čarnogurský. We will never learn what the outcome would have been. The trial of Čarnogurský encouraged further cooperation among dissidents in Slovakia: a petition against Čarnogurský's detention was signed by Bishop Korec, as well as by the ex-Marxist Milan Šimečka. According to historian Marušiak, this was a crucial moment in the short history of independent action, when all strands of the Slovak independent sphere met.<sup>623</sup> By this point the integration between civic dissent and underground Catholics culminated. But as the previously considerable gap between them was narrowing, the gap between underground Catholics and the official Church was broadening.

When the official authorities and Church hierarchy turned out to have little understanding of civic dissent, the underground Catholics were dismayed. This was despite the fact that in some respects, the official authorities seemingly fulfilled some of the demands raised by the underground Catholics. As we have seen in this section, the underground community developed a new concept of a nationalised culture the creation of which no longer involved only the freedom of worship, but also more broadly to a reform of the political system. Yet—as we shall see below—despite the growing strength of the underground Church, the most powerful new movements for the reconstruction of a new national culture now came from the Communist state. The authorities came to fully recognise the benefits of supporting a national church to sustain their own power, which they did in co-operation with many within the Church hierarchy.

#### **4. The Official Church, Communist State and 'National Unity'**

By the end of the 1980s, the Communist authorities began to play a key role—in conjunction with the Church hierarchy—contributed to the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture. They sought to portray the Catholic Church as a symbol of 'national unity'. As I mentioned before, this began as a part of Czechoslovak perestroika, in an attempt to strengthen Catholic loyalty towards the communist state. As we shall see, the shaping of nationalised public Catholic culture by the Communist authorities remained highly hierarchical and closely connected to the state. This official contribution to the Catholic national culture excluded the underground Church.

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<sup>623</sup> Marušiak, 'The Normalisation Regime,' 1811.

In the following section, I will analyse to what extent these differences became visible and what effect they had on the overall shaping of nationalised public Catholic culture.

#### **4.1. Nationalised public Catholic Culture and Official Church**

In some respects, the official contribution to the nationalised public Catholic culture was similar to the one created by the underground Catholics, especially at its initial stages during the Methodian year. This is not surprising: the Communist state started to try to appropriate the message of the underground Church. First and foremost, official authorities followed the underground Church in that they placed a new emphasis on popular Catholicism in legitimising themselves. Second, they tried to integrate the Catholic Church into a socialist vision of a specifically Slovak history. Indeed, the changes that were made by the official authorities as they rebuilt the nationally functional Church, both as an institution and as a culture, fulfilled some of the demands of the underground Catholics, such as filling the vacant bishoprics. The state supported the ordination of more bishops and an archbishop, thus fulfilling a demand from the underground Catholics. Moreover, the new archbishop began to use his position to promote Catholic rituals with a nation-wide effect. One of the first acts of the newly appointed archbishop was the consecration of the Slovak nation to Mary.<sup>624</sup> It is not clear whether the official Church was inspired by the underground Church in this respect, but the archbishop nonetheless performed a ritual very similar to the ritual of national consecration the underground Catholics had been calling for since 1983 and saw it as the best way of expressing the close relationship between the Catholic Church and the Slovak nation.

Nevertheless, the Communist authorities were interested in involving the Church in the creation of a nationalised culture (and thus unwittingly contributing to the creation of a nationalised public Catholic culture) only in so far as this culture helped them to maintain their own power. They were not interested in bringing other groups such as the underground Church into dialogue. Indeed, they attempted to create an environment in which the underground communities did not feel that they were accepted as legitimate creators of nationalised public Catholic culture. Rather, the official authorities wanted to strengthen the position of the hierarchy and official

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<sup>624</sup> PAPA, 'Drahý brat Augustin Navratil,' 1.

clergy as the real custodians of the Church. This promotion of the Catholic hierarchy as a symbol of national identity and unity did not suit the image of a 'national culture' that the underground Church had supported. Indeed, the hierarchy that the authorities supported – such as the newly appointed archbishop of Trnava – did little to stop leading members of the underground Church from being imprisoned; they also did not support civic dissent.

This new image of the Church promoted by the authorities—as centralised, focused on the official hierarchy and patriotic clergy, and closely attached to the state—was also reflected in the new national official narrative that the official authorities promoted in the late 1980s. In one sense, the state embraced figures that the underground Church had supported, such as Ss. Cyril and Methodius. This had been evident already during the Methodian year when the saints were considered as part of the development of the Slovak nation, independent from the Czech nation. But now Ss. Cyril and Methodius were no longer considered solely as 'teachers' and their contribution was no longer seen solely in terms of a 'contribution to the cultural development' of the 9th century chiefdom of Great Moravia. Rather, they were celebrated as Catholic priests and Methodius as an archbishop. Moreover, the Ministry of Culture in the Slovak socialist republic was preparing to celebrate Ss. Cyril and Methodius as related to the origins of Slovak statehood. This would lead to a new focus on the southern Slovakian town of Nitra - the centre of the Pribina chiefdom, which Slovak nationalists saw as the centre of the first ancient Slovak state. In order to celebrate Nitra as the centre of the first ecclesiastical unit on Slovak territory, a monumental statue of Ss. Cyril and Methodius was planned to be erected near Nitra Castle and was to become a place of annual celebrations of Ss. Cyril and Methodius as teachers of the 'Slovak nation.'<sup>625</sup> Ten years after the establishment of the independent Slovak province, the official authorities began to fuse the history of the Slovak nation with the official history of the Catholic Church in Slovakia. What is more, the official authorities allowed leading Catholic émigrés to publicly present Catholic and national memory as vitally inter-related. Most notably, during the appointment ceremony of Archbishop Sokol, Cardinal Jozef Tomko, a Rome-based cardinal of Slovak origin, presented this appointment as an important episode in the common history of the Catholic Church and the nation. In his speech, he said that

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<sup>625</sup> 'Sochy,' <http://www.nitra.sk/stranka.php?cat.226> (last accessed 22 August 2015).

'today the ancient dream of Slovaks is coming true—Slovakia has its own archbishop in close relation to the Cyrilomethodian tradition, which runs through the history of the nation as a red thread. The desire for an independent Slovak province survived on these Cyrilomethodian roots, which would become the guarantee of the preservation of the faith, the faith which is the spiritual culture of the nation.'<sup>626</sup> The head of the Office of Religious Affairs followed up by claiming that 'in one heart, there can be love for God and for one's homeland.'<sup>627</sup> The official authorities also began to use the 'historical' national emblem (the double cross on three hills) during church events. Most notably, on the day of the appointment of the archbishop of Trnava, the cathedral was adorned with this 'historical' Slovak national emblem flag.

All of these changes signalled a significant change in the position of the Catholic hierarchy in the official construction of the national identity of the Slovak socialist nation. Prior to the appointment of Archbishop Sokol, major religious changes had not been the subject of official attention. For example, when the independent Slovak province was enacted in 1977, the official authorities made sure that the event did not take on national importance. They also prevented the head of the Trnava diocese at that time, Bishop Julius Gábriš, from using the opportunity to present the Church as part of national history. Now after more than ten years, the official authorities sought to make the hierarchy an important agent in the construction of a nationalist narrative of Slovak history. The official authorities now encouraged the Catholic episcopate to participate in the discussion on the new constitution.<sup>628</sup> During the appointment ceremony of Archbishop Sokol at Trnava Cathedral, Vincent Máčovský, the head of the Office of Religious Affairs, informed the congregation 'about the preparation of a new constitution and laws, which will be in accord with international agreements.'<sup>629</sup> We will never learn what exactly the role of the Church hierarchy would be in these discussions as these negotiations were brought to an abrupt end in November 1989. Nonetheless, these were all significant changes that placed the Church, and the Church hierarchy especially, into a key position in the construction of nationalised culture and indirectly also the nationalised public Catholic culture. Yet these changes did not seem to satisfy the underground

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<sup>626</sup> PAPA, 'Drahý brat Augustín Navrátil,' 1.

<sup>627</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>628</sup> 'Otvorený list kardinála Tomáška,' *Katolícky Mesačník*, 10(1989), 5.

<sup>629</sup> PAPA, 'Drahý brat Augustín Navrátil,' 1.

community, especially as the forces calling for a democratic political system were rapidly expanding both in Czechoslovakia and in the region more widely.

#### **4.2. Official Nationalised Culture, the Catholic Church and the Underground Catholic Community**

The underground Church sensed that these changes within the official Church and in its position in official culture were not intended as a first step towards a more autonomous, or 'freer', Church and autonomous nationalised public Catholic culture. The underground Church began to lose interest in some of the major changes taking place within the official Church.<sup>630</sup> If, during the early 1980s, the underground journals would celebrate any sign of a stronger position of the hierarchy, by the last years of the decade, most of the main journals ignored them. This was for a number of reasons. First, the ordination of the archbishop of Trnava suggested that the official Church had embraced a very different notion of 'national church' and nationalised culture. Second, these changes were accompanied by the suppression of the underground Catholic leaders by official authorities and a disregard for the underground communities on the part of the official Church.

The underground Church disagreed with the close connection between the state and the official Church. As Pavol Abrhan wrote to Augustín Navrátil, the co-ordinator of the Petition for Religious Freedom, 'we rejoice that we have an archbishop, but we are sad because Čarnogurský is still imprisoned.'<sup>631</sup> Other underground Catholics were puzzled by the continued strong presence of *Pacem in Terris*, the association of priests loyal to the communist state. 'Why is *Pacem in Terris* still working?' inquired a group of priests from Košice in a letter circulated in the Catholic samizdat.<sup>632</sup> Furthermore, the underground Church communities were disgruntled by the fact that they could no longer organise their programme in official Church spaces. During pilgrimages in 1989, the official Church organised all-night programmes at the churches and thus took up the space and time used by the underground communities. As a consequence, the underground groups were effectively pushed out by the official Church. Bishop Korec, the underground Church leader, who had in 1986 and 1987 attended the pilgrimages and played an important role in creating the

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<sup>630</sup> 'Kardinál Tomko na Slovensku,' *Katolícky Mesačník*, 4(1989), 4-5.

<sup>631</sup> 'Drahý brat Augustín Navrátil,' 1, PAPA.

<sup>632</sup> 'List kňazov Košickej diecézy o ZKD PiT,' *Katolícky mesačník*, 6(1989), 11-12.

feeling of a powerful underground community, was now conspicuously absent, both from the Šaštín and the Gaboltov pilgrimages. The new official leaders of the Church even began to indirectly criticise the Church, calling on laity to fully obey the Catholic hierarchy and not contribute to creating 'anarchy' within the Church. Indeed, in a 1989 article, one of the newly ordained bishops, František Tondra, argued that Catholics needed to trust bishops and that the Church laity needed to stop contributing to 'anarchy' within the Church, emphasising that the laity needed to obey the hierarchy.<sup>633</sup>

However, for all their respect for hierarchy, the underground Catholics were not going to heed these calls. Their understanding of a nationalised public Catholic culture was not limited simply to a strong hierarchy—they imagined the Church as related to the nation. At this point this connection meant that all independent groups and initiatives should be considered legitimate participants in the transformation of society. Considering the state's initiatives to be insufficient, the underground Catholics believed that they could still fight for their own understanding of a national culture as a culture that was shaped, not only by the hierarchy, but also by the laity and what is more independently from the state. Catholic samizdat journals continued to be published and the underground networks kept working until November 1989. However, for the time being, these diverging views on what the relationship between the Church, the state and the nation should be did not translate into open clashes over the nationalised public Catholic culture.

The last pilgrimage to Šaštín on the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows before the fall of state socialism in November 1989 saw two parallel programmes. On one hand, there was an all-night programme organised by the official Church. This programme was focused on faith and, unlike the previous programmes organised by the underground Church, did not show any discontent with the current religious policies. The underground Catholics continued to present their demands and did not accept the role of the hierarchy as the only representative of the Catholic Church in the semi-public debate about the reform of the Czechoslovak constitution.

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<sup>633</sup> J. Kornalík, 'Dielo ducha svätého, *Katolícke Noviny*, 1. Quoted in, *Katolícky mesačník*, 10(1989), 6-7.

Groups of underground Catholics wanted to use the pilgrimage to get involved in the debate on the reform of the Czechoslovak constitution. Catholic activist Pavol Abrhan found it appropriate to discuss the issue in the national basilica at the national pilgrimage.<sup>634</sup> In a proclamation that was more a manifesto than a prayer, they said they wanted to look for ‘the truth about our national emblem and about our nation.’<sup>635</sup> He concluded, ‘...we trust our patron saint... and hope that in the future, our nation will be *of its own right*...in the European community of nations.’<sup>636</sup> Abrhan’s speech in Šaštín was remembered by many as the ‘most memorable moment.’<sup>637</sup> Their programme started with a song that had very little to do with *Our Lady of Sorrows*: ‘Slovakia my Fatherland.’<sup>638</sup> Prayers comprised a rather insignificant part of the programme, and only one out of five songs was dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the rest featured the Slovak nation. For comparison, in 1985, only one out of seven songs was nationally themed.<sup>639</sup> However, the November events which led to the fall of state socialism removed the central agent of this project and the issue of sovereignty was pushed into the background as democracy became the theme of the day. The underground Catholics were almost immediately mobilised by this discourse. The November events might have fully exposed the great difference between these two views of the nature of a ‘national church’.

For the time being, the nationalised public Catholic culture was thus being shaped from two different directions, top-down by the official Church and bottom-up by the underground community. The symbol of Our Lady of Sorrows was accordingly invested with two different meanings. Whilst for the official Church the National Patroness remained a symbol of the faith of the nation, for the underground Church its meaning was already more politicised, related to the questions of Slovakia’s political future. We will never know how far the Church, or indeed the official authorities, would have allowed this development of nationalised public Catholic culture to continue on two parallel levels. November 1989 saw the end of state socialism and the end of the state control of the Church. As the November events eventually turned out for Catholics, they prevented a division and in fact helped to

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<sup>634</sup> Šaštín ’89 PAPA.

<sup>635</sup> Ibid. p. 2

<sup>636</sup> Ibid. p. 2

<sup>637</sup> Jozef Vlkovič, interview with the author; Mikloško, interview with the author; Šulavíkova, interview with the author.

<sup>638</sup> Šaštín 1989, PAPA.

<sup>639</sup> Šaštín 1985, PAPA.

unify the Catholic Church and thus place nationalised public Catholic culture in strong position after November 1989.

## **5. Catholics and the ‘Gentle Revolution’**

As we have seen throughout this chapter, a newly emerging nationalised public Catholic culture was not the product of the post-communist period—it was firmly rooted in the 1980s developments within various groups of Catholics. Indeed, by the end of the decade, the communist authorities were—in conjunction with the Church hierarchy—significantly contributing to the shaping of a nationalised public Catholic culture. This role of official authorities was apparent especially in the increased use of religious-national symbols, and the construction of Catholic national memories. Relatedly, the Church hierarchy now recognised the Communist authorities as potentially useful partners. As a result, the divides within the Church were deeper and deeper exactly because the underground church, influenced by civic dissent and embracing ideas of political democracy, now found themselves to be at a much greater distance from the Church hierarchy than they had been earlier in the decade. However, the gradual collapse of Communism was to change all of this. In the days leading up to the system’s ultimate demise, the hierarchy began to gravitate towards the underground church. Leading members of the hierarchy joined prominent figures in the underground Church to express support for what increasingly appeared to them to be a major political shift on the near horizon.

Revealing the level of the Church’s involvement in the build-up to the November 1989 strikes, the Czech and Slovak hierarchy, together with a large number of pilgrims, were in Rome, celebrating the canonisation of St. Agnes of Bohemia. On the 17th of November 1989, when the first student demonstrations in Prague began, hundreds of leading Czech and Slovak Catholics were at St. Peter’s in Vatican square rather than on November squares in Czechoslovakia. Archbishop Ján Sokol, the newly appointed leader of the Slovak ecclesiastical province, also attended the ceremony. Bishop Ján Korec was also present, already wearing the insignia of a bishop. It was highly probable that his appointment to one of the dioceses in Slovakia (most probably Nitra) was approaching.

The first demonstrations began in Prague on 17 November, International Students' Day, which, in 1989, was also the fiftieth anniversary of the Nazis' repression of Czech universities. On that day, a peaceful gathering organised by the Socialist Association of Youth turned into a demonstration for broader political changes and was eventually violently suppressed by the police. In Bratislava, about 200 students demonstrated on Thursday 16 November and demanded a dialogue about problems in the educational system.<sup>640</sup> On 19 November, one day after individual groups of Slovak civic dissent and intellectuals had discussed the possibilities of civic mobilisation, about 500 people met and formed a broad civic movement *Verejnost' Proti Násiliu*, 'Public Against Violence', (VPN), which became the Slovak counterpart of the Civic Forum (OF), established simultaneously in Prague.<sup>641</sup> The Catholics welcomed the demonstrations but still kept their own dissenting behaviour within religious spaces. By Monday, 20 November, popular protest had grown enormously – it had spilled into the Bratislava theatres, where actors went on strike. Students were beginning to hold assemblies, and by the next day the activity had spread all over Slovakia: Wednesday's newspapers reported demonstrations in Košice, Banská Bystrica, Žilina, Zvolen, Trnava and Martin.<sup>642</sup> Initially the Catholic activists did not join them. They were not passive, but they kept to church spaces. A good illustration of their initial reaction is the action of the Catholic activists at the Trnava pilgrimage in mid-November, who gathered at the traditional annual Trnava Novena, a local Marian feast, and prayed for the release of the detained Catholic and civic activists.<sup>643</sup>

Eventually it was figures from the hierarchy who had the greatest impact on encouraging the involvement of Catholics in protest. The leading figure of November 1989 from the Catholic hierarchy was initially Cardinal Tomášek, who joined in the bottom-up mobilisation for support of radical change. On the day of his return from Rome, he published a declaration to 'All people of Czechoslovakia,' encouraging Catholics not to stand aside from protest. 'In this fateful hour of our history,' appealed Tomášek, none of you should stand aside. Let's raise our voice again, in unity with other citizens of our country, Czechs and Slovaks and with members of minorities,

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<sup>640</sup> Karen Henderson, *Slovakia: The Escape from Invisibility* (London and New York, 2002), p. 29.

<sup>641</sup> Ingrid Antalová (ed.), *Verejnost' proti násiliu 1989–1991* (Bratislava, 1998) and in Ingrid Antalová (ed.), *Verejnost' proti násiliu: Fórum* (Bratislava, 1999).

<sup>642</sup> *Smena*, 22 November 1989, 4.

<sup>643</sup> 'Trnavská Novéna,' *NaS*, 4(1989), 10-11.

believers and non-believers. The right to religious freedom cannot be severed from other democratic rights. Freedom is inseparable.<sup>644</sup> Tomášek also advocated the end of the one party monopoly on power. Archbishop Sokol, by contrast, was much more careful not to move away from the recently achieved co-operation with the socialist state too quickly. Archbishop Sokol sent a letter to all ordinaries and bishops in Slovakia, on the same day as Tomášek. In it he announced that, 'since our Catholic Church is part of society, which is undergoing the process of democratisation, we have to take an official stance.' By this time Sokol was already under pressure from within the Church in Slovakia. A leading group of young seminarians (candidates for priesthood) joined the students by gathering at the statue of the 18th century nationalist poet Ján Hollý and signing national songs.<sup>645</sup> They were led by Alojz Martinec, one of the leading figures of *Pacem in Terris*, a well-known nationalist historian who would, after November 1989, become one of the central advocates for placing the Church at the centre of national history.<sup>646</sup> On the next day, 22 November, Sokol issued a declaration that supported the call for respect of human rights but did not explicitly reject the Communist Party. 'I join the people of Czechoslovakia and many leading functionaries in this country and the whole world, in protest against this brutal violence, trampling on human dignity and violation of basic human rights. I hope that there will be people democratically elected.' Importantly, however, Sokol did not call on Catholics to mobilise. Instead, he called on them to 'pray so that violence would stop.'<sup>647</sup> It took almost another week for Sokol to call for Catholic popular mobilisation.

In the meantime, members of the underground Church began to mobilise in support of the Czech and Slovak students. In over 14 declarations, the first of which appeared on 23 November 1989, groups that had previously mobilised within the underground Church began to demand changes.<sup>648</sup> They supported the demands of

<sup>644</sup> 'Všetkému ľudu Československa,' in Ján Šimulčík, (ed.), *Katolícka cirkev a nežná revolúcia 1989* (Prešov, 1999), pp. 39-40.

<sup>645</sup> 'Stanovisko študentov rímskokatolíckej cyrilometodskej bohosloveckej fakulty v Bratislave,' Príloha A8, in, Šimulčík, *Katolícka cirkev a nežná*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>646</sup> 'Bohoslovci sa pridali k strajkujúcim študentom 21 Novembra,' SITA, 20 November 2013, <http://www.webnoviny.sk/ostatne/clanok/759196-bohoslovci-sa-pridali-k-strajkujucim-studentom-21-novembra/> (last accessed 11 September 2014).

<sup>647</sup> 'Ľuďom dobrej vôle na Slovensku,' in Šimulčík, *Katolícka cirkev a nežná revolúcia 1989*, p. 24.

<sup>648</sup> 'My, veriace rodiny,' Príloha A5, p.46. ; 'Prehlasenie katolíckych laikov,' Príloha A6, p. 47. 'Stanovisko študentov Rímskokatolíckej cyrilometodskej bohosloveckej fakulty v Bratislave,' Príloha A8, pp. 50-51. 'Výzva Hnutia Rodin na Slovensku,' Príloha A9, p. 52.; 'Mili priatelia,' Príloha A11, p. 54-5.; 'Vyhlásenie greckokatolíckych duchovných,' Príloha A12, p. 56.; 'Slovo

the Czech and Slovak students and added their own demands. Three themes were paramount. First, the activists repeated some of their demands voiced in 1988, and these included an end to 'discrimination against believers at schools, cultural institutions, in factories and scientific institutions', to allow the establishment of an independent association of party members as well as those who do not belong to the party', an end to censorship, and a greater allowance of religious publications.<sup>649</sup> Second, they repeated their demands for 'moral renewal.' The Movement of Christian Families challenged the dominance of the 'atheist worldview' in culture and demanded an 'adequate' role for religions and the abolishment of, in their view, 'demoralising and destructive sexual education.'<sup>650</sup> A group of seminarians condemned the current political system as totalitarian, 'leading to the deformation of true values.'<sup>651</sup> Implicit in these demands was the basic claim that any truly 'moral' system had to respect Catholic values. These Catholics however, did not present the Catholic Church as a strong leader in the cause of this moral renewal. In fact they saw the current state of the Church as a symptom of broader moral 'decay.'<sup>652</sup>

Last but not least, the activists demanded an end to the close co-operation between Church and state. Emboldened by the society-wide mobilisation, the underground Catholics criticised the Church's involvement with the state. It may well be that the events of November 1989 allowed these Catholics to voice the criticism they did not dare to say publicly before November, in fear of repression not only from the state, but also from the Church hierarchy. An activist priest Anton Srholec saw 1989 as the beginning of the Church's internal renewal as well as its work on renewing society at large. The Church was, in his view, 'facing a difficult task: to genuinely atone, overcome fear, sympathise with the poor and un-free nation. We should become the conscience of the nation, spokesperson of her demands in...service, to make clear that we are not after money and prestige.'<sup>653</sup> The Movement of Christian Families, which, since 1985, had been the fastest growing group within the underground community, demanded that the leaders of the Church begin to 'publicly defend the interests of believers and other citizens and not let them

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veriacich ku svojim kňazom,' Priloha A13, p. 57.; 'Stanovisko kňazov Nitrianskej diecézy,' p. 59. All in J Šimulčík, *Katolícka Cirkev a Nežná*. Missing pagination.

<sup>649</sup> 'My, veriace rodiny,' p. 46.

<sup>650</sup> 'Výzva Hnutia Rodin na Slovensku,' Supplement A9, p. 52.

<sup>651</sup> 'Stanovisko studentov,' A8, pp. 50-1.

<sup>652</sup> 'Stanovisko študentov,' A8.; 'Slovo veriacich,' p. 57.

<sup>653</sup> Anton Srholec, 'Radosť a nádej, Konkrétna situácia Cirkvi v Československu,' *RoS*, 4(1989), 10.

be abused by the authorities of the state.’ They also rejected *Pacem in Terris* priests as ‘representatives of the Church.’ They also protested the official labelling of the underground Church as an heir to a ‘clerical-fascist’ state.<sup>654</sup> ‘We have our own views’, they asserted, which ‘matured under the conditions of real socialism and we reject the view that they had been forced upon us by émigrés.’ The Lay Apostolate around Mikloško and Jukl criticised current Church policies, claiming that a ‘state that constantly interferes with the internal matters of the Church is not a democratic state.’<sup>655</sup> All these declarations demanded the separation of the Church from state control. It initially seemed that some in the official hierarchy might eventually abandon their support for the state and join in with the society.

Meanwhile, the head of Slovak Province Archbishop Sokol caught up with this bottom-up mobilisation. Following the first common negotiations between the state and members of Public Against Violence, Sokol, as the head of the Slovak province, publicly supported PAV and called on all Catholics to join this movement.<sup>656</sup> By this time, VPN had been joined by Čarnogurský. However, the rest of the hierarchy did not follow Sokol’s lead yet; they did not show any signs of abandoning their recently inaugurated state-oriented cultural nationalism. At the end of November 1989, the Slovak hierarchy published a letter to all believers in which it announced the beginning of the ‘Year of Faith’ and related this year to the 370th anniversary of the death of three Catholic ‘martyrs of Košice’ who died during the Reformation. According to the Slovak hierarchy, the message of the story of these martyrs for Catholics was to stay away from politics. As the hierarchy put it, the martyrs were ‘victims of the confrontation between different confessions, which were marked by different political interests.’<sup>657</sup> Rather than encouraging societal engagement, they called on Catholics to focus on faith. Indeed, the only priest present at the main November stage at the Slovak National Uprising Square in Bratislava was Anton Srholec, a priest who, after 1989, would be suspended from his service for unorthodox views. In the meantime, Čarnogurský came to the centre stage of the demonstrations. The imprisonment helped gain Čarnogurský the large following necessary for his long-term project of establishing a Christian political movement. He

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<sup>654</sup> ‘My, veriace rodiny,’ p. 46.

<sup>655</sup> ‘Prehlásenie katolíckych laikov,’ in J Šimulčík(ed.), *Katolícka Cirkev a Nežná Revolúcia 1989*, (Prešov, 1998), Priloha A6.

<sup>656</sup> ‘Všetkým ľuďom dobrej vôle,’ p. 26.

<sup>657</sup> Personal Archive of the Author, ‘Pastiersky List Zboru Ordinarov SSR z príležitosti roku viery,’ 1.

was now the 'martyr,' a suitable leader for the Catholic nationalists, but also more broadly for the Slovak society.

In the meantime, the demonstrations led to changes in the highest echelons of the party. Wednesday, 22 November, saw another trial of Čarnogurský, which attracted a crowd of protesters who outside the courtroom demanded his freedom. Daily rallies began on SNP (Slovak National Uprising) Square in Bratislava, and Alexander Dubček appeared before the crowd, as VPN demanded access to the press and television. On the 24 November, Dubček appeared in Prague alongside Havel, the dissident Czech playwright and Civic Forum leader. Later that night, the entire presidium of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia resigned. Miloš Jakeš, current General Secretary who had only recently replaced Husák, was now replaced by an unknown Karel Urbánek. On Saturday, between half a million and a million people met in Letná, Prague, as the crowds had outgrown Wenceslas Square, while some 70,000 people assembled in Bratislava. Havel announced that Ladislav Adamec, the Czechoslovak prime minister, had met a delegation from the Prague based Občanské Forum, OF, and that President Husák had stopped the prosecution of Čarnogurský and a number of other dissidents. On 27 November, a 2-hour general strike gained wide support across the country, symbolising that, according to Karen Henderson, 'the working class and intellectuals were pulling together for the first time since the Communist takeover.'<sup>658</sup> From that moment, the regime collapsed very rapidly. When the Czechoslovak government next met the citizens' movements the day after the strike, it was talking not only to Havel (only released from jail in May 1989), but also to Čarnogurský, who had been released the previous Saturday. In Bratislava, VPN began negotiating with the Slovak government, and one of its first demands – the removal of Article 4 of the constitution, guaranteeing the lead role of the Communist Party – was almost immediately conceded by the Federal Assembly in Prague on 29 November.

The underground Catholic activists would form the leading post-1989 political party. They began their political mobilisation in December 1989 (the Christian Democratic Movement would be officially launched in January 1990). The politicisation of most of the Catholic dissent movement happened independently of the 'liberal' VPN. In a matter of months, Catholic dissidents issued an appeal for the

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<sup>658</sup> Henderson, *Slovakia*, p. 30.

establishment of Christian Democratic clubs. This mobilisation lasted several months. In the meantime, the Christian Democratic Movement gained positions in the executive and legislative structures of state (Čarnogurský was appointed vice-chairman of the Federal Assembly).<sup>659</sup> From December 1989 to April 1990, Čarnogurský was the first federal vice-prime minister, and from April to June 1990 the vice-prime minister of Czechoslovakia.

In the meantime, some Catholics had begun where they left off during the Prague Spring in 1968. They again began to call for swift integration of the underground Church leaders into the structures of the official Church. Vladimír Jukl returned to the strategy rehearsed in 1968 and called for removal of *Pacem in Terris* members from the leading positions in Church administration and an end to the *PiT* influence in *Katolícke Noviny*.<sup>660</sup> This did not come as fast as the underground Church had expected. These Catholics, who, in the last months preceding November 1989 struggled to understand the hierarchy's lack of interest in the underground Church, were now happy to see Sokol's support of VPN. They probably saw it as an indication of broader support of bottom-up mobilisation by the Catholic Church hierarchy. As Jukl wrote for *Katolícky Mesačník*, 'We abound with gratitude and admiration for our university students and actors, who triggered this chain reaction. But we are even more enthusiastic and proud of the reaction of our Church dignitaries who reacted promptly, courageously and wisely to the situation.' Jukl's demand for the removal of *PiT* functionaries was partially fulfilled in December, at the first meeting at the Trnava Archbishopric Office.

The fact that Jan Sokol, the leading Church dignitary, supported democratic mobilisation did not mean that the hierarchy would embrace the underground Church wholeheartedly. Archbishop Sokol reacted to the public emergence of secretly ordained priests with restraint.<sup>661</sup> Indeed, to the great disappointment of some formerly underground clergy, clergy loyal to *Pacem in Terris* were handled with 'kid gloves', while underground priests came under close scrutiny because of fear from

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<sup>659</sup> Lubomír Kopeček, *Politické strany na Slovensku 1989 až 2006* (Brno, 2007), pp. 304-5.

<sup>660</sup> Vladimír Jukl, 'Drahí čitatelia, bratia a sestry v Kristu,' *Katolícky Mesačník*, Ročník II, 1989, 12.

<sup>661</sup> The Catholic hierarchy waited to be able to select out progressive elements within the secret church community in Czechoslovakia. Given their shared ecclesiastical conservatism, most of the secret church leaders in Slovakia accepted this new development.

liberal elements within the Church.<sup>662</sup> Curiously, this conservatism was supported directly from the Vatican - which sought to contain possibly liberal influence from formerly underground churches. Moreover, the pope saw the issue of purges and debates about collaboration as highly divisive and was determined to prevent any division by treading carefully with regard to PiT members.<sup>663</sup> Certainly, representatives of the secret church wanted something more radical: Jukl argued that 'The nation is loyal to the Holy Father...[but] PiT members are a disgrace to the Slovak nation.'<sup>664</sup> Jukl's plea was based on the fact that even if PiT was officially abolished by the Vatican, its leading members retained their positions.<sup>665</sup> Bishop Sokol answered by questioning Jukl's legitimacy as a priest (because of his secret ordination.)<sup>666</sup> On December 11, 1989, the communist-controlled *Pacem in Terris* was disbanded, alongside its counterparts in the region. Overall, the Catholic Church would come out of the November events as a symbol of change and a vehicle of post-socialist national identity. The Catholic hierarchy, as well as large groups of lay Catholics, had adapted themselves reasonably quickly to the new democratic discourse and the emerging democratic system.

## Conclusion

This chapter attempted to shed some light on the complex process of the nationalisation of Catholic identity and the development of nationalised public Catholic culture in the last three years before the fall of the socialist state. During this period, the process of nationalisation that had begun during the Methodian year developed in two respects. First, the underground Church began to understand itself as part of a broader history of national emancipation. Second, the first changes in official culture helped to turn the Church hierarchy into a symbol of national unity. This chapter aimed to examine how nationalised public Catholic culture changed through two processes: the institutional and cultural reconstruction of the Catholic Church by future Catholic elite and the intensified creation of an ethnic state and

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<sup>662</sup> 'Programove vyhlásenie kňazov Slovenska,' in J Šimulčík *Katolícka Cirkev a Nežná*, p. 28.

<sup>663</sup> Hans Jorissen, 'Odmietnuté Dedičstvo: Rímske Normy v zaobchádzaní so skrytou cirkvou,' in *Zradené prorocstvo: Československá podzemná cirkev medzi Vatikánom a komunizmom*, eds., Erwin Koller, Hans Küng, Peter Križan (Prešov, 2011), pp. 137-47. Jan Konzal, *Duch a Nevěsta: Z dějin církevního podzemí ve 2. Polovině 20. Století* (Brno, 2010), 66-82.

<sup>664</sup> Karol Moravčík, 'Zápis- infomacia o stretnutí knazov v Trnave dna 4. 12. 1989', In Jan Šimulčík, *Katolícka Cirkev a Nežná Revolúcia 1989* (Prešov, 1998), p. 74.

<sup>665</sup> Moravčík, 'Zápis- infomacia o stretnutí kňazov', p. 74.

<sup>666</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

culture. The first part of this chapter looked at the mobilisation of underground Catholics during the Marian year, roughly spanning the period from September 1987 to September 1988. During this time, underground Catholics began to perceive themselves as 'national-awakeners' seeking not only emancipation for the Church as an institution, but also free expression of religious communities. In the second phase, underground Catholics, as well as patriotic priests, were increasingly presented as part of a national mission for sovereignty - this was promoted by the socialist state as part of the belated Czechoslovak perestroika. Initially, this official discourse mobilised underground Catholics, who understood support of this change as a natural part of their cultural nationalism. However, the socialist state did not imagine that this 'national church' would be a result of a bottom-up mobilisation and legitimisation. Instead, they imagined a reconstructed centralised and authoritarian patriotic church as a leader of this process. This change occurred as part of the broader campaign of the promotion of nationalised culture as well as the promotion of culture on par with other aspects of socialist life. It was presented within the concept of a patriotic church and as a fulfilment of the 'Cyrilomethodian heritage' of close co-operation between church and state. Excluding the underground Church, this new arrangement threatened to antagonise the underground Church. The official discourse of greater national sovereignty, however, helped to preserve a minimal sense of unity within the Catholic Church. However, the November events which led to the fall of state socialism removed the central agent of this project and the issue of sovereignty was pushed into the background as democracy became the theme of the day. The change of the status of Our Lady of Sorrows, and the popularity of nationalised public Catholic symbols, did not start as a result of the fall of state socialism. Contrary to currently dominant histories of Catholicism and nationalism in the last years of state socialism and early years of post-socialism, November 1989 was not the only important turning point.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 'The Return to Nitra'

#### Nationalised public Catholic culture after 1989

On 5 July 1991, the feast day of Saints Cyril and Methodius-- the first post-Socialist 'national pilgrimage' to Nitra took place. It had been more than fifty years since the last such pilgrimage took place, since before the Communist Party assumed a power monopoly in 1948. Before that, Nitra, a sizable city in central Slovakia, was at the core of nationalist and Catholic interpretations of Slovak history. Since at least the 1920s, Catholic nationalists had been using Nitra for various commemorations and pilgrimages to promote the connection between Slovak national autonomy and Slovak Catholicism.<sup>667</sup> During this first post-Socialist 'national pilgrimage', Jan Ch. Korec, the former leader of the underground Church and now the first Slovak Cardinal and Bishop of the Diocese of Nitra, presented the early medieval Saints Cyril and Methodius not exclusively as symbols of the Catholic Church in Slovakia, but also as symbols of Slovak political autonomy. Korec presented a vision of a 'national Church' in which Slovak ethnicity was connected with Catholicism by memory, values, myths, and symbolism – drawn from blood ties and bonds to the land and native traditions.<sup>668</sup> Since at least 1985 Korec had crusaded tirelessly for a nationalised public Catholic culture, but now in 1991, in a step away from his pre-1989 rhetoric, he no longer evoked Cyril and Methodius to promote 'faith' as an important part of the national narrative in support of religious freedom. His Nitra speech was given at the height of debates about Slovak political future and amidst revision of the Czechoslovak constitution. According to public opinion polls, most Slovaks agreed that Slovakia should have greater autonomy within the Czechoslovak federation – however, they disagreed on how to achieve this. On the most general level, Slovaks debated over whether this should be achieved in collaboration and through negotiation with the Czech nation, or whether it should be a unilateral decision made by Slovak representatives at the Slovak National Assembly. Cardinal Korec, by this time the most popular Church representative in the country and widely regarded as a leading 'moral authority,' supported the latter – and mobilised nationalised public Catholic culture in support of

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<sup>667</sup> Zajonc, 'Prečo je Nitra staroslávne mesto', p. 139.

<sup>668</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, 1986), p.136.

national autonomy. According to Korec, the 'Slovak nation has a right to a life on its own; it has a right to sovereignty; it has a right to decide on its own on how it wants to develop.'<sup>669</sup> This was an important turning point in the shaping of a nationalised public Catholic culture in post-Socialist Slovakia.

This chapter explores how the symbol of Cyril and Methodius acquired this meaning and, more generally, how nationalised public Catholic culture developed and changed in Slovakia's first post-Socialist years. The post-Socialist vision of a 'national Church' culture continued to be shaped as a result of a combination of two processes: the continued Slovakisation of the Catholic Church and its growing cooperation with emerging political nationalism. Indeed, the emergence of Cyril and Methodius in this specific interpretation is a symbolic expression of the fact that, during the first years of the post-Socialist transformation, Catholicism was woven into a specific political and nationalist vision of a post-Socialist transformation: one which saw greater Slovak autonomy as being central to the renewal and preservation of a distinctive Slovak national culture and identity.

Most recent scholarship on religion and nationalism after 1989 typically observes the rise of Catholic nationalism as a function of freedom of expression and as a result of repression of Churches under Communism.<sup>670</sup> This chapter follows these studies in this assumption, but goes even further. As the previous chapter illustrated, by 1989, Catholics from the ranks of the underground Church as well as those coming from the official Church, had contributed to the development of a Catholic national culture composed of symbols, collective memories, and events which depicted the Church as an intrinsic part of the nation. Although from outside the development of this culture may look like a general revival of religion, not unlike public revivals in neighbouring countries, including the Czech lands and Hungary, the late 1980s 'revival in Slovakia' was marked by tensions between the official and the underground Church. These tensions stemmed from the fact that the reconstruction of the official Church was in part directed by the state, which wanted to use this reconstruction to strengthen its own power and to edge the underground Church out of the public spaces of the Church (especially pilgrimages). We will never know what would have happened; November 1989 brought state socialism to an end, and the

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<sup>669</sup> 'Ako Solúnski bratia,' *Katolícke Noviny*, 21. July 1991, 1, 3.

<sup>670</sup> See. e.g. Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?*; Paces, *Prague Panoramas*, pp. 228-54.

nationalised public Catholic culture could be now developed without any restraint. With Catholics from the underground Church assuming leading positions in the new hierarchy and political elite, the tensions seemed to have been forgotten. Moreover, after 1989 Catholics in Slovakia, regardless of their previous relationship to the Communist regime, assumed a central position in the construction of post-Socialist nationalised culture. After 1989, the Catholic Church was put on a pedestal by a range of post-Socialist elites, and this gave it the opportunity to further develop a powerful, distinctively national Slovak popular Catholic culture. This meant that Catholic national culture moved towards the centre of official nationalised culture, a culture which had itself resulted from the influence of many different religious, political, and cultural forces: the interventions of the papacy, the first post-Socialist interim government, the personal involvement of leading figures in the hierarchy, such as Jan Chrysostom Korec, and the rise of the Christian Democratic Movement.

Between 1990 and 1992, calls for declaring Slovak sovereignty and for deciding Slovakia's future independently of the Czech nation became stronger and stronger. The nationalised public Catholic culture stepped forward to play an important role in these debates. This was, however, not because all Catholics would support the direct involvement of the Church (hierarchy) in political debates. The importance of the Catholic Church in these debates was not in the direct political involvement of the Church leaders. Rather, the Catholic Church became important through the mobilisation of nationalised public Catholic culture, which was used by a variety of nationalists, including leading members of the hierarchy, to promote and legitimise their views about the Slovaks' political future. This use of the Catholic culture was a result of several developments. First, the nationalised public Catholic culture was now maintained not only by the hierarchy, but also by nationalists who sought to mobilise this culture in support of various degrees of Slovak autonomy. Second, the pope, who had since the early 1980s been considered the central creator of nationalised public Catholic culture, did not, at least not publicly, prevent this use of Catholic culture. Although the pope's priority was the rebuilding of post-Socialist Churches rather than nation-building, his mission of a return to national 'Christian roots' could be instrumentalised by those who sought Slovak independence. Within this post-Socialist culture, those repertoires of Catholic cultural mobilisation that had been developed in the 1980s continued into the 1990s. They became connected with

the issue of Slovak political autonomy and were eventually used to legitimise Slovak independence.

### **1. Nationalised Public Catholic Culture after 1989**

The development of a post-Socialist nationalised public Catholic culture was a powerful phenomenon of post-Socialism – a feature of the former underground and the official hierarchy coming together and playing important roles in the political and culture life of early post-Socialist Slovakia. The fusion between Catholicism and an ethnically-defined Slovak nation was promoted as national heritage and through national symbols on an unprecedented scale. Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows and Cyril and Methodius became central to the symbolic construction of the post-Socialist nation. These symbols were used to celebrate the various changes that had happened in Church life in 1989 – several mass pilgrimages were made to Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows to give thanks for the 'renewal of political freedom of society and within it also the freedom of the Church.'<sup>671</sup> On major feasts, the shrines were visited by political leaders. Following the fall of state socialism, leading political figures such as President Václav Havel, the Prime Minister of the Slovak Federal Republic, Vladimír Mečiar, and others of similar clout visited the shrine of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows in the first year alone.<sup>672</sup> Cyril and Methodius underwent an even more radical change of status: Nitra quickly metamorphosed into the central pilgrimage site for devotees of Cyril and Methodius, and these saints became symbols of the new post-Socialist Church hierarchy. Together, these symbols, narratives, and events came to play a central role in building a new national identity for the Slovak nation. This transformation took place as a result of many different political, religious and cultural forces: the interventions of the papacy, the change of the position of Catholics and Catholicism in the early months of the democratic regime, the first post-Socialist interim government. Already at this point separatist nationalist voices began to emerge, attempting to mobilise nationalised cultures, including Catholic culture, in support of Slovak independence and to turn this Catholic culture into the culture of the Slovak nation and for Slovak nation. The shaping of nationalised public Catholic culture was in the first months, however, fully at the hand of underground Catholics and the Catholic hierarchy, who focused on the

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<sup>671</sup> 'Národná púť v Saštíne,' *Katolícke Noviny*, 17 June 1990, 1-2.; Letz, *Sedembolestná*, p. 100.

<sup>672</sup> Kružliak, *Cyrlometodský kult*, p. 218.

promotion of Christianity in the public sphere. In doing so, they focused their energies on building a strong Christian presence and on cooperating with both the Czechs and the Hungarians. The Church was imagined as an integral part of the nation, but this was motivated by cultural rather than political nationalism. In the following section, I will analyse in greater depth why popular Catholic culture gained central importance during post-Socialist transformation, and explain the centrality of Catholic national memory, symbols, and events to the post-Socialist culture as well as how and to what ends these cultural repertoires were used by the Slovak hierarchy and by Christian Democrats.

## **1.2. 'Christian Europe' after 1989**

The fall of state socialism marked a new stage in the development of the papal vision of Christian Europe, a stage at which he could be ever more directly involved in the promotion of his vision directly in Eastern European countries. With the newly acquired political freedom, freedom of expression, and free assembly and the related end of official regulation of Church life, the project of a united Christian Europe could move ahead. Indeed, within a matter of months after the November 'Velvet Revolution' events, the pope travelled on his first official visit to Czechoslovakia. As he told audiences in Prague, Velehrad and Bratislava, the post-Socialist nations, in his view, needed not only political and economic but also 'spiritual and moral renewal.' The pope returned to his vision of Churches as leading creators of nationalised culture that encouraged Churches to break free from control of the state and become more involved with the people and with the nation and return to a 'true' nationalised culture. During his Prague visit, he reiterated that this culture and this position of the Church stemmed directly from the history of these nations. According to the pope, the previous regime was 'in discord with national traditions.' And since in his view, the life of the nations in Central and Eastern Europe is still 'paralysed by the effects of repressive enforcement' of this 'materialist ideology,' if these nations wanted to revive themselves they needed to return to their 'authentic national histories.'<sup>673</sup> The pope thus encouraged the shaping of a national Catholic culture, but it is important to note that he was not encouraging political nationalism or ethnic politics.

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<sup>673</sup> 'Vážený pane kardinále,' in *Evokace fondu demokratických iniciativ, První návštěva pápeže Jána Pavla II v CSFR—21 a 22 dubna 1990*, *Mimoradne číslo*, 5.

Rather, the pope promoted a certain cultural nationalism – a nationalism that encouraged nations to turn to their nationalist Catholic symbols and narratives. He encouraged these nations to do so not in rivalry but in cooperation with other nations in building a common Christian civilisation. This papal nationalism encouraged looking back to ethnic roots but did not endorse defensive ethnic politics. This reminiscing and sorting through national histories was supposed to lead these nations to greater awareness of the importance of Christianity and to encourage greater unity with other nations with Christian origins. This was especially pertinent in the case of Czechoslovakia.

When the pope visited Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1990, he emphasized the ‘universal’ dimension of his vision. He had good reasons to do so. The pope visited Czechoslovakia amidst the first ethnic clashes. About this time, the so-called Štúr Society was established by a group of formerly communist nationalists and began campaigns against the Hungarian minority in southern Slovakia.<sup>674</sup> This rise in intolerance against Hungarians roughly coincided with Hungary’s decision to champion the Hungarian minorities in neighbouring states. This was promptly used as a pretext for further anti-Hungarian attacks by the newly established Slovak National Party (March 1990) and *Matica Slovenská*.<sup>675</sup> The first complications in Czech-Slovak relations in this phase and a chance for separatist ultranationalists to mobilise beyond ethnic politics occurred in connection with the new name of the state. These separatist nationalists remained a marginal group electorally and would play a marginal role in the shaping of nationalised public Catholic culture. During his visit the pope nonetheless emphasized the importance of cooperation. In the light of these developments, the pope emphasized that national spiritual renewal of Central European nations had to go hand in hand with a ‘deepening of European unity...mutual understanding...peace and respect for human rights.’ As always, the pope presented a rather grand vision.

However, as we have seen in the previous chapters, whether and in what ways the individual Catholic communities would follow this vision depended on various factors. The most crucial factor was the character of official nationalism. As has been analysed in the previous chapter, before 1989 Catholics had returned to nationalist

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<sup>674</sup> Cohen, *Politics without Past*, pp. 140-2.

<sup>675</sup> Kopeček, *Politické strany*, pp. 414-15.

Catholic discourse within the context of cultural nationalism and the struggle for religious freedom and human rights. The National Patroness, Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows and Cyril and Methodius, and the narratives related to them were evoked to support these causes. This fusion was happening on two levels, in the underground and in the official Church. Now, after 1989 the position of Catholics changed. For the Catholics in Slovakia this broad agenda would soon focus on creating a nationalised culture of Slovaks and for Slovaks. However, in the first months following the 'Velvet Revolution' the Catholic nationalists in Slovakia, both from underground and from the official Church would together focus on a programme of 'moral renewal', and this programme would not yet involve a decrease in cooperation with the Czechs or the Hungarians.

### **1.3. Catholics in Slovakia after 1989**

The fall of state socialism in Central and Eastern Europe brought the end of official control of the Church and constraints on religious participation in the public sphere. The developments in the first months after the fall of the communist regime brought an entirely new situation for the Catholic Church in Slovakia, one which created favourable conditions for the long-wished freedom from state control. The implosion of the socialist state spelled the end of state control over the Catholic Church, which had been the basic demand of Catholic activists throughout the late 1980s.<sup>676</sup> The situation of religious groups was one of the priorities of the new political elites. As the Communist Party lost its monopoly on power, an interim government was formed together with dissidents from human rights movements and the underground Church, with the goals of preparing free elections and setting up a separate legislature, executive and judiciary, facilitating the transformation to a market economy, enacting a new constitution, and last but not least preparing a law on religious freedom.<sup>677</sup> The structures of state control of the Church created by the communist state began disappearing one by one. The fall of state socialism was

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<sup>676</sup> Hanuš, Balík, *Katolícka cirkev v Československu*, p. 140.

<sup>677</sup> Jozef Žatkuliak et al, *November 1989, Medzník vo vývoji Slovenskej Spoločnosti a jeho Medzinárodný Kontext* (Bratislava, 2009), p. 98-100.

followed by the banning of *Pacem in Terris* (PiT) and the Office for Church Affairs, which had regulated public expressions of Catholicism.<sup>678</sup>

As state control was receding, the Vatican was regaining its traditional influence and was re-enabled to appoint new Bishops to long-vacant Bishoprics. The most important changes of the Church's status included the restoration of Czechoslovak-Vatican diplomatic ties, an invitation to the pope to visit Czechoslovakia (which he did in April 1990), the filling of all the vacant episcopal seats by candidates selected by Rome and the establishment of Czechoslovakia's first standing Bishops' Conference (originally urged by Paul VI at the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council in 1965). The Church was also able to open new seminaries, and its male and female religious orders were reconstituted.<sup>679</sup> Catholics in Slovakia, but perhaps the newly forming Catholic elite in particular, now had a good chance to move away from the self-limiting discourse of struggle for freedom of the Church and loyalty to the Vatican to broader questions on the role of the Church, and more broadly, Catholicism in the transforming society.

After the revolution, the two levels at which nationalised public Catholic culture was created through construction of Catholic nationalist narratives and symbols merged. The revolution was the beginning of the process of bringing these two strands of discourse and practice together in the creation of nationalised public Catholic culture. As described in the previous chapter, by 1989 the two-level creation of Catholic culture was determined by a different understanding of the Church-state and nation-state relationships. Both groups believed that Catholicism was the central source of national renewal, but whilst the underground Catholics, mainly consisting of laity, believed that this was supposed to be a bottom-up process involving cooperation with civil society and support for democracy, the second group, which began to form around official hierarchy on the eve of the revolution, seemed inclined to believe that the creation of a 'national Church' was essentially a matter of acknowledgement of the Church's role by the state. Although both of these strands essentially supported the fusion of Catholic and national identity, there was a chance that they might become estranged should the communist state continue to exist and seek to suppress any unauthorised bottom-up mobilisation. November 1989 and the

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<sup>678</sup> Hanuš, Balík, *Katolícka cirkev v Československu*, p. 140.

<sup>679</sup> Ramet, *Nihil Obstat*, p. 139.

hierarchy's detachment from the state and support for popular mobilisation changed this situation and prepared the ground for future rapprochement of these two strands. This development continued after 1989.

The character of post-socialist transformation further reinforced this convergence. Several changes prepared the ground for a further coming together of these two strands. First, underground Catholics entered into post-socialist politics, when in February 1990 a group of former Catholic dissidents formed one of the strongest political movements, the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH); they thus moved from civil society and cultural nationalism toward the political field and the state. Second, the Church hierarchy moved in the opposite direction: after 1989 three new Bishops were named, all of whom came from the underground Church. The hierarchy promptly showed support for the Christian Democrats. Archbishop Ján Sokol at the Trnava diocese and the highest ranking hierarch in the Slovak ecclesiastical province sent out a letter supporting the formation of the KDH.<sup>680</sup> This convergence was thus a result of not only the hierarchy's detachment from the state, but also politicisation of underground Catholics. A number of Catholics from the underground communities came into the open and gained a variety of leading posts. This meant a stronger position in the creation of a nationalised public Catholic culture. The emerging Catholic elites were also supported by the emerging media, often led by former producers of *samizdat* publications.<sup>681</sup> The end of censorship saw an increase in the number of public Catholic print media.<sup>682</sup> *Katolícke Noviny*, the former stronghold of the Pacem in Terris Association, now became interested in the laity, and their production was no longer confined to the hierarchy and clergy.<sup>683</sup> Indeed, top lay leaders of the underground Church became editors of *Katolícke Noviny*.<sup>684</sup> In fact, one of the leading pre-1989 editors of the *samizdat* *Rodinné Spoločenstvo*, Jozef Zavarský, became the new editor-in-chief of *Katolícke Noviny*.<sup>685</sup> The institutional consolidation of the Church and its greater presence in the public sphere prepared the ground for the expansion of nationalised public Catholic culture, especially as it was combined with unprecedented public appreciation of non-communist cultures.

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<sup>680</sup> Ján Sokol, 'Podpora Kresťanskodemokratických Klubov,' Personal Archive of the Author.

<sup>681</sup> See e.g. Bratislavské Listy, Rodinné Spoločenstvo, Svetlo, Serafínsky Svet, Máriin Svet.

<sup>682</sup> See Slovenský Denník, Večeradlo,

<sup>683</sup> See e.g. Vladimír Jukl, 'Cirkev potrebuje aj aktivitu laikov,' *Katolícke Noviny* 14 January, 1990, 1.

<sup>684</sup> This was the case of Vladimír Jukl and Jozef Zavarský. Jozef Zavarský, Interview with the author, 9 November 2011, Bratislava, Slovakia.

<sup>685</sup> Jozef Zavarský, Interview with the author, 9 November 2011, Bratislava, Slovakia.

The following section describes how non-Catholic post-socialist elites strengthened the position of Catholic nationalised culture and influenced its direction.

#### **1.4. Anti-communist National Identity and Nationalised Public Catholic Culture**

After 1989 the construction of nationalised public Catholic culture was supported due to the broader focus on the construction of an anti-communist and non-communist national identity. During the early months of post-socialist transformation, nationalised culture was created and mobilised as part of the efforts to condemn the past communist regime and legitimise the new democratic one. The new elites perceived themselves as initiating the moral renewal of society. Religion, as a system focused on maintaining morality, now gained a central role in this project. Although not traditionally religious, President Havel viewed Christianity as a 'moral compass for the modern era.'<sup>686</sup> This appreciation of Christianity was, however, more specifically, an appreciation of its role in the construction of non-communist national identity. According to Havel, 'Our two nations – Czechs and Slovaks – were not free to realize their national sovereignty for long decades and centuries.'<sup>687</sup> Deconstruction of old symbols and narratives and construction of new ones became central to reckoning with the former political system.<sup>688</sup> The symbols of the communist regime (such as the ubiquitous five-pointed red star) were being erased in favour of new symbols; the central figures and histories of the old regime (the Slovak National Uprising or the Prague Uprising) were being replaced with new figures and pasts (Czechoslovakia's inter-war president, Tomas Garrigue Masaryk, or the leader of the Slovak People's Party Andrej Hlinka). These leading post-socialist political forces made it clear that their primary task was the 'moral' renewal of society and that central to this 'moral renewal' was a return to 'authentic national symbols' and authentic 'histories.' Various public commemorations, organized by forces which perceived the past or 'national memory' as an important source of thought about non-communist arrangements of the state and society, became an important part of post-socialist public discourse. Catholics, Catholic symbols, and Catholic interpretations of national history promptly became central to these developments. In the following

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<sup>686</sup> Paces, *Prague Panoramas*, p. 229.

<sup>687</sup> Tomáš Winkler, *Matica Slovenská, Vrastanie do času* (Matin, 2012), p. 160.

<sup>688</sup> Ján Bunčák, Valentína Harmadyová, Zuzana Kusá, *Politická Zmena v Spoločenskej Rozprave* (Bratislava, 1996), pp. 107-8.

paragraphs I will explain how Catholicism gained a major role in this discourse and how Catholic leaders themselves responded to this change.

The goal of the dominant post-socialist discourse dominated by former anti-communist dissent was to break away from the communist past. As James Krapfl argues in his cultural history of the 'Velvet Revolution' and its aftermath, November 1989 was initially interpreted in terms of romance, as a triumph of 'good' over 'evil.' Accordingly, the central strategy of the new political and cultural elites was to 'break away...from the recent past and in certain ways to fight against the symbols of this regime.'<sup>689</sup> The authoritative position of this idea derived from the dominance of anti-communist dissent in the interim government that formed at round table discussions with the Communist Party. In the Czech lands Civic Forum became the leading non-communist force and in Slovakia Public Against Violence (VPN). Both of these forces were led by former members of Czech and Slovak dissent, including members of the underground Catholic communities in Slovakia. Several members of the underground Church became members of the interim government and the national assembly. František Mikloško became one of the leading figures of the VPN. Ján Čarnogurský established the Christian Democratic Movement, which promptly became the most powerful party in Slovakia. Catholics, and more broadly the Catholic Church as an institution, would quickly begin to play a central role in this post-socialist change. There were, however, also cultural reasons for this position of the Catholic Church.

The period under communism was interpreted by the now-ruling former dissidents as a time of moral decay, materialism and the rule of an anti-national elite that served the Soviet Union, compromised national sovereignty and had no sense of 'spirituality.' 'True' transformation, according to these new leaders, demanded action by forces such as the Catholic Church. One of the central voices was again President Havel. Initially, the focus was on the 'universal values' of human rights and solidarity. These new values and this new national identity were presented as being the opposite of the past system, a system that was cast as a symbol of 'moral decay.' Socialist politics and politics more generally were presented as an immoral way of achieving illegitimate interests. In addressing the country on New Year's Day 1990,

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<sup>689</sup> James Krapfl, *Revolúcia s ľudskou tvárou, Politika, kultúra a spoločnosť v Československu po 17. Novembri 1989* (Bratislava, 2009), p. 30.

Havel spoke about the legacy of the 'totalitarian state.' He described the 'obsolescence of the economy, the environmental degradation, and the deficits in education' and last but not least the unwanted legacy of 'contaminated moral environment.'<sup>690</sup> Communism was seen as aberration in national history. The goal, however, was not simply to dismantle communism but also to legitimise the new democratic order.

The second reason why Catholicism was central to this change was the importance of history to the building of a post-socialist national identity. The Catholic Church, as the only non-communist institution which (alongside other Churches) remained existent during communism, could present this more spiritual national identity as having been in existence before communism and preserved during communism. Reviving the parts of history that had been suppressed by the Communist regime was central to the process of post-communist transformation:<sup>691</sup> previously forgotten or suppressed pasts emerged into public discourse as a function of the post-1989 'liberation.' The return of these histories to public discourse was initially perceived as a symbol of victory over the past regime, because they had been among the most constrained areas in the previous regime, in Czechoslovakia as well as in other countries in the region. Shortly after the Velvet Revolution the major Slovak daily *Smena* challenged Slovak historians to 'concentrate ... on forming a true historic consciousness among our people.'<sup>692</sup> According to the American historian James Mace Ward, a common demand in the first months following November 1989 was for the victims of communism including politicians, writers, journalists, religious people, and members of discriminated groups, to be rehabilitated.<sup>693</sup> An important part of this recovery was a new appreciation of pre-communist figures and events related to the Catholic Church.

If the goal was to return power to people, as was famously maintained by Havel, this also meant returning an 'authentic' social life and collective identity to the nation;

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<sup>690</sup> Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence*, p. 107.

<sup>691</sup> Kopeček, 'In Search of 'National Memory'', pp. 75-97. Müller, 'Introduction: The power of memory, the memory of power and the power over memory' in J W Müller (ed.), *Memory and Power in Postwar Europe*, (Cambridge, 2002), pp. XX; Tony Judt, 'Nineteen Eighty-Nine: The End of Which European Era?', *Daedalus*, 123, 3 (1994), 1-19; Vladimir Tismaneanu, 1998, p. 5.

<sup>692</sup> 'Hlas k slovenským historikom,' *Smena*, 19 December 1989, 1.

<sup>693</sup> 'Rehabilitácia,' *Literárny týždenník*, 16 Feb 1990, 2; 'Aj školy treba rehabilitovať,' *Katolícke noviny*, 21 Apr 1990, 5. See. James Mace Ward, 'Blank pages: Slovakia's struggle to reevaluate Jozef Tiso, 1989-2001, 'unpublished MA thesis, University of Washington (2001), p. 57.

this meant being national and anti-communist. Havel talked about the ability of people to not be simply a product of their external world but to actively change themselves and the human condition, 'to make their own history.'<sup>694</sup> The first post-Communist president called for restoration of 'Masarykian morality' to politics. Accordingly, Havel appealed to Czechs and Slovaks to 'restore this concept of politics...(to) teach ourselves and others that politics should be an expression of the desire to contribute to the happiness of the community rather than of a need to cheat or rape the community...Politics can be...the art of improving ourselves and the world.'<sup>695</sup> Although the call for restoration of morality resonated with similar calls in Slovakia, the situation was different, especially as far as historical referents were concerned.

The identification with the first president of first Czechoslovak Republic was not so widely shared among the population at large and more specifically among Catholic elites. These elites began to look to different historical figures and indeed different pasts which, in their view, better represented the vitality of Christianity for the Slovak nation. However, during the first months after the revolution, this difference was not visible. Catholic elites seemed to identify with the values included in the Havel's concept of 'Masarykian morality.' The mutuality was certainly strengthened by the fact that the Catholic Church was repeatedly presented by Havel and early post-socialist elites as being simultaneously an embodiment of the morality of this nation, the guardian of this morality and a source of change. In fact, post-socialist political elites did not demand simply any national identity: by being the very opposite of communism, Christianity was held up as an important source of change.

### **1.5. The Catholic Church and National Renewal**

President Havel argued that 'the Catholic Church and Christianity in general helped society to recover [after 1989],'<sup>696</sup> and coverage of the papal visit in the non-religious media, but especially in lifestyle magazines, showed that this view was not held by the President only: in 1990 these journals featured interviews with Catholic Bishops

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<sup>694</sup> Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence*, p. 108.

<sup>695</sup> Václav Havel, 1991, in Falk, *Dilemmas of Dissidents*, p. 395.

<sup>696</sup> 'Nad naliehavými otázkami, Správa zo zasadnutia Biskupskej Konferencie CSFR, *Katolícke Noviny*, 23 Septembra 1990, 1.; 'Privítací prejav Václava Havla', in, S Labo (ed.), *Ján Pavol II*, p. 20.

and former Catholic dissidents about the need for moral renewal.<sup>697</sup> The new elites, as well as the popular discourse, perceived Christianity as a positive and crucial force in the transformation, and nothing seemed to be standing in the way of free public participation of Catholics and the production of a discourse within which the questions of Catholic and national identity and their relationship to one another could be addressed and which would contribute to creating nationalised public Catholic culture.

The task for the Catholic Church was to engage in this 'moral renewal' of society and help the nation return to its 'authentic identity' and 'authentic history.' At the first post-November 1989 meeting of Church and political leaders Milan Čič, the interim Slovak prime minister, asked the Catholic episcopate to assist the government in the 'moral and general renewal of our society,' to help the government renew the morality and patriotism of citizens.<sup>698</sup> This role of the Churches stemmed from what Čič called the '[previous] patriotic' role they played in maintaining nationalised culture during communism and at its end.<sup>699</sup> The Catholic Church was also encouraged by the support of the papacy, which enjoyed wide popularity at the time, as evidenced by the widely popular visit of Pope John Paul II in April 1990,<sup>700</sup> which was a major event for all Catholics and many non-Catholics alike. This visit was a moment during which Churches were installed as symbols of 'national renewal' and 'brotherly unity in diversity.'<sup>701</sup> In his welcome speech at the Prague Airport President Havel presented the papal visit as an opportunity 'to remind Czechoslovak citizens of the importance of the spiritual dimension of life.'<sup>702</sup> Havel welcomed the pope as a 'harbinger of peace, dialogue, mutual tolerance and respect and love' who comes to a 'country which was being destroyed by an ideology of hatred.'<sup>703</sup> Catholic elites were ready to

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<sup>697</sup> *Svet* (formerly *Svet Socializmu*, The World of Socialism), as well as the women's magazine *Slovenka* (The Slovak Woman) and literature weekly *Literárny Týždenník*, popular with Slovak cultural elites. 'Arcibiskup Jan Sokol', *Svet*, 6 March 1990, 16-17.; Milan Augustín, 'Ľudská úbohosť mocných: Hovoríme s Monsignorom Jánom Chryzostomom Korcom, svätiacim biskupom Nitrianskeho biskupstva a cirkevným spisovateľom', *Literárny týždenník*, 3, 41(1990), 1, 11.; 'Rodina s otcom a Matkou', *Slovenka*, 22 March 1990, 3-4.

<sup>698</sup> Jukl, 'Začiatok normalizácie vzťahov,' 1.

<sup>699</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>700</sup> Paul Froese, 'Secular Czechs and Devoted Slovaks: Explaining Religious Differences,' *Review of Religious Research*, 46(March, 2005), 281.

<sup>701</sup> 'Vaše Svatosti, mili spoluobčane,' in *Evokace fondu demokratických iniciativ, První návštěva papeže Jana Pavla II v CSFR—21 a 22 dubna 1990*, Mimoradne číslo, 5.

<sup>702</sup> 'Vaše Svatosti, mili spoluobčane,' 5.

<sup>703</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

put the Catholic Church in the role of a victim of communism and at the same time the victor over communism.

Czech theologian, sociologist and a former dissident Tomas Halik, writing in the early months of the new democratic regime, captured this perception of the Church very well. According to Halik, two tendencies were observable in Czechoslovak society between the 'Velvet revolution' in November 1989 and the papal visit in April 1990. These were 'the rising moral authority of the Church and the rapprochement between the Church and people.' This in his view was a continuation of the growing sympathy towards the Church in recent years among intellectuals as well as young people in cities.<sup>704</sup> In the Czech Republic this new position of the Catholic Church was believed to have been achieved by Cardinal Tomášek and his actions on behalf of civic dissent and the contacts between the underground Catholic communities and civic dissent. After 1989 Tomášek was ready to present the Catholic Church as a part of Czech history and Czech identity. When John Paul II arrived in Czechoslovakia, Tomášek referred to Czechoslovakia as a 'country with a glorious Christian history.'<sup>705</sup> The Czech Catholic Church continued in its programme of a 'Decade of Spiritual Renewal' (started in 1987), part of which was construction of a Czech national Catholic narrative.<sup>706</sup> In many ways, this observation also applies to the Church in Slovakia; however, it is important to point out several differences.

Initially, the Church hierarchy in Slovakia did not play a significant enough role for a long enough time in the construction of a national narrative and national symbols to be ready to play a leading role in the creation of post-socialist nationalised culture and provide the nation with ready-made non-communist narratives and symbols. Although the Catholic hierarchy appointed before 1989 supported the 'Velvet Revolution' and quickly embraced the language of a radical breaking away from the communist past and the promoting of Catholic symbols,<sup>707</sup> their public speeches were

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<sup>704</sup> Tomáš Halik, 'Church and society in Czechoslovakia: The evangelisation of a post-communist country', *Religion in Communist Lands*, 19(1991), 53.

<sup>705</sup> František Tomášek, 'V Sobotu 21. Dubna,' *Evokace fondu demokratických iniciativ, První návštěva papeže Jana Pavla II v CSFR—21 a 22 dubna 1990*, Mimořádné číslo, missing pagination.

<sup>706</sup> Tomášek, 'V Sobotu 21. Dubna,' missing pagination.

<sup>707</sup> František Tondra, 'Nove Perspektivy,' *Katolícké Noviny*, 14 Januar 1990, 1.; 'V Kristovi je budúcnosť, Z pastierskeho listu Mons. J. Ch. Korca nitrianskeho Biskupa, *Katolícké Noviny*, 25 Marec 1990, 1.

characterised by a lack of grounding in the nationalised public Catholic narrative.<sup>708</sup> However, the appointment of new Bishops from the underground Church and the rise of the Christian Democratic Movement changed this situation. From the day of his appointment, Bishop Jan Ch. Korec, the former clerical leader of the underground Church, used almost every public event to promote an understanding of the Catholic Church as an integral part of the Slovak nation through construction of a distinctly Catholic national memory, symbols, places, and events. Likewise, the Christian Democrats, most of whom were recruited from the underground Church and had already embraced the notion of the Church as an integral part of Slovak history, were ready to place the Catholic Church at the centre of post-socialist nationalised culture.

### **1.6. The historical 'Christian' Slovak nation**

The central event in terms of reviving the role of the hierarchy in the construction of nationalised public Catholic symbols and national memory and more broadly the creation of nationalised public Catholic culture was the appointment of Bishop Korec to Nitra. The ordinations of Bishops in Rožňava and Košice were central events of the post-socialist Church, but the most publicity was focused on the inauguration of Bishop Jan Chrysostom Korec in Nitra. The inauguration of Bishop Korec in April 1990 in Nitra, the oldest diocese on Slovak territory (dating back to the 9th century), was designed as a commemoration of the 9th century mission of Cyril and Methodius to Great Moravia (Methodius is believed to have been the first Bishop of Nitra).<sup>709</sup> The appointment of Korec, the clerical leader of the underground Church, to ancient Nitra was no coincidence. The choice was made by John Paul II on the recommendation of Slovak Cardinal Jozef Tomko (exiled in Rome).<sup>710</sup> The point was clearly to emphasize that the new hierarchy was related to the historical 'Cyrilomethodian tradition.' Tomko (then Prefect for Evangelisation, exiled in the Vatican) was an indefatigable promoter of the Cyrilomethodian tradition, and the pope himself, as mentioned in previous chapters, showed an interest in promoting the tradition and Nitra as the new centre of the Slovak nation (The pope referred to

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<sup>708</sup> Ján Sokol, 'Drahi bratia a sestry v kňazskej službe, milá mládež, bratia a sestry,' *Evokace fondu demokratických iniciatív, První navsteva papeže Jana Pavla II v CSFR—21 a 22 dubna 1990*, Mimofádné číslo, missing pagination.

<sup>709</sup> Mons. Jan Chrysostom Korec, nitriansky biskup, 'Kristovo svetlo- prameň a istota nášho národného jestvovania', *Katolícke Noviny*, 8 April 1990, 1.

<sup>710</sup> Halas, *Fenomen Vatikán*, p. 638.

Korec as the 'Slovak Wyszyński.').<sup>711</sup> The main effect of Korec's presence in Nitra was public presentation of the new hierarchy as the direct continuation of the first hierarchy on Slovak territory. As Tomko maintained in his sermon, Bishop Korec was 'the direct successor of Bishop Methodius.'<sup>712</sup>

After Korec's arrival to Nitra, the idea of Nitra as the city of 'Cyril and Methodius' and as the cradle of Slovak Christian and nationalised culture began to be revived. Korec personally worked to return Nitra to its former glory as a pre-1948 centre of Cyrilomethodian pilgrimages. He used his ordination to fuse the histories of the Slovak nation and the Church and to place Nitra at the centre of this narrative. As he said, 'It was here in Nitra where our Christian, cultural and national history began.' As he continued,

It was here in Nitra where the first Christian Church was built around 828. Cyril and Methodius walked upon this land. The first Benedictine monastery was located here on *Zobor* ... Nitra was ... the epicentre of the spiritual life which was developing in the space around Devin, Velehrad and later spread towards Prague, Cracow and Esztergom. In Nitra Jan VIII established the first bishopric under Archbishop Method's leadership. As ... John Paul II wrote on the 1100th anniversary of the establishment of the Nitra diocese, "A great certainty is being born out of the ancient character of Nitra: God has always been with us and with the whole of the Church. His continuous presence is the guarantee of our [national] life and vitality."<sup>713</sup>

Korec's reconstructions of Nitra's place in the narrative of Slovak history drew on Catholic nationalist narratives dating back to the 19th century, which presented the early Christian history of contemporary Slovak territory as an integral part of the history of Catholicism and its relationship with the Slovak nation.<sup>714</sup> For Korec this national Catholic narrative of Slovak history was the only authentic interpretation of Slovak history, the 'nation's memory,' and he was convinced that the Slovak nation could not function without this 'memory.'<sup>715</sup> According to Korec a nation which does not have or maintain such 'memory' is 'lost.'<sup>716</sup>

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<sup>711</sup> František Mikloško, *Desat Spravodlivých* (Bratislava, 2010), p. 42.

<sup>712</sup> 'Mons. Jan Chrysostom Korec', 1.

<sup>713</sup> Mons. Jan Chrysostom Korec, nitriansky biskup, 'Kristovo svetlo- prameň a istota nášho národného jestvovania', *Katolícke Noviny*, 8. Aprila 1990, 1.

<sup>714</sup> Gabriela Kilianova, 'Komu patrí Devin', in E Krekovič, E Krekovičová, E Mannová, *Mýty naše Slovenské*, (Bratislava, 2005), p. 120.

<sup>715</sup> 'Kristovo svetlo- prameň a istota,' 1.

<sup>716</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

The communist regime, in the Bishop's view, did everything to 'exclude Christians from [national] history, despite the 'fact' that the Slovak nation and its culture had from its beginnings been connected with the light of the gospel and with the great work of Cyril and Methodius.'<sup>717</sup> The supposed 'spiritual decline' during communism was also evident, in his view, in the regime's 'misinterpretation' of Slovak history. Korec juxtaposed the present celebration of Cyril and Methodius to the pre-1989 Slovak National Theatre opera *Svätopluk* (a figure celebrated as the first 'Slovak King' of the early medieval Great Moravia). The latter was, according to Korec, only about 'pagan rituals' and was an inauthentic representation of the beginnings of Slovak history.<sup>718</sup> Korec saw Slovak society as being split between those who had lost faith and those who were protecting it during the previous regime. According to Korec, communism was not what 'the nation' wanted, and the underground Church petitions and the demonstration for religious freedom in March 1988 were all public demonstrations of the fact 'that in our nation, in Europe, and in the world there is only one true spiritual life, whose foundation is in Christ.'<sup>719</sup> At this point Korec fused national Catholic and nationalist narratives to encourage a 'renewal of faith.' In his view this 'renewal of faith' was a central aspect of national renewal, since faith 'preserved the Slovak nation during the years of Godless communism.'<sup>720</sup>

One of the most important symbols Korec used was that of the 'burning bush.' Whilst the 'burning bush' has taken on many different meanings in Jewish and Christian tradition, in the Biblical narrative, the burning bush is the location at which Moses was appointed to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and into Canaan. This is probably the meaning Korec ascribed to this metaphor: Christianity and Christian roots were the source of national liberation for the Slovaks. The forty years spent in the desert by the Israelites were commonly used by former Catholic dissent to symbolise the forty years of communism, thus emphasising the experience of persecution of the Church during this period. The fall of state socialism was likened to the Israelite arrival to the 'promised land' Canaan.<sup>721</sup> Indeed, Christian Democrats

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<sup>717</sup> 'Milovani bratři a sestry,' in *Evokace fondu demokratických iniciativ, První návštěva papeže Jana Pavla II v ČSFR—21 a 22 dubna 1990*, Mimořádné číslo, missing pagination.

<sup>718</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>719</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>720</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>721</sup> František Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môct' rozvrátit'* (Bratislava, 1990), p. 1.

and more broadly former Catholic dissidents fully shared this understanding of the past forty years. Like Korec, they were ready to utilise their pre-1989 constructs of a nationalised public Catholic narrative as part of the post-socialist nationalised public Catholic culture and their understanding of Catholic symbols as being firmly anchored in this national narrative. Like Korec, they sought to publicize the idea that Christianity was vital to the Slovak past, present, and future. Alongside, the Catholic hierarchy began to play a central role in organizing and promoting a distinctly Catholic national culture: through promotion of Catholic national symbols, memory, and events. Indeed, the Catholic-led commemorations during the first year after the Velvet Revolution suggested that their common goal was ambitious and one typical for the religious revivals of the 1970s, 1980s, and in some cases also the 1990s, 'a revival of essential religious principles as a basis of individual morality and social organisation.'<sup>722</sup> Shortly after 1989 they were joined by two other important actors who also sought to instrumentalise nationalised public Catholic culture to attain their mostly political agendas.

### **1.7. Nationalist Émigrés and ex-Communist Nationalists**

A central role in the creation of a nationalised public Catholic culture and more specifically a national Catholic narrative was also played by groups of Slovak émigrés who were returning to Slovakia from exile in Rome, Germany, Canada, and the US.<sup>723</sup> Their contributions to nationalised culture were characterized by the identification against the ethnic 'others,' historical and contemporary, of the Slovak nation. Alongside Christian (Catholic) values, these émigrés saw the Slovak language and resistance against both Hungarians and Czechs as the most important building blocks for Slovak nationalised culture and identity.<sup>724</sup> This view was firmly anchored in their interpretation of Slovak history, characterized by, as a Slovak historian Adam Hudek points out, a 'clear preference of ethnic over civic principles and national independence over a democratic regime.'<sup>725</sup> The time when Slovakia

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<sup>722</sup> John Hutchinson, *Modern Nationalism* (London, 1994), p. 65.

<sup>723</sup> See Václav Vodrášek and Ján Pešek, *Slovenský poválečný exil a jeho aktivita* (Bratislava, 2011); Kružliak, *Cyrlometodský Kult u Slovákov*; František Braxátor, *Slovenský exil 68* (Bratislava, 1992), 173-7.

<sup>724</sup> Tomas Sniegon, 'Looking back, going forward: Czech and Slovak dominant historical narratives of the long 1990s', B Tornquist-Plewa and Krzysztof Stala (eds.), *Cultural Transformations After Communism*, (Lund, 2011), p. 196.

<sup>725</sup> Adam Hudek, 'Anti-national freethinkers, nationalists and Bolsheviks: Wars over history after fall of communism. The case of Slovakia', Conference paper Prague, 2011, 5.

was part of Hungary and Czechoslovakia were seen by these émigrés as times of repression of Slovak culture and national identity. Some of these émigrés focused on pre-communist Catholic nationalism and more specifically on the Slovak state (1939-1945) as the central positive referent. However, most of the émigrés who played a central role in the mobilisation of nationalised public Catholic culture in support of Slovak independence focused on other moments of Slovak history, especially the early medieval chiefdom of Pribina and Great Moravia as the main historical referent. Nonetheless, all of these nationalist émigrés understood the communist past through this prism as a ‘Czechoslovakist’ and Soviet attempt to destroy the idea of Slovak statehood. Groups of nationalist Slovak émigrés were convinced that this ‘historicity’ of the Slovak nation had more concrete meaning for the Slovak nation, that this past meant a responsibility for the present to create an independent Slovak state as soon as possible. For these nationalists to evoke historicity, whether through national memory or symbols, meant to demand Slovak independence. The goal now was not only to revive the ‘authentic national identity’, part of which was Christianity, but to safeguard Slovak independence in order to protect this reviving Slovak culture and identity. They joined the Christian Democrats and the Catholic hierarchy in producing a nationalised public Catholic culture. Their views about Slovak history, Slovak identity and its implications for Slovak politics were closest to those presented by ex-communist nationalists.

Ethnic nationalists who emerged in the late 1960s and were later co-opted by the post-1968 communist state also contributed to the creation of nationalised public Catholic culture. These Communists returned to the public sphere in Slovakia thanks to their support for the creation of a national culture and construction of a national identity through rediscovering ‘authentic’ national history championed by early post-socialist political elites. Indeed, official anti-communism did not mean the demonisation of all Communists, particularly not in Slovakia. The Czech case was different: the Czech parliament would launch a campaign for the enactment of a Lustration Law intended to purge Communists from leading positions of power. In Slovakia, nationalist heritage organisations left over from the previous regime were encouraged to take part in the post-socialist ‘moral national renewal.’ The heritage organisation *Matica Slovenska* and the Centre of National Development (*Národné Osvetové Centrum*, NOC) were the two leading such institutions. The new political

elites, including former dissident activists, sought to re-include national institutions, such as *Matica Slovenská*, into the project of 'national renewal.' On 16 June 1990, President Havel paid an official visit to *Matica*. In his speech Havel argued that 'Our two nations, Czechs and Slovaks, were not free to realize their national sovereignty for long decades and centuries. This is why their cultural institutions took on special political meaning. *Matica*, as a centre of political education...as the guardian of the identity of Slovak nation, has always been indirectly a political institution.'<sup>726</sup> Thus encouraged, these Communists continued to develop their ethnic understanding of the nation, but they also embraced Christianity as an important part of national identity. They continued to develop the idea of an ethnic historical Slovak nation, but in contrast to their pre-1989 attitudes toward religion, these former communist nationalists now gave religion a central role. In their construction of a national narrative, they were now returning to the 'Christian' roots of Slovak history.<sup>727</sup> Matúš Kučera, the leading late-socialist nationalist historian, now talked about Christianity being at the beginning of Slovak history. According to Kučera, the Cyrilomethodian tradition is the 'memory of the nation,' and the nation is 'built on Christian foundations.'<sup>728</sup> Some ex-communist nationalists now even began to criticise the lack of appreciation of the Christianising aspect of the Cyrilomethodian mission during the Methodian year of 1985<sup>729</sup> and began to support expansion of a nationalised public Catholic culture. However, their goal was not simply to support such expansion but also to mobilise this culture in support of ethnic policies and prompt attainment of Slovak independence. Like the émigré nationalists, these ex-communist nationalists saw the Slovak past as binding them to support swift attainment of Slovak independence. As one of the leading figures of the Slovak National Party, Jozef Prokeš, put it, 'the coexistence of two nations in one state leads to suppression of the identity of one of them.'<sup>730</sup> As will be discussed in the second section of this chapter, during the next two years the émigrés and ex-communist nationalists sought to mobilise Slovak history and symbols in support of the cause of Slovak independence. In the process they shaped nationalised public Catholic culture, contributed to its expansion, and played an important role in its politicisation.

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<sup>726</sup> Winkler, *Matica Slovenska*, p. 160.

<sup>727</sup> Ibid. p. 162.

<sup>728</sup> Jozef Badurik, 'Identifikácia s národom,' *Literárny Týždenník*, 26 November 1990, 22. See also Matúš Kučera, *Postavy Veľkomoravskej Ríše* (Bratislava, 1991), p. 9.

<sup>729</sup> Ladislav Ťažký, 'List svätému Metodovi,' *Slovenský Denník*, 23 August 1990, 5.

<sup>730</sup> *Pravda*, 3 February 1992, 1, 2, 5.

## 1.8. The Catholic programme of 'national moral renewal'

As Catholic elites, both political and ecclesiastical, entered the post-socialist public sphere, cultural nationalism, buttressed by evocations of the beginnings of Christianity in the Slovak nation and its role throughout history, was at the centre of their public engagement. National renewal in terms of 'spiritual renewal' was initially the central programme of most Catholics. In the first months following the fall of the communist regime, ex-dissident Catholics were focused on moral renewal of the Slovak nation and accordingly evangelisation of Slovak politics. As far as pastoral letters were concerned Bishops were also pre-occupied with moral renewal: the central programme of the 1990s was the 'The Decade of Spiritual Renewal.'<sup>731</sup> The supposedly poor moral state of the nation and the importance of religion and personal conversion to the improvement of this morality became the single most important issue of all major sermons and pastoral letters issued by the Slovak episcopate.<sup>732</sup> Indeed, the central theme of the decade of spiritual renewal was 'the seven deadly sins.' Beginning in 1990, each half-year would be dedicated to meditations over an individual 'sin.'<sup>733</sup> In order 'to raise moral standards' they proposed religious instruction<sup>734</sup> while also seeking re-criminalisation of abortion in a joint effort with the federal Bishops' Conference.<sup>735</sup>

The first political force to support this programme was the Christian Democratic Movement. Led by Čarnogurský, the Christian Democrats saw it as their common task to maintain the morality of the Slovak nation and to return the Slovak nation to its 'Christian roots.' For Christian Democrats, Catholic identity and national identity were vitally connected in issues of morality, which was for them the central theme of post-communist national renewal. The leading figures of the movement were at one in criticising the 'bad moral situation of the nation'. Ján Čarnogurský regularly lamented

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<sup>731</sup> 'Rok mravnej obnovy Slovenska,' *Katolícke Noviny*, 20 January 1991, 1.

<sup>732</sup> *Pastierske Listy Biskupov Slovenska (1991-2000)* (Bratislava, 2008); Nové Perspektivy, *Katolícke Noviny*, 14 January 1990, 1.; 'V Kristovi je budúcnosť, Z pastierskeho listu Mons. J. Ch. Korca nitrianskeho Biskupa,' *Katolícke Noviny*, 25 Marec 1990, 1.; Ján Ch. Korec, 'Kristovo svetlo- prameň a istota', 1, 2.

<sup>733</sup> 'Rok mravnej obnovy Slovenska,' 1.

<sup>734</sup> 'Pastiersky List Biskupov Slovenska na začiatku školského roka 1991/1992, 8 September 1991,' *Acta Curiae Episcopalis Nitriensis*, 31 May 1991, supplement. Nitra Diocese Archive (henceforth NDA), unprocessed materials.

<sup>735</sup> 'Pastiersky List Biskupov Česko-Slovenska,' 30 December 1990, Supplement II, in *Acta Archiepiscopalis Curiae Tyrnaviensis*, 9(1990), Diocesan Newsletters, Spiš Diocese archive (henceforth SDA), 223590.

the poor moral situation in culture, and party member and vice-chairman of the federal government Jozef Mikloško took care to inform the Federal Bishops conference about the bad moral situation and the need for the Church's help in this respect.<sup>736</sup> The Christian Democrats also worked to build a public space for the Church and its teachings. Their proposals were very similar to those advocated by the Catholic Church in Poland, and following the Polish example they promoted religious instruction in schools and also sought to change the law on abortion. In doing so they continued in the campaign they had started in 1986, when the abortion law was liberalized in Czechoslovakia.<sup>737</sup> In fact, the anti-abortion law activists from 1986 were now members of the Christian Democratic movement..

The role of the Christian Democrats, as they saw it, was to help the Church overcome the legacy of socialism and contain the liberalism they saw arriving from the West. The inspiration for their agenda was set in an idealised picture of pre-communist Catholicism, but particularly one drawing on the figures of Catholic nationalism. The Christian Democrats, similarly to the Catholic hierarchy, regularly criticised the 'poor' moral situation, maintained close links with the Bishops' Conference, and regularly informed Slovak Catholics about the situation on the moral front, typically on the pages of the main Catholic mouthpiece *Katolícke Noviny*.<sup>738</sup> These themes would continue to resonate during the 1990s. However, after elections in the summer of 1990 the theme of Slovak cultural distinctiveness would also become central for Christian Democrats.

## **2. Nationalised Public Catholic Culture and 'National Autonomy'**

In the first months following the first democratic elections the creation of a nationalised public Catholic culture became central to the promotion of Slovak political autonomy. This was not because all Catholics would support Slovak independence, but rather because the Catholic Church was already focused on mobilizing nationalised public Catholic culture, and this fact was in turn instrumentalised by the independence movement. Slovak independence became legitimised by a Catholic, historical, and ethnic understanding of the Slovak nation,

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<sup>736</sup> 'Nad naliehavými otázkami,' *Katolícke Noviny*, 23 Septembra 1990, 1.

<sup>737</sup> Július Brocka, Interview with the author, 13 July 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia.; Pavol Abrhan, Interview with the author, 23 July 2010, Nové Zámky, Slovakia.

<sup>738</sup> Ján Čarnogurský, 'Obrana KDĽ', *Literárny Týždenník*, 28 November 1992, 10.; 'Nad naliehavými otázkami,' 1.

which many different Catholic actors had helped to strengthen in the first years after 1989. In the process, the nationalised public Catholic culture based around the idea of the ethnic nation began to be constructed not solely by members of the hierarchy and Christian Democrats, but also by many other actors, most notably former émigrés and ex-communist nationalists. They began to participate together in the creation of nationalist Catholic symbols, national memory, and events alongside the Catholic hierarchy and the Christian Democrats. They also began to participate in the creation of a nationalised public Catholic culture in which the Church became *the* symbol of national autonomy. On the most general level this alliance was based on the appreciation of Christian culture as a central part of Slovak nationalised culture: all of these actors shared the view that a nationalised public Catholic culture was central to post-socialist transformation. Before I develop this claim further, it should be pointed out that these groups differed in several important respects: first, each had a slightly different attitude towards the future of the common Czechoslovak state and Slovak political future, an issue which was central to Czechoslovak politics when the reform of the Czechoslovak constitution became the central task of the first freely elected federal and national governments. They also differed in their attitude toward the rights of ethnic minorities, and last but not least, they differed in their attitude to Slovakia's future in the international community, especially the European Union. These differences crucially influenced how the common national Catholic culture would be mobilised in the legitimisation of Slovak independence in 1992.

This national culture was created against the backdrop of debates about the future of the common state, more specifically the federal constitution, led by the winners of the June 1990 parliamentary elections. In Slovakia, Public Against Violence (VPN), the broad civic movement formed during the November 1989 demonstrations, and the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) formed a coalition government. In the Czech Republic, the first democratically elected government was formed by Civic Forum (OF) and the Christian Democratic Union-Czech People's Party (KDÚ-ČSL). In this first phase the main theme of discussions was the division of powers between the federal and national bodies. The talks led to a revised Constitutional Act which renewed the division of powers as they were originally defined in 1968, when the federation was first formed, and repealed a series of articles from the early 1970s which strengthened the central federative institutions at

the expense of the national ones. This debate was, of course, not confined to the Czech and Slovak ruling parties and to the federal and national assemblies. Slovak nationalists also sought to get involved.

In terms of attitude to the future of the common state, three major groups can be identified among Slovak political and cultural elites: First were federalists, mostly present in the leading Public Against Violence, and they refused to consider Slovak autonomy; their sole aim was to make the federation work quickly, so that Czechoslovakia would be able to join the European Union as soon as possible.<sup>739</sup> Second were the autonomist nationalists, who gathered around the Christian Democratic Movement and advocated greater political autonomy within the common state. I call these Slovak nationalist 'autonomists' since for the most part they wanted to achieve greater autonomy – not necessarily independence – through constructive dialogue with their Czech partners. But whilst they were fully engaged in negotiations with Czech representatives and saw these negotiations as a perfectly legitimate way of making decisions about Slovakia's political future, they did not hesitate to disrupt them, if they saw their outcomes as not being beneficial for the Slovak side. The Christian Democrats typically talked about the need for 'eventual' Slovak 'self-determination'. Similarly to the federalists the Christian Democrats envisioned Slovakia as a member of the European Union. The third group, the 'sovereignty nationalists,' were led by ex-communist nationalists and the émigrés and coalesced around *Matica* and the Slovak National Party. These nationalists were convinced that Slovakia needed to take control of its future by advocating for its own future unilaterally rather than relying on discussions with the Czechs. They wanted to look for a solution to the question of Slovak political future independently of the Czechs and sought to disrupt negotiations with the Czechs. For three years they urged the Slovak National Assembly to declare 'Slovak sovereignty,' and they themselves issued several such declarations.<sup>740</sup> They also demanded that the Slovak constitution (still pending since 1968) be enacted before the federal one and insisted that Slovak language be given the status of an official language.

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<sup>739</sup> For a version of this typology see Paal Sigurd Hilde, 'Slovak Nationalism and the Break-up of Czechoslovakia,' *Europe-Asia Studies*, 51(June 1999), 647-665.

<sup>740</sup> See e.g. 'Šesťdesiatjeden krokov k slovenskej identite,' *Smena*, 27 Oct 1990, 4.

Different attitudes in regard to minority rights (especially those of the Hungarian minority) became clear in debates about the status of the Slovak language in Slovakia. In the autumn of 1990 two alternative language bills emerged in the Slovak National Council. One, drafted by Matica and sponsored by the SNS, which saw this code as part and parcel of 'Slovak sovereignty',<sup>741</sup> stipulated the exclusive use of Slovak as the official language of the state and clearly discriminated against the sizeable Hungarian minority in Slovakia's south.<sup>742</sup> The Christian Democratic Movement defended the second draft proposed by the VPN, which made no exclusionary attempts.<sup>743</sup> Indeed, the Christian Democrats attempted to cooperate with the Hungarians on a 'Christian basis'; the KDH had from its very beginning had a Hungarian section, but this section soon left to form a coalition with Együttélés (translates as 'co-existence') in the first parliamentary elections.<sup>744</sup>

The Slovak nationalists who supported mobilisation of a nationalised public Catholic culture also differed in the extent to which they sought to involve the Catholic hierarchy in attaining their political goals, especially those concerning Slovakia's political future. The émigrés were the first to demand active involvement of the Slovak hierarchy in support of the cause of Slovak sovereignty. They looked back to the constitution of an independent Slovak ecclesiastical province in 1977, which was regarded as papal confirmation of Slovak sovereignty.<sup>745</sup> The leading émigré writer and head of *Matica Slovenska* abroad,<sup>746</sup> Imrich Kružliak, wrote a letter to the Bishops and Federal Assembly as well as to the Slovak National Council, asking them to proclaim the papal decree which constituted a Slovak ecclesiastical province as a 'state-constituting' law.<sup>747</sup> This past would become the basis for a nationalist

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<sup>741</sup> Winkler, *Matica Slovenská*, p. 163. On the role of Slovak emigres in the support of the law see, *Slovenský politický exil v zápase za samostatné Slovensko* (Bratislava, 1996), pp. 314-15.

<sup>742</sup> Abby Innes, *Czechoslovakia--the Short Goodbye* (New Haven, 2001), p. 100.

<sup>743</sup> Innes, *Czechoslovakia*, p. 100.

<sup>744</sup> *História KDH*, p. 5.; Kopeček, *Politické strany*, p. 447.

<sup>745</sup> An independent ecclesiastical province, which is a higher administrative unit of ecclesiastical administration comprising a number of dioceses, had historically been one of the central demands of Slovak Catholic nationalists. In the absence of Slovak autonomy, an independent Slovak province was intended to safeguard cultural autonomy from Hungarian and later, during interwar Czechoslovakia, limit Czechoslovak influence on Catholics in Slovakia. However, the Vatican did not show any interest in this nationalist project. A Slovak province was not constituted and Slovak Bishops remained within the old Hungarian provinces of Esztergom and Eger until 1977. In 1977 the communist authorities reached agreement with the Vatican. See: Emília Hrabovec, *Slovensko a Svätá Stolica, 1918-1927 vo svetle vatikánskych prameňov* (Bratislava, 2012), p. 49

<sup>746</sup> An organization modeled according to Matica Slovenska in Slovakia proper, formed by Slovak émigrés to support the development of Slovak culture abroad.

<sup>747</sup> Kružliak, *Cyriľometodský kult u Slovákov*, p. 201.

narrative constructed to present the Catholic Church as a supporter of independence. These émigrés were not alone in their notion of a Church actively involved in the promotion of Slovak sovereignty. They were soon joined by ex-communist nationalists, and their first public appeal for a declaration of Slovak sovereignty included suggestions on how the Catholic Church could contribute to advancing the cause of Slovak sovereignty. The declaration, titled '61 steps towards a Slovak identity,' presented the vision of a 'national' Church. They demanded that the seat of the Archbishop of Trnava be moved to Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia; that a national shrine be dedicated to Slovak saints in the capital; that a diplomatic mission of the Vatican be established in Bratislava and that 'Slovak saints' be canonised by the Vatican<sup>748</sup> The Christian Democrats closely co-operated with the Slovak hierarchy in promoting their political programme, but, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, this cooperation concerned issues of religious instruction, establishment of Catholic schools, etc. and not the above mentioned issues, at least not yet.

Despite these clear differences in their political approach towards political independence, European integration, national minorities and the involvement of Catholic hierarchy, there was nevertheless much that was shared between these different groups. Indeed, as will be developed in the following section, these nationalists all claimed to be creating a united movement around the concept of a distinct Slovak nation embodied in a 'revived' nationalised public Catholic culture. This culture was conceptualised not only as a post-socialist renewal but also as a defence of this reviving nation against others – the Czechs, Western liberalism and Hungarian nationalism – and the need to protect Slovak identity and culture against such potential incursions.

The sense of this shared culture – defined against 'others' – would become clear at a number of pilgrimages and commemorations at Ružomberok and Šaštín in 1990. In the following section I shall analyse these events, as they allow observing the ways in which and the extent to which Catholics identified with a defensive understanding of the Slovak nation and culture. These events themselves were vital for the development of this nationalised public Catholic culture: they were the only public spaces where these groups openly expressed that they all acknowledged and

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<sup>748</sup> 'Šesťdesiatjeden krokov k slovenskej identite.'

shaped this nationalised public Catholic culture. These were attended by figures from all of these groups and they helped develop a common understanding of what was shared in this new Slovak culture. This section shows that despite different political outlooks these different nationalist groups contributed to strengthening the fusion between ethnicity and Catholicism in the nationalised public Catholic culture. Whilst the focus in the first section is on the Catholic laity, ex-communist nationalists and émigrés, the next section describes how the Slovak hierarchy began to play a key role in employing Catholic national symbols and constructing narratives to promote both greater sovereignty of the Church as well as political sovereignty.

## **2.1. Expanding Nationalised Public Catholic Culture**

### **2.1.1. Andrej Hlinka and ‘National Unity’**

The first event these nationalists initiated together was a celebration of the birthday of Andrej Hlinka, the interwar leader of Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party. The first commemoration took place at the end of August 1990 on the 127th anniversary of Hlinka’s birthday and was conjoined with a commemoration of the victims of the Černová tragedy in Ružomberok, northern Slovakia, in 1907. This celebration did not happen in traditional Church spaces but was designed as a national ‘pilgrimage’ and led to a strengthening of the position of the Catholic Church in the public national memory. Ružomberok represents an important moment when all these groups came together – they were all there for slightly different political reasons – nevertheless, they all recognised the importance of building a distinctive Catholic Slovak memory. Coming together for a Catholic ceremony, they all recognized the power of the Catholic national past for construction of Slovak identity in the present. Ahead of the commemoration, the Ministry of Culture declared Černová as a space of the ‘Slovak struggle against magyarisation’, and the memorial was listed as a site of ‘national heritage.’<sup>749</sup> In addition, plans were also in place to restore the Andrej Hlinka mausoleum in Ružomberok, northern Slovakia, originally built during the Nazi-dominated Slovak state. Its current neglected state was seen as a result of ‘persecution of the Church by the totalitarian regime’ and its renovation as a victory for Catholicism.<sup>750</sup> These nationalists did not only want to remember Hlinka, but,

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<sup>749</sup> ‘Nové národne kultúrne,’ 10.

<sup>750</sup> František Bielik, Štefan Borovský (eds.), *Andrej Hlinka a jeho miesto v Slovenských dejinách* (Bratislava, 1991), p. 155

again, as with Nitra, they wanted to return Ružomberok, the pre-communist intellectual centre of political Catholicism, to its former glory.

The commemoration was organized as an 'all-national' event and was aimed at demonstrating 'unity' of Slovaks in celebrating the 'father of the Slovak nation.'<sup>751</sup> The central part of the commemoration was a ceremonial mass presided over by Bishop František Tondra and co-celebrated by all members of the Slovak episcopate, including Bishop Korec.<sup>752</sup> It culminated in the joint issuing of a manifesto in which representatives of these nationalists declared that they were dedicated to the idea of 'Slovak political sovereignty.'<sup>753</sup> The document did not give details on how or when this sovereignty would be achieved, but this was the first time when these different groups issued a joint statement, and the document clearly declared that despite their differences in rhetoric and politics, they were all dedicated to the cause of Slovak sovereignty. For some of these nationalists, this would be the only space in which they would make such pronouncements. When after the event 'sovereignty nationalists' i.e. émigrés and ex-communist nationalists, proposed proclaiming a similar manifesto at the Slovak National Assembly, the Christian Democrats did not agree. Nonetheless, the commemoration was presented as a moment of 'national unity'.<sup>754</sup> Despite these differences, all of these actors remained involved in 'returning' Andrej Hlinka to Slovak history and constructing a national Catholic narrative. They all agreed that the moral integrity of the Slovak nation was under threat. Despite disagreeing about exactly who was responsible for this situation and to what extent, and despite disagreeing about what should be done and when, they agreed that this integrity needed to be strengthened and protected.

Although the Catholic hierarchy was not among the organisers and was not yet directly involved in debates about Slovakia's political future, this event provided an opportunity for leading hierarchs to assume an important role in co-producing the central new event of the expanding nationalised public Catholic culture. Bishop František Tondra of the Eastern Slovakian Spiš diocese was invited to concelebrate

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<sup>751</sup> Rudolf Dobiáš, 'Dlhá neprítomnosť Andreja Hlinku, Pred celonárodnými oslavami v Ružomberku,' *Slovenský Denník*, 22 August 1990, 1, 2.

<sup>752</sup> 'Syn ľudu medzi nami, Celonárodná spomienka na Andreja Hlinku,' *Slovenský Denník*, 27 Augusta 1990, 1-2

<sup>753</sup> Jiri Pehe, 'Slovak Nationalism Splits Christian Democratic Ranks,' *RFE/RL Research Report* 13 (1992), 13-16.14.

<sup>754</sup> 'Syn ľudu medzi nami,' 1-2.; Jozef Klepáč, 'Zjednoťme sa,' *Slovenský Denník*, 28 August 1990, 1-2.

the mass which was the central ceremony of the event. Tondra used the occasion to argue that the hierarchy was entitled to be actively involved in the public sphere. For Tondra all the central events of Slovak and world history were moments when Churchmen 'did politics', 'when Cyril and Methodius brought us script and freed us from the Western neighbours' or 'when the popes of last hundred years stood...against uncontrolled liberalism and just in the same way against absolutist collectivism.'<sup>755</sup> Tondra used the celebration of this priest-politician (Hlinka) to present the Church's involvement in 'earthly' and more specifically political matters as desirable. He asserted that Andrej Hlinka's voice of 'defence of the Slovak nation' sounded even stronger because he was a Catholic priest.'<sup>756</sup> Tondra then supported Andrej Hlinka's autonomism as not only striving for the 'Slovak becoming the master of his own country' but also so 'that a Slovak would be a person with all the dignity of a personality...[and that Slovaks would] live for values which are worth sacrifice.'<sup>757</sup> Evoking Cyril and Methodius and Andrej Hlinka as a follower in their footsteps, Tondra continued in the reconstruction of national Catholic narrative started by Cardinal Korec in Nitra.

Commemorating Hlinka, these nationalists also presented and promoted a defensive understanding of the Slovak nation. According to Jozef Klepáč, 'great forces of history' have always 'endangered Slovak existence...the central characteristic of the development of our nation is a constant defense of the nation.'<sup>758</sup> According to Čarnogurský, Andrej Hlinka was always able to recognise where these 'dangers' came from and was ready to face them; Hlinka defended the Slovak nation from 'magyarisation when the Hungarians wanted to erase us from the European map.' Second, Hlinka 'protected moral norms in the life of our people, because this is the future of our nation.' One of the reasons for Čarnogurský's initial support for this future independence was the conviction that Slovakia's destiny was to become a Catholic oasis within European 'Godless consumerism.'<sup>759</sup> In this sense Slovak Catholics were similar to conservative Catholics throughout the region who, led by the pope's criticism of Western secularisation, believed the situation in the West to be

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<sup>755</sup> František Tondra, 'Zapáliť sa za najkrajšie ideály národa', *Katolícke Noviny*, 9 September 1990, 1

<sup>756</sup> Tondra, 'Zapáliť sa za najkrajšie ideály národa', 1

<sup>757</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>758</sup> Klepáč, 'Zjednotíme sa,' 1.

<sup>759</sup> Innes, *Czechoslovakia*, p. 51.

the other 'extreme.'<sup>760</sup> Third, according to Čarnogurský, Hlinka defended the Slovak nation against Czechoslovakism and promoted Slovak autonomism and the 'Pittsburgh Agreement, the basis of our state law.'<sup>761</sup> The Pittsburgh Agreement was concluded in May 1918 between Czech and Slovak émigrés in America. Providing legal claim to autonomy, the pact promised Slovakia an independent administration, judiciary, and diet (national assembly) while giving preference to the Slovak language.<sup>762</sup> During the the first Czechoslovak Republic, the Pittsburgh Agreement was the central argument in the interwar Slovak People's Party's campaign for Slovak autonomy.<sup>763</sup> Čarnogurský thus identified with some of the basic tenets of pre-communist political Catholicism and Catholic nationalism.

Leading members of the Catholic hierarchy present at the commemoration supported some of these ideas, especially the call for the protection of morality. As Bishop Tondra asserted in his sermon, 'morality is a question of national existence.'<sup>764</sup> Similarly to the Christian Democrats, Tondra saw the communist rule as a time of 'moral decay', but he also saw Western liberalism as a new 'danger.' According to Tondra there was not much of a difference between, as he put it, the 'totalitarianism' imposed by communism and the 'totalitarianism' of liberalism.<sup>765</sup> Both were, in his view, harmful for a Catholic Slovak nation. They began preparing for the next year's commemoration. In the meantime, the 'sovereignty' nationalists began to lay the groundwork for mobilising leading Catholic national symbols, narratives, and events in support of 'Slovak sovereignty.'

### **2.1.2. Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows and 'National Unity'**

In addition to creating new public events and commemorations, the nationalist movement began to use traditional symbols of nationalised public Catholic culture to reinforce this newfound 'national unity.' At the same time it was becoming clear that 'sovereignty nationalists' were able to successfully mobilise these symbols in support of sovereignty. As far as 'national unity' was concerned, the symbol of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows was now used to symbolise that the unity of the Slovak nation

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<sup>760</sup> Natalie Gagnere, 'The Return of God and the Challenge of Democracy: The Catholic Church in Central Eastern Europe,' *Journal of Church and State*, 35 (1993), 862.

<sup>761</sup> Ján Čarnogurský, 'Do Európy svojbytné,' *Slovenský Denník*, 28 August 1990, 1.

<sup>762</sup> Ward, *Priest, Politician, Collaborator*, p. 66.

<sup>763</sup> See e.g. *Ibid.* pp. 77-8.

<sup>764</sup> Čarnogurský, 'Do Európy svojbytné,' 1.

<sup>765</sup> *Ibid.* 1.

was of central value to these nationalists. Nationalised public Catholic culture was made an important part of celebrating this holiday. On 1 November 1990 these nationalists co-organised a national pilgrimage to Šaštín and actively participated in the pilgrimage and the programme. The pilgrimage was planned to be celebrated as 'a liturgy for reconciliation;' the officially announced intention was to celebrate the ideals of 'non-violence' and pray for all victims of political violence. This employment of a nationalised public Catholic symbol confirmed the conciliatory approach to the nationally minded Communists and more broadly to the communist past. Unlike, for example, Czech dissent, former underground Catholics in Slovakia were especially conciliatory toward nationally-minded Communists – this was clearly a result of their pre-November 1989 engagement with nationalist narratives. This approach to the communist past was reflected in the various ways of remembering of the fall of state socialism in November 1989. Rather than celebrating the 17th of November as a bank holiday and a 'Day of the Fight for Freedom and Democracy,' the Slovak National Assembly adopted a 'Day of Reconciliation.'<sup>766</sup> The Christian Democrats talked about 'historical reconciliation on the basis of Christianity and national orientation.'<sup>767</sup> The Catholics thus approached the communist past from, in their view, a 'genuinely Christian perspective' characterized by 'forgiveness.' This approach to the communist past was not unusual among Catholics in the region. The first post-communist prime minister in Poland, the devout Catholic Tadeusz Mazowiecki, argued that a 'thick line' should be drawn between the past and the present.<sup>768</sup> The Šaštín pilgrimage demonstrated that a similar approach was wide-spread among nationally minded Catholic elites in Slovakia. Leading figures from November 1989, such as President Havel, were present, but the point of the pilgrimage was not to celebrate the end of state socialism and the 'Velvet Revolution.'<sup>769</sup> For Christian Democrats the main point of the pilgrimage was to support 'national reconciliation.' The 'sovereignty nationalists' went much further, obliterating the anniversary of November events altogether and focusing on promotion of Slovak sovereignty. They used the pilgrimage to publicly relate Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows and the

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<sup>766</sup> See *Zákon Národnej Rady Slovenskej Republiky*, 241/1993, Zz.

file:///C:/Users/Agata/Downloads/241\_1993\_1379318245.pdf (last accessed 20 August 2014).

<sup>767</sup> See Tížik, *Náboženstvo*, p. 204., Bunčák, Harmadyová, 'Velká Rozprava o Národe,' In J. Bunčák; V. Harmadyová; Z. Kusa (eds.), *Politická Zmena v Spolocenskej Rozprave* (Bratislava, 1996), p. 128.

<sup>768</sup> Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution*, p. 4.

<sup>769</sup> Kružliak, *Cyrlometodský kult*, p. 218.

Catholic Church to national sovereignty. This pilgrimage was the first time when the Vatican was evoked in relation to the project of Slovak sovereignty.

The 'sovereignty nationalists' turned to leading Catholic symbols, seeking to imbue them with new meaning, especially with the idea of Slovak political sovereignty. This was a crucial change in the use of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows. A few months earlier Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows and the national shrine had seen a thanksgiving service for the 'gift of freedom' and the new Bishops; there were no indications that the symbol would soon be used in support of Slovak sovereignty.<sup>770</sup> However, in the meantime, the 'sovereignty nationalists' succeeded in convincing the Slovak hierarchy that the Catholic Church needed to publicly support the territorial integrity of the Slovak ecclesiastical province. In autumn 1990, Slovak Bishops reacted to letters from Imrich Kružliak sent in early summer in which he had demanded ceremonial public announcement of the papal decrees by which the Vatican established an independent Slovak ecclesiastical province in 1977.<sup>771</sup> It seems that the main reason for this change was the campaign of Catholics from the Hungarian minority for an independent Hungarian diocese in southern Slovakia. The Slovak hierarchy rejected these Hungarian demands, determined to keep the Church administration in Slovakia, in Slovak hands, and saw the Hungarian demands as a challenge to the territorial integrity of the Slovak province.<sup>772</sup> By establishment of an independent ecclesiastical province, the Slovak dioceses were taken out of the Esztergom and Eger provinces – a change Slovak Catholic nationalists requested, fearing magyarisation of Slovak Catholics. In his response to Imrich Kružliak, Bishop Ján Baláž of the Banská Bystrica diocese maintained that it was 'a very pressing matter to emphasize our boundaries, so that the territorial integrity of Slovakia [would not be] challenged.'<sup>773</sup> Baláž was clearly alluding to the activities of Hungarian Catholic nationalists. It was these Hungarian demands that prodded the Slovak hierarchy to agree to publicly announce the decrees. The 'sovereignty nationalists' immediately stepped in and began to prepare the announcement. They proposed

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<sup>770</sup> Jukl, 'Čelónárodná ďaková púť,' 1.; Jukl, Bédi, 'Národná púť,' 1.

<sup>771</sup> For copies of the letters from Vladimír Filo, František Tondra, Jozef Baláž and Ján Sokol see Kružliak, *Cyrilometodský kult*, pp. 223-6.

<sup>772</sup> Jan Sokol, Interview with the author, 29 May 2012, Trnava, Slovakia.; František Tondra, Interview with the author, 11 November 2011, Spišská Kapitula, Slovakia.; See also Alojz Tkáč, Interview with the author, 12 November 2011, Košice, Slovakia.; Ján Ch. Korec, Interview with the author, 17 August 2012, Nitra, Slovakia.

<sup>773</sup> Letter from Biskup Baláž to Imrich Kružliak, 30 December 1990, in I Kružliak, *Cyrilometodský kult u Slovákov, Dlhá cesta k slovenskej cirkevnej provincii* (Prešov, 2002), p. 225.

that these documents should be read at the ‘national reconciliation’ pilgrimage in Šaštín.<sup>774</sup> But the ‘sovereignty nationalists’ were not intending to use the event simply as a response to Hungarian demands; they also turned it into a celebration of Slovak sovereignty within the common Czechoslovak state.

The public proclamation in Šaštín of a decree constituting a Slovak ecclesiastical province turned into a celebration of Slovak sovereignty within the Czechoslovak federation. The ‘sovereignty’ nationalists used the event to present the Church as a central force supporting the cause of Slovak ‘sovereignty’ to the leading figures of the Czechoslovak federation. At the end of the mass, a group composed of ex-communist nationalists – Roman Kaliský, actor Gustáv Valach, and writer Milan Rúfus – publicly read the papal decree.<sup>775</sup> At this point the hierarchy was not yet directly involved in support of political Slovak sovereignty, but the nationalised public Catholic culture was gradually being turned into a repertoire of cultural tools which could be mobilised to support Slovak independence. This event was remembered by leading members of the Slovak hierarchy as the first time they realised the extent to which the Vatican, in the words of Bishop Tondra, had ‘acknowledged the integrity of Slovak territory.’<sup>776</sup> Following this event, leading figures in the Slovak hierarchy became more active and soon came to play a central role in the mobilisation of Catholic symbols in support of Slovak sovereignty. Initially they simply boycotted attempts made by the Czech episcopate to mobilise the federal Bishops’ Conference in support of the common state. In doing so they began to play an important role in strengthening the ‘national unity.’

As is clear from private correspondence,<sup>777</sup> Slovak Bishops began to distance themselves from the Czech episcopate towards the end of 1990. This became clear

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<sup>774</sup> Hungarian Catholics, for instance, demanded Hungarian as a liturgical language during the papal visit to Slovakia in April 1990. These Hungarians also demanded that Hungarian language would be one of the official languages during the papal visit to Slovakia in April 1990. Jan Sokol, Interview with the author, 29 May 2012, Trnava, Slovakia.

<sup>775</sup> Imrich Kružliak, *Cyrilometodský kult u Slovákov, Dlhá cesta k slovenskej cirkevnej provincii* (Prešov, 2002), p. 199.

<sup>776</sup> František Tondra, Interview with the author, 11 November 2011, Spišská Kapitula, Slovakia.; See also Alojz Tkáč, Interview with the author, 12 November 2011, Košice, Slovakia.; Ján Ch. Korec, Interview with the author, 17 August 2012, Nitra, Slovakia.; Jan Sokol, Interview with the author, 29 May 2012, Trnava, Slovakia.

<sup>777</sup> ‘Provolání Biskupské Konference ČSFR a Ekumenické Rady Církvi, křesťanům i celé veřejnosti ČSFR.’ Private Correspondence of František Tondra, SDA, 21/30/90.; František Tondra, List BKČSF, 10 December 2011, Spišské Podhradie, Slovakia, Private Correspondence of František Tondra, SDA, 22/30/90.

in the communication between Czech and Slovak Bishops about Czechoslovakia's political future. At the time, the Czech Episcopate was advocating what is perhaps best understood as a more universalist cultural nationalism. Similarly to Slovak Catholic leaders and most Catholics across the region, the Czech hierarchy called for moral renewal and a re-building of Czech identity, but they did not see Czech political autonomy as necessary to achieve this goal. On the contrary, they focused on integration with Europe. Towards the end of the turbulent first year of democracy, the Auxiliary Bishop of Prague, František Radkovský (1990-1993), who was also the secretary general of the Federal Bishop's Conference (BK ČSFR), drafted an 'Appeal from the Federal Bishops' Conference and the Ecumenical Committee of Churches to Christians and the general public in the ČSFR.'<sup>778</sup> Radkovský was clearly alarmed by any plans for Slovak independence. In the appeal he urged the citizens of Czechoslovakia to remain faithful to the values which they 'so clearly demonstrated to the world during the Revolution.' The proclamation was designed to urge Czech and Slovaks not to allow their common state to disappear 'because of national intolerance...'<sup>779</sup> The letter criticized the strategy of Slovak nationalists of all stripes by stating that 'for both nations, it would be a bad way of entering a unified Europe, if we would look for our way individualistically only because we were not able to create unity between ourselves.'<sup>780</sup> Radkovský's appeal did not seem to resonate with the Slovak Bishops.

Leading figures in the Slovak hierarchy, namely Archbishop Sokol, head of Slovak province, and Bishop František Tondra, head of the Czechoslovak Bishops' Conference, did not show much interest in this more universalist Czech Catholic cultural nationalism. The Slovak Bishops did not worry much about the international reputation of the common state or the democratic legacy of the revolution; for them the theme of the day was Slovak sovereignty. The two Slovak bishops whose reactions are available – Ján Sokol of Trnava and František Tondra of the Spiš region in eastern Slovakia – responded in a manner which showed that their understanding of 1989 did not dictate a defence of the common state at any cost. In a clear appreciation of the Slovak nationalist interpretation of the revolution as a mere

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<sup>778</sup> 'Provolání Biskupské Konference ČSFR.' Private Correspondence of František Tondra, SDA, 21/30/90.

<sup>779</sup> Ibid.

<sup>780</sup> 'František Tondra, List BKČSF.' Private Correspondence of František Tondra, SDA, 22/30/90.

stepping stone towards Slovak independence, Archbishop Ján Sokol of Trnava suggested that the paragraph about the revolution should be replaced by ‘in the first place legislate what is just for both republics... may Slovaks be considered as an equal nation and may their justified demands be realised.’<sup>781</sup> Bishop Tondra’s suggestion was more concerned about economic equality between the two nations, and he likewise seemed more interested in the fate of the Slovak nation than its international reputation. He proposed leaving out the sentence about future independence and instead suggested adding the following text: ‘May the Slovaks be given space to develop to the level of Bohemia and Moravia, because the backwardness of Slovakia in comparison to the Czech lands during the first Republic bred a lot of evil in their mutual relations.’ Based on this experience, the common state would be, in Tondra’s view, ‘united and prosperous’ only when both nations develop [equally].<sup>782</sup> Both Bishops were clearly much more interested in advocating what they considered the interests of the nation, rather than safeguarding the continuation of the common state.

This support for Slovak ‘sovereignty’ at the expense of cooperation with the Czechs became evident first on the intra-Church level, when the Slovak episcopate attempted to separate from the Federal Bishops’ Conference and create an independent Slovak Bishops’ Conference. In March 1991 Ján Ch. Korec spearheaded the decentralisation of the Federal Bishops Conference, which later turned out to be the first step in his sustained support for Slovak independence. In March 1991, Korec, backed by all Slovak Bishops (and the papal nuncio G. Coppa, who was also willing to support the cause) suggested that the federal Bishops’ Conference should split into separate Czech and Slovak conferences. Korec was convinced that this separation was legitimised by the history of ecclesiastical independence dating back to the first ancient diocese of Nitra. He argued that ‘after more than 1000 years of waiting [since the time of establishment of an independent diocese in Nitra administered by St. Methodius, the Archbishop of Velehrad], Slovakia was given in 1977 an independent ecclesiastical province within the Slovak [Socialist] Republic...the faithful, the clergy, and bishops are convinced that this feat of the Holy See must be fulfilled by [constituting] an independent Bishop’s Committee

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<sup>781</sup> Ján Sokol, Fax to BKČSFR, 10 December 1990, Trnava, Slovakia, Private Correspondence of František Tondra, SDA, 23/30/90.

<sup>782</sup> Tondra, ‘List BKCSFR’, Private Correspondence of František Tondra, SDA, 22/30/90.

of the Church in Slovakia.<sup>783</sup> By employing Cyrilomethodian legacy in this way, Korec clearly abandoned the pre-1989 interpretation of this legacy as demanding spiritual renewal. The history of the Slovak nation was now re-interpreted by the hierarchy as obligating them to support decentralisation of the common state. Decentralisation of the federal Bishops' Conference was one such step.

Calling for decentralisation of the Bishops' Conference would not be unusual in an already independent state. Indeed, since the 1960s, when the Vatican fully recognised the legitimacy of the nation state, Churches in individual states were typically led by national Bishops Conferences.<sup>784</sup> Accordingly, the Vatican still fully supported this degree of nationalisation on both the cultural and institutional level. The decentralisation of the conference was requested with the knowledge of Nuncio Coppa. Yet, as it soon turned out, this step was not solely a matter of more effective administration. Korec's argumentation and the relative urgency with which he sought to attain this goal betrayed the increased influence of the 'sovereignty nationalists'. Korec referred not only to the distinct character of the Catholic community but also to the sovereign state, the Slovak Socialist Republic.

## **2.2. Cyril and Methodius and Slovak Sovereignty**

Under the leadership of Cardinal Korec, the Catholic hierarchy began to play an active role in mobilising the nationalised public Catholic culture in support of an immediate declaration of Slovak sovereignty, as suggested by the 'sovereignty nationalists.' The pilgrimage to Nitra became central to the largest event of 1991 – Cyrilomethodian days – designed as a celebration of the Slovak nation as the direct heir of Cyril and Methodius and co-organised by *Matica Slovenská*, the Christian Democrats, the Slovak National Party and the Centre of Nationalised culture. Together these nationalists prepared a series of events, including pilgrimages, conferences, and cultural programmes, to celebrate the Slovak nation as a 'direct heir of the Cyrilomethodian tradition.'<sup>785</sup> In addition to developing and expanding the

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<sup>783</sup> 'Návrh na rozdelenie na dve národné biskupské konferencie (Zo zasadania Československej biskupskej konferencie v marci 1991),' J Korec, *Svedectvá doby (1991)*, (Bratislava, 2009), p. 55.

<sup>784</sup> Jose Casanova, 'Church, State, Nation and Civil Society in Spain and Poland', In Arjomand, S. A. (ed.), *The Political Dimensions of Religion*, (New York, 1993), pp. 101-57.

<sup>785</sup> Miroslav Holečko, 'Návrat sv. Gorazda,' *Katolícke Noviny*, 18 August 1991, 10.; Ján Ch. Korec, Interview with the author, 17 August 2012, Nitra, Slovakia.; Juraj Chovan Rehák, Interview with the author, 14 April 2015, Hubová, Slovakia.

celebrations of Cyril and Methodius in Nitra, new symbols were inaugurated to support the idea of a Slovak Church, most notably the tradition of 'St. Gorazd, the first Slovak priest.'<sup>786</sup> The nationalised public Catholic culture, which had begun being created around Nitra and Cyril and Methodius since Korec's arrival, was now being merged with the origins of a Slovak nation in the medieval Pribina chiefdom of Nitra, promoted by 'sovereignty nationalists' as the foundation of independent Slovak statehood. During the central event – the national pilgrimage – Cardinal Korec supported for the first time in public the proclamation of Slovak sovereignty as a legitimate solution to the Slovak question, and this event was the beginning of his attempts to get directly involved in the promotion and legitimisation of the cause at the Slovak National Assembly.

Cardinal Korec presided over the 'national pilgrimage', as he planned it, on 5 July, the feast of Sts. Cyril and Methodius.<sup>787</sup> The event was attended by leading figures of Slovak political and cultural life as well as leading Slovak émigrés, most notably Cardinal Jozef Tomko.<sup>788</sup> This pilgrimage was clearly considered by Korec as an appropriate context for talking about the question of Slovakia's political future. He claimed that 'the Slovak nation has a right to a life of its own, it has a right to *self-determination*, [the nation] has a right to decide on its own how it wants to develop.'<sup>789</sup> Following the 'national pilgrimage,' Korec became personally involved in the central cause of the 'sovereignty nationalists', i.e. to declare Slovak sovereignty at the Slovak National Assembly. The 'heritage' of Cyril and Methodius in Slovakia became the Cardinal's main argument in his support for speedy attainment of independence.

The constitution of the independent diocese on Slovak territory in the 9th century and the constitution of the independent ecclesiastical province centuries later

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<sup>786</sup> Holečko, 'Návrat sv. Gorazda,' 10.

<sup>787</sup> František Tondra, Interview with the author, 11 November 2011, Spišská Kapitula, Slovakia.; Alojz Tkáč, Interview with the author, 12 November 2011, Košice, Slovakia.; Ján Ch. Korec, Interview with the author, 17 August 2012, Nitra, Slovakia. Note that the date of the feast in Slovakia is different from that in the rest of the Church, which has been February 14 since the 1980s (John Paul II made the change when he proclaimed Cyril and Methodius Patrons of Europe).

<sup>788</sup> František Tondra, Interview with the author, 11 November 2011, Spišská Kapitula, Slovakia.; Alojz Tkáč, Interview with the author, 12 November 2011, Košice, Slovakia.; Ján Ch. Korec, Interview with the author, 17 August 2012, Nitra, Slovakia.

<sup>789</sup> 'Slovo Kardinála J. Ch Korca na záver sv. omše na sviatok sv. Cyrila a Metoda' (Nitra 5. Jula 1991), in Korec, *Svedectvá doby*, p. 128.

was in Korec's view papal confirmation of Slovak sovereignty. Supported by émigrés and *Matica Slovenská*, Korec now sought to have the papal decree constituting an independent Slovak province incorporated into Slovak law. In July 1991 Korec wrote a letter to the Ministry of Culture and to the chairmen of the Czech National and Slovak National Councils, asking them to qualify the decree as a law. In his view, the decree had an 'unquestionable state-constituting (constitutional) importance not only as far as ecclesiastical independence of Slovakia was concerned, but also for its national sovereignty'<sup>790</sup> Korec's support for a prompt public declaration of Slovak sovereignty did not stem only from his personal longer-term support for the cause but was further encouraged by several other new developments.

In the spring of 1991 a new political force emerged in the country. This new force turned out to be more capable than anyone before it to effectively mobilise the Slovak public, including broader segments of the Catholic Church, in support of Slovak sovereignty. The 'sovereignty nationalists' were in turn more confident to mobilise the nationalised public Catholic culture in support of this cause. The rise of this force was preceded by several important events. In early 1991 Public Against Violence came apart at the seams over the question of Slovakia's political future, the pace and form of economic reforms, and last but not least the lustration law. The key figure in this argument in the run up to Slovak independence and more generally in Slovak politics as a whole for the next decade was the Slovak Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar. A lawyer who before November 1989 had worked in a provincial factory, After November 1989 Mečiar was co-opted to become the Minister of the Interior of the first post-1989 government. Despite initial general enchantment with his charismatic leadership, Mečiar soon became estranged both from VPN as well as the KDH. He was proving increasingly unaccountable to his coalition partners mostly because of his rather mysterious past and his handling of secret police files while interior minister. However, his falling out with his coalition partners had little effect on his popularity among the population at large. As Karen Henderson maintains in her analysis of Slovak post-socialist politics, Mečiar had successfully 'tapped into the undercurrents of popular unease about the indifference of Prague politicians to the consequences of economic policy in Slovakia, and the failure of the Czechs to recognise that the Slovaks might have valid reasons for emphasising their

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<sup>790</sup> Kružliak, *Cyrlometodský kult u Slovákov*, p. 200.

otherness.<sup>791</sup> Mečiar, along with a group of followers, left the broader VPN movement and named itself the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS). Under Mečiar's leadership the HZDS leaned to the left, rejected lustration (many of its members were ex-Communists) and began to promote confederation.<sup>792</sup> HZDS promptly became the most popular political force in the country, and Mečiar emerged as a popular populist leader capable of mobilising others behind anti-Czech rhetoric. Yet unlike the 'sovereignty nationalists,' he based his attacks on the issue of economic inequality as the primary evidence of the suppression of Slovaks within the federation. Nonetheless, his voice easily resonated with those of the 'sovereignty nationalists'.

The new alliance between Mečiar and the 'sovereignty nationalists' was mutually beneficial. The 'sovereignty nationalists', on one hand, were in dire need of an electorally strong political force and saw Mečiar as the new 'national leader,' following in the footsteps of the great historical nationalist leaders of the Slovak nation.<sup>793</sup> Mečiar, on the other hand, needed to legitimise his programme as authentically Slovak. He had only recently belonged among the strong proponents of the common state, and his newfound nationalism was seen by many (including the VPN and Christian Democrats) as inauthentic.<sup>794</sup> In the spring of 1991 the 'sovereignty nationalists' organised rallies in support of Mečiar; he in turn supported their second proposed declaration of sovereignty, which was issued in the spring that same year. Later, in autumn he came up with his own attempt to declare Slovak sovereignty, known as the 'Initiative for a Sovereign Slovakia'.<sup>795</sup> This document promised the achievement of Slovak sovereignty and the adoption of a Slovak constitution as its priority. The initiative exacerbated conflicts over Slovakia's future, and the 'Initiative for a Sovereign Slovakia' (*Za zvrchované Slovensko*) was immediately countered by the creation of a pro-federation citizens' initiative, mostly with

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<sup>791</sup> Henderson, *Slovakia*, p. 35.

<sup>792</sup> The remaining members of VPN retained the original name and moved to the right, advocating a strong federation and strict anti-communist legislation and neo-liberal reforms.

<sup>793</sup> Imrich Kružliak, 'V dome Lazárovom,' *Literárny Týždeň*, 8 February 1991, 12.

<sup>794</sup> Cohen, *Politics without Past*, pp. 149-50.

<sup>795</sup> Tim Haughton and Marek Rybář, 'All right now? Explaining the successes and Failures of the Slovak Centre-Right,' in Aleks Szczerbiak and Seán Hanley (eds.), *Center-Right Parties in Post-Communist East-Central Europe*, (London and New York, 2006), pp. 115-133. Innes, *Czechoslovakia*, p. 106.

members from VPN.<sup>796</sup> These conflicts only further hardened their conviction that they needed to act as fast as possible.

A second development which contributed to understanding the early 1990s as the right time for declaring Slovak sovereignty was the fact that Christian Democrats, one of the central supporters of the engagement of Catholic culture in Slovak self-determination, assumed a leading position in the Slovak government. According to Cardinal Korec, this new position of the Christian Democrats was the central reason for him to hope that his personal involvement in the issue of declaration of Slovak sovereignty would be successful.<sup>797</sup> This change in the composition of the Slovak government was related to a split between the KDH, the leading political force in the country, and its coalition partner, Public Against Violence. After the ouster of Mečiar, Čarnogurský became the new prime minister and formed a new coalition government from which Mečiar and his followers were excluded.<sup>798</sup> However, shortly after assuming this leading position the Christian Democrats became increasingly opposed to attempts to declare Slovak sovereignty. The position of Christian Democrats on the question of Slovak political sovereignty had by this time changed significantly. According to Czech political scientist Jíří Pehe, the new position exposed the Christian Democrats to pressure from different quarters. 'First, it was subject to pressure from the federal and the Czech governments to clarify Slovakia's stance on the future of the common state. Second, the government led by Christian Democrats had to face intensifying demands from nationalist forces in Slovakia, strengthened by the followers of Mečiar, to defend Slovak national interests more vigorously. Third, the Christian Democratic Movement was under a degree of pressure from its coalition partners.<sup>799</sup> Not having enough votes in the Slovak National Council and the Presidium to enforce its own policies, it had to rely on the support of the Public Against Violence and the Democratic Party, both of which were strongly in favour of a federation. The Christian Democratic Movement eventually opted to keep the coalition alive rather than give in to sovereignty-nationalist pressure within and outside the movement. The movement slightly modified its stance on the future of the common state and the state treaty, abandoning the idea of a confederation in favour

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<sup>796</sup> 'Protichodné iniciatívy,' Kováč *et al.*, 2:523.

<sup>797</sup> Ján Ch. Korec, Interview with the author, 17 August 2012, Nitra, Slovakia.

<sup>798</sup> Pehe, 'Slovak Nationalism,' p. 14.

<sup>799</sup> *Ibid*, p. 14.

of a loose federation. This affected their approach regarding direct involvement of the hierarchy on behalf of the 'sovereignty nationalists.' The papal decree constituting the Slovak province was not, as Korec had requested, proclaimed as a 'state-constituting document,' and the main decision in this case was made by Christian Democrats.<sup>800</sup> Nonetheless, Christian Democrats continued to support Slovakia's right to self-determination, but did so less ambitiously.

Third, leading representatives of the Vatican continued to support this Catholic culture, even now when it was mobilised for the cause of Slovak sovereignty.<sup>801</sup> By this time the pope was involved much less directly,<sup>802</sup> and Cardinal Jozef Tomko played a central role. Tomko supported this interpretation on several occasions, but the best known were his sermon at the Nitra pilgrimage and a speech at the Slovak parliament. Tomko did not talk about the Slovak political future. Instead, the main theme of his speech was Slovak distinctiveness, its historical roots, and in terms of the present concerns, moral renewal of the nation.

Although Tomko avoided the issue of Slovak political sovereignty, he nonetheless dwelled on the idea of the Slovak nation as a historical nation and on Slovak national distinctiveness. He paid the most attention to the cultural rights of the Slovak nation and obligations, giving short shrift to the question of the rights of minorities or the value of the common state. Tomko urged Slovaks to be 'just towards national minorities.'<sup>803</sup> Central to his speech, however, was the idea of Slovak distinctiveness. Tomko emphasized that the pope recognised Slovak distinctiveness internationally and listed all the instances when John Paul II had acknowledged the Slovak nation as an independent nation. Speaking as a Prefect of the Congregation of Evangelisation of Nations, Tomko likened a nation to a tree, and like a tree the Slovak nation, in his view, could not 'live without roots...and without a future.' Tomko

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<sup>800</sup> Ján Ch. Korec, Interview with the author, 17 August 2012, Nitra, Slovakia.

<sup>801</sup> 'Vernosť, Prihovor apoštolskeho nuncia v ČSFR Arcibiskupa Giovannio Coppu', *Katolícke Noviny*, 6 January 1991, 1. This much is clear from memoirs of the ambassador F. X. Halas.

<sup>802</sup> František X. Halas, *Fenomen Vatikán, Idea, dejiny a súčasnosť papežství – Diplomacie Svätého stolca – České země a Vatikán*, (Brno 2004), p. 638. Before Tomko's speech, František X. Halas, the CSFR's ambassador to the Holy See, informed the Vatican's Minister of Foreign Affairs Msgr. Tauran that in Slovakia Tomko's speeches were 'perceived as... official stances of the Vatican.' Halas claims that Tauran must have spoken about the issue to Tomko, since Tomko in his speech according to Halas, 'spoke in favour of federation.' Interestingly, however, Tomko's speech does not contain any such supportive statement.

<sup>803</sup> 'Ostaňte verní svojmu národu' *Slovensky Dennik*, 26 April 1991, 5.

encouraged Slovaks 'to return to the deepest roots of national life.' The goal, however, was no longer to merely 'return to Europe' but to play a distinctive role in Europe. 'The roots of our life are in the Cyrilomethodian heritage (legacy). Slovaks are the direct heirs of the spiritual treasure the great missionaries brought to us.'<sup>804</sup> For Tomko the role of the Church and the state was to build a democracy true to these national traditions. The Slovak nation should in Tomko's opinion focus on its own morality. He talked about national renewal in terms of reviving the 'good' 'features of the Slovak character, which have been harmed by a system of mutual distrust.' These were the 'return of religious conviction to the public sphere' (to prevent the 'decline of civilisation,' which in Tomko's view was already underway in the West); and moral renewal, that is support for of 'all that is good, beautiful and healthy' (this in his view included, for instance, "protecting unborn life"). The speech was widely circulated across all major Catholic and nationalist papers and was later widely used, especially by Catholic nationalists, in their legitimisation of Slovak sovereignty.<sup>805</sup>

In addition, the Vatican had just recently supported independence movements elsewhere in the region. It was one of the first states to extend diplomatic recognition to the newly established states of Croatia and Slovenia in 1991.<sup>806</sup> According to official Vatican sources, both countries had a 'moral and lawful right to independence.'<sup>807</sup> But this step should not be interpreted as unreserved support for post-communist geo-political changes. It is worth mentioning that the main papal project for Europe was re-evangelization of a unified Europe through reintegration of its 'faithful East' with the secular West.<sup>808</sup> Accordingly, as Ramet argues, 'whatever we might conclude about the merits and demerits of its dissolution, from the standpoint of the Catholic Church in Croatia and the Vatican, the breakup of the

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Tomko, 'Odkaz Slovenskému národu', <http://ksn.frcth.uniba.sk/Tomko1991.html> (last accessed 6 June 2013). Tomko emphasized that the Cyrilomethodian mission to the Slovaks was prophetic since it used the method of enculturation, i.e. respect for national traditions when evangelising, which is now "an important missionary method of evangelisation."

<sup>804</sup> In a way that resonated with Korec's speech in the previous year.

<sup>805</sup> 'Ostaňte verní svojmu národu,' 5.

<sup>806</sup> Sabrina Ramet, 'The Croatian Catholic Church since 1990,' *Religion, State and Society*, 24:4(1996), 345-55. 345.

<sup>807</sup> 'Vatikan za Chorvatsko a Slovinsko,' *Slovenský Denník*, 7 October 1991, 1, 3.

<sup>808</sup> Timothy Byrnes, *Transnational Catholicism in Postcommunist Europe* (Lanham, MA and Oxford, 2001), p. 5.

multi-confessional Yugoslavia was virtually an unmixed blessing.<sup>809</sup> The crucial point here is that Croatians, similarly to Slovenians, were in the majority a Catholic population living in a state where they were far more bitterly attacked than the Serbian Orthodox or Islamic communities, and where the influence of Serbian nationalism and the Serbian Orthodox Church was growing, making the non-Serbian minorities feel threatened. Even though John Paul II also envisioned cooperation among different Christian denominations, with special regard to Orthodoxy, the dissolution of Yugoslavia worked rather well in his plans for strengthening Christianity against secular forces. The pope was already more careful in the case of Lithuania. Lithuanian independence could potentially turn religion into a reason for conflict in a region which the pope envisioned as being the centre of the revival of 'the glorious traditions of Russian Christianity, forgotten and lost in the last 70 years.'<sup>810</sup> The pope offered moral support for Lithuanians, but the Vatican, similarly to Poland or the United States, did not initially grant it diplomatic recognition.<sup>811</sup> The case of Slovakia was rather different. It is very probable that the combination of traditional Slovak religiosity and more intellectual Czech Catholicism were seen by the pope as a usefully strong combination in his vision for a Christian Eastern Europe.<sup>812</sup> In the Slovak case the Vatican did not encourage political separation, but its representatives did support cultures that were mobilised for separation.

### **2.3. Andrej Hlinka and Slovak Sovereignty**

That year, the Hlinka festivities were used by the Catholic hierarchy to promote the Slovak 'right to self-determination,' with František Tondra, like Cardinal Korec before him, using the occasion to argue in favour of such rights. In his 1991 sermon, Tondra reflected on Andrej Hlinka's role in Slovak history and used this reflection to openly support 'the right to make its own decisions.'

Every nation has a right to self-determination i.e. to decide whether it wants to become an independent state or stay in a common state with another nation, but on equal terms. The right to self-determination is a right to make decisions

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<sup>809</sup> Ramet, 'The Croatian Catholic Church', 345.

<sup>810</sup> Stephen Egelberg, 'Pope Subtly offers Moral support for Lithuanians,' *New York Times*, 6 June 1991, <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/06/06/world/pope-subtly-offers-moral-support-for-lithuanians-independence.html> (last accessed 23 March 2014).

<sup>811</sup> Egelberg, 'Pope Subtly offers Moral support'.

<sup>812</sup> This could explain why the pope spoke against the split-up of Czechoslovakia at a personal audience with Mikloško and Čarnogurský. Čarnogurský, Interview with the author, 11. 11. 2011. ; Mikloško, interview with the author, 13 July 2010,

about oneself. This was the goal of Andrej Hlinka and he achieved this goal, even though he never lived to see it come to fruition...His ideals are still valid. What concrete form we will give them depends on the possibilities and circumstances. [But] We should never abandon the ideals of sovereignty; that would be anti-national.<sup>813</sup>

As their political programme became less clearly national, the Christian Democrats continued to present themselves as part of the nationalised public Catholic culture. Despite the conflicts over the future of the common state, the central events of the nationalised public Catholic culture continued to be supported by all forces. Most notably, the Christian Democrats continued to organise and take part at Hlinka festivities in Ružomberok, celebrating the birth of Andrej Hlinka.<sup>814</sup> The Christian Democrats continued to support these commemorations, as they understood these memories as central to creating a 'self-standing' Slovak nation. They were still convinced that 'national unity' with the nationalists, including émigrés and ex-communist nationalists, was important. In fact, even if their disagreement with sovereignty nationalists over the Slovak political future became more pronounced, they continued to support the sovereignty nationalists in important respects.

By the end of 1991, the Slovak episcopate was united in the idea that the Church hierarchy should officially and publicly express their view on the question of the Slovak political future. In November 1991, these bishops issued a pastoral letter on the relationship between the Czech and Slovak nations. Writing in rather ambiguous terms, they claimed that 'the [Catholic] Church has always proclaimed the right to self-determination.' The Bishops were convinced of 'the fact' that each nation has a 'moral right to self-determination.'<sup>815</sup> This wording was ambiguous indeed in the very fact that they did not use the word 'sovereignty' but more broadly 'self-determination.' The hierarchy supported self-determination, but it was not clear which political programme exactly it was that was being endorsed. This absence of clarity signalled disagreements within the Slovak episcopate over how far they should

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<sup>813</sup> František Bielik and Štefan Borovský, *Andrej Hlinka a jeho miesto v Slovenských Dejinách* (Bratislava, 1991), pp. 7-8.

<sup>814</sup> Kováčová, 'Černovský hold a neúcta,' 6-7.; '27. September uplynie 127. Rokov...', *Bratislavské Lísty*, 9(1991), 1.

<sup>815</sup> 'Morálne aspekty súčasného spoločenského života, Pastiersky list biskupov Slovenska k problematike vzťahu medzi našimi dvomi národmi Čechmi a Slovákmi (24 November 1991)' In *Pastierske Lísty Biskupov Slovenska (1991-2000)* (Bratislava, 2008), p. 7-8

interfere in political debates.<sup>816</sup> Furthermore, the bishops also might have been seeking to unify the sovereignty nationalists, who by now were increasingly embattled. However ambiguous this wording, the bishops would unambiguously unite behind Vladimír Mečiar by the same time the following year, the candidate who would by that time have emerged as the winner of the parliamentary elections.

Between the pastoral letter and the elections, all negotiations about an agreement on the basis of which it would be possible to ratify the federal constitution failed. General elections planned for June 1992 were thus awaited in an atmosphere of deadlock and lingering confusion.<sup>817</sup> Vladimír Mečiar's HZDS ran on a platform proposing a vague form of confederation and gradual economic reform. Although Mečiar did not advocate disintegration of Czechoslovakia; he successfully portrayed himself as the strongest defender of Slovak interests. In addition, Mečiar was supported by *Matica Slovenská* and the Slovak National Party which used the election campaign to strongly push the sovereignty issue.<sup>818</sup> The Christian Democrats supported the common state but continued to propose that Slovakia should eventually represent itself in the EU. When compared to the often unscrupulous rhetoric of sovereignty nationalists and Mečiar, the Christian Democrats may have easily appeared as lacking in resolve.

The HZDS subsequently won a decisive victory, with 37 per cent of the vote; the KDH and the SNS both lost ground, winning around 9 and 8 per cent, respectively. Following the elections, Mečiar became Slovak Prime Minister and formed a new government which continued in negotiations with the Czech representatives. But it soon became clear that the winners of the parliamentary majorities in each republic, both with a hard and uncompromising stance towards each other and both clear on the constitutional issues, would not be able to reach an agreement. Whilst, on the Slovak side Vladimír Mečiar supported a confederation, on the Czech side, the Civic Democratic Party (ODS, *Občiansko Demokratická Strana*) led by Václav Klaus supported a firmer 'functional federation' (no international

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<sup>816</sup> František Tondra, Interview with the author, 11 November 2011, Spišská Kapitula, Slovakia.; Alojz Tkáč, Interview with the author, 12 November 2011, Košice, Slovakia.

<sup>817</sup> Erika Harris, *Nationalism and Democratisation, Politics of Slovakia and Slovenia* (Aldershot, 2002), p. 90.

<sup>818</sup> For all of the party's positions on independence, see 'Konfrontácie,' *Smena*, 27 Apr 1992, 3.

recognition for republics and clear sovereignty of the federal government).<sup>819</sup> The former was unacceptable to Klaus, the latter to Mečiar, which left only a third option: the disintegration of the state. In a matter of a month, Mečiar moved to declare Slovak sovereignty in the Slovak parliament. Leading sovereignty nationalists and leading members of the Catholic hierarchy were ready to mobilise the nationalised public Catholic culture in support of their new national leader, Mečiar.

### **3. Nationalised public Catholic Culture and Slovak independence**

The repertoires of nationalised public Catholic culture that were developed in the 1980s and expanded in the 1990s were used in 1992 to legitimise Slovak independence. The newly elected Slovak government made the declaration of Slovak sovereignty by the Slovak parliament its central priority. In the next few months, between this declaration of sovereignty and the declaration of independence, the nationalised public Catholic culture, together with its major symbols, memories, and events, would be mobilised in legitimisation of this programme. Despite the fact that not all Catholics agreed with Slovak independence, Cyril and Methodius were placed in the preamble of the new state constitution as an important historical source of Slovak statehood.<sup>820</sup> On the feast of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows in September 1993, a ceremonial thanksgiving mass was held at the national shrine for the gift of independent statehood. After the establishment of an independent Slovakia, the feast of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows was declared a 'bank holiday' with the then prime minister declaring that 'Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows had played an important role in Slovak independence.'<sup>821</sup> In the last months between the declaration of Slovak sovereignty and the declaration of Slovak independence (July-November 1992), the differing approaches to the Slovak political future translated into struggles about the meaning of Slovak history, and eventually into different interpretations of the meaning of the symbols, memories, and events central to nationalised public Catholic culture.

On 17 July 1992, the Declaration of Sovereignty of the Slovak Nation was passed by the Slovak National Council. Although Prime Minister Vladimir Mečiar refused to admit that this was a step towards independence, the declaration was

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<sup>819</sup> Henderson, *Slovakia*, p. 35.

<sup>820</sup> 'Preambula,' *Ústava Slovenskej Republiky* (Bratislava, 2006), p. 19.

<sup>821</sup> Letz, *Sedembolestná*, pp. 107, 126.

widely regarded as such. The Czechs, including President Havel, read the declaration as a Slovak consensus on separation and Havel used it as a pretext to resign. Klaus was subsequently able to exploit the declaration as further proof that 'the Slovaks were intransigent and that the federation was simply not salvageable.'<sup>822</sup> The declaration was followed by a hasty enactment of a Slovak constitution in September that same year.<sup>823</sup> The dissolution of the Republic was hastily carried out in the last few months of 1992. In August, the HZDS and ODS ceded the constitutionality of the break-up, and 25 November 1992 the law on the break-up of Czechoslovakia was approved. As of 1 January 1993, Czechoslovakia was no more.

### 3.1. Catholics and the Declaration of Sovereignty

Catholics were divided over whether these steps were legitimate not only constitutionally, but in terms of national memory. The differences in approach to the Slovak political future translated into struggles about the different meaning of Slovak history and eventually into different interpretations of nationalist Catholic Slovak culture. On one hand, the Christian Democrats saw this process as not only constitutionally but also historically illegitimate. On the other hand, sovereignty nationalists and the Slovak episcopate became firm supporters of a process that would lead to independence. Following the declaration, the Bishops' Conference issued a proclamation 'The Hour of Sovereignty' in which they presented the declaration as a 'natural' outcome of Slovak history.

The Slovak Bishops Conference acclaimed the declaration as a 'natural' culmination of Slovak history.' The introductory lines are worth quoting at length:

Every nation with a long cultural tradition desires to accomplish its national life in state sovereignty. This was the desire and goal of the endeavours of the noblest personalities in our history, especially in the last 150 years...This natural right established in international documents was fulfilled in 1968 by the establishment of the Slovak Republic...<sup>824</sup>

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<sup>822</sup> Hilde, 'The Break-up of Czechoslovakia,' 661-2.

<sup>823</sup> Miroslav Pekník, *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti* (Bratislava, 1998), missing pagination.

<sup>824</sup> 'Hodina Zvrchovanosti Slovenska' 17 July 1992, *Acta Curiae Episcopalis Nitriensis* No. VI/1992, Nitra 21 August 1992, Supplement, missing pagination. See also 'Hodina Zvrchovanosti Slovenska', *Katolícke Noviny*, 30 July 1992, 1.

The hierarchy claimed that the declaration was in accord with Catholic teaching and Slovak Catholic memory. The Declaration also referred to John Paul II and his speech to the Polish nation during his first visit to Poland in 1979. Showing just how liberally these words could be interpreted, the declaration stated that ‘Peace and rapprochement of nations can be built only on the foundation of respect for objective rights of a nation, such as the right to being, to freedom, to confession.’<sup>825</sup> The declaration was published on the front page of the *Katolícke Noviny*.<sup>826</sup> Cardinal Korec then suggested that the declaration should be welcomed by the ringing of church bells.<sup>827</sup>

The establishment of a Slovak province was presented in the major Catholic weekly *Katolícke Noviny* as papal confirmation of the Slovak right to ‘Slovak sovereignty.’ Archbishop Sokol wrote a central article in which he celebrated ‘sovereignty.’<sup>828</sup> *Katolícke Noviny* applauded the declaration of sovereignty in an article entitled ‘Love for the Nation.’<sup>829</sup> A hitherto little known author, associated with *Matica Slovenská*, claimed that love for one’s nation has an important place in the Christian hierarchy of love. He also argued that loving the Slovak nation is every Slovak’s moral responsibility.<sup>830</sup> The weekly openly presented the constitution of the Slovak province in 1977 as first of all the Vatican’s approval of Slovak sovereignty.<sup>831</sup> Another author at the weekly saw the constitution of the province as establishing an obligation for the Slovak Bishops and Catholics to support the declaration of Slovak sovereignty.<sup>832</sup> The weekly also rejected claims made by Christian Democrats that

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<sup>825</sup> ‘Hodina Zvrchovanosti Slovenska,’ 1.

<sup>826</sup> ‘Ibid., 1.

<sup>827</sup> The only result of the controversy in terms of authority was that from then on, individual names would be given only when accepted unanimously, but if a letter should be accepted only by a majority of votes, the signature will be “Bishops of Slovakia.” ‘Cirkev a svetská politika, Po vyhlásení deklarácie nezvonili vo všetkých kostoloch, Názory J. Čarnogurského, F. Mikloška a kardinála J. Ch. Koreca (sic)’ *Národná Obroda* 24 Augusta 1992, p. 3

<sup>828</sup> It is quite telling that most of the celebratory articles in *KN* were written by hitherto little known authors related to *Matica Slovenská* (with the rare exception of Archbishop Sokol) and no other member of the hierarchy wrote an article celebrating sovereignty. ‘Cirkev a zvrchovanost,’ *Katolícke Noviny*, 16 August 1992, 1.

<sup>829</sup> Burian, ‘Láska k národu’, 1.

<sup>830</sup> Even though there was never explicit exchange of views, these words were most probably addressed to the politicians from the KDH who never supported the new constitution.

<sup>831</sup> The negotiation of the federation’s future arrangement saw the radicalisation of stances in the church. While their origins could be traced to the exile, with exile influenced *KN* advocating independence most vocally, many from among the former dissent supported such views.

<sup>832</sup> Ján Košiar, ‘Žime zvrchovane a kresťansky,’ *Katolícke Noviny*, 16 August 1992, 1.

the pope was against the split.<sup>833</sup> According to the weekly these were mere 'rumours.'<sup>834</sup> The official Catholic support for the sovereignty nationalists also translated into further support of the *Matica Slovenská*, the leading force among the sovereignty nationalists. In August 1992 Cardinals Jozef Tomko and Ján Ch. Korec joined *Matica Slovenská* as honorary members,<sup>835</sup> *Matica* issued a declaration in which it stated that 'national and Christian principles are 'indivisible.'<sup>836</sup> The hierarchy's open support of sovereignty nationalists dismayed some Catholics, especially Christian Democrats. The Christian Democrats, however, did not go into direct confrontation with the hierarchy.

Their discontent transpired most visibly in their clashes with the émigrés. The main bones of contention are best captured in an exchange between Imrich Kružliak, a former émigré and one of the leading ideologues of the sovereignty nationalists, and Čarnogurský. Following the KDH's vote against the Declaration, Kružliak wrote to *Literárny Týždenník*. Writing in an agitated tone Kružliak argued that the KDH's rejection of the declaration and absence at the drafting of the Slovak constitution was a fatal misunderstanding of the 'logic of Slovak history.'<sup>837</sup> For Kružliak and for sovereignty nationalists alike, the achievement of independence was a culmination of historical efforts of Slovak nationalists. Moreover, Imrich Kružliak claimed that Vladimir Mečiar was now following in the footsteps of Andrej Hlinka and Martin Rázus, the leaders of the two autonomist parties during the first Czechoslovak Republic.<sup>838</sup> Čarnogurský defended the Christian Democratic decision as making complete sense. He did not see this moment as the culmination of historical emancipation of the Slovak nation. He did not see the previous episodes of national emancipation (19th century emancipation, interwar autonomism and wartime Slovak Republic) as laying the groundwork for the current efforts for Slovak independence. Rather, he saw them as warning signs for future generations.<sup>839</sup> Based on these past events, Ján Čarnogurský was convinced that Slovakia should not seek independence

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<sup>833</sup> František Mikloško, interview with the author, 13 July 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia; Ján Čarnogurský, Interview with the Author, 11. 11. 2011. Bratislava, Slovakia

<sup>834</sup> Rudolf Burian, 'Láska k národu', In *Katolícke Noviny*, 20 September 1992, 1.

<sup>835</sup> 'Jozef Markuš opäť' predsedom,' *Slovenský Denník*, 10 August 1992, 1-2.

<sup>836</sup> 'Jozef Markuš,' 2.

<sup>837</sup> Imrich Kružliak, 'Sebaklam', In *Literárny Týždenník*, Vol. 6, 4(1992), 13.; 'Problémy kresťanskej politiky,' *LT*, 17 October 1992, 12.; 'V dome Lazárovom,' 12.

<sup>838</sup> Kružliak, 'Sebaklam', 13.

<sup>839</sup> Ján Čarnogurský, 'Obrana KDH', *Literárny Týždenník*, 28 November 1992, 10.

at any cost lest it risk international isolation and descend into a semi-authoritarian regime under Vladimír Mečiar. Kružliak countered that the Christian Democrats had not 'grasped the meaning of the Slovak history...the good initiatives [for Slovak independence] were unsuccessful because of the outside balance of forces which were anti-Slovak.'<sup>840</sup> According to Kružliak, today the situation was favourable: since 1989 several independent states had been established and diplomatically acclaimed, and Slovakia had an (electorally) strong political leader capable of carrying through the cause of Slovak independence.

### 3.2. The Christian Democrats and the Catholic Hierarchy

Following the publication of 'Hour of Sovereignty', Christian Democrats and 'sovereignty nationalists' clashed openly for the first time over the extent to which the Catholic hierarchy should be engaged in political debates. Leading Christian Democrats criticised the hierarchy's support for this project of Slovak sovereignty as undue involvement with politics. The clearest and most visible herald of this disagreement came in the form of three short interviews with Mikloško, Čarnogurský, and Korec as published in the daily *Národná Obroda*.<sup>841</sup> The three Catholic leaders were asked whether their different stances on the Declaration would in any way divide the Church. Čarnogurský refused to talk about Church in this way, claiming that he knew nothing about internal Church matters. Mikloško indirectly criticised the 'Hour of Sovereignty,' and argued that 'the historical problem of the Church (hierarchy) is interfering with the temporal matters.' Mikloško and Čarnogurský thus no longer identified with what they helped to create in the early 1990s. Cardinal Korec did not seem to see a reason why the Church should be less engaged in politics, maintaining that in the public sphere, the Church is represented not only by the bishops, but also by Catholic politicians. What is clear, however, is that he felt that the Catholic hierarchy was the leading representative of the nationalised culture and should determine its use. In addressing the views of the Christian Democrats, he said that '*the Church tolerates their views in all respects and the Christian Democrats*

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<sup>840</sup> Kružliak, 'Sebaklam,' 13.

<sup>841</sup> 'Cirkev a svetská politika', *Národná Obroda*, 20 July 1992, 3.

should do the same thing.<sup>842</sup> The nationalised Catholic culture thus could no longer serve as a unifying space for Catholics.

The Christian Democrats also tried to de-politicise the nationalist Catholic public culture, recalling the struggle in the late 1980s of underground Catholics for religious freedom. At the most recent Congress of Christian Democrats in 1992, Čarnogurský had referred to the Christian Democrats as the only legitimate successors of the late socialist nationalised public Catholic culture and its 'legacy of struggle for religious freedom and democracy.'<sup>843</sup> As he said,

It was us, our people, who started to implement a national programme for Slovakia far earlier than anyone else. Youth groups, which were also associated with us, sang [national] songs at our pilgrimages.... Articles about true Slovak history were published in the samizdat journals *Náboženstvo a Súčasnosť* and *Bratislavské Listy*.... We organised group visits of activists who were detained and tried. By the way, it was our activities which had created an accurate and positive picture of Slovakia abroad.<sup>844</sup>

He also identified the current behaviour of the Church hierarchy as reminiscent of the wartime connection between the state and the hierarchy. According to Čarnogurský, the Christian Democrats had begun to shed their pre-1992 cooperation with the Church and were moving towards a more Western European model of Christian democracy.<sup>845</sup> They also attempted to resuscitate the understanding of Cyrilomethodian 'heritage' as based on faith, and argued that this 'heritage' should be utilised to support political agendas. The Christian Democratic daily *Slovenský Denník* recycled the pre-1989 criticism of secularisation of Cyrilomethodian tradition. The author at *Slovenský Denník* accused the SNS of convoluting the role of Cyril and Methodius by turning their legacy, which was 'first and foremost spiritual' into a 'merely secular one.'<sup>846</sup> The one thing the author failed to mention was that unlike the

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<sup>842</sup> The interviewer seemed to understand the authority of the Cardinal in a similar way. 'I would not say that the Church would stand against its faithful in public life, nor that religious politicians of one party [KDH] have as a whole stood up against *the Church*.' Even if the *Národná Obroda* journalist's interpretation of his words by no means represents its general reception in Slovak media, it does hint at who was seen as the authority within the church, and that even if Mikloško was reasoning from the history of the Church, the one who spoke from a position of official, recognised authority was Cardinal Korec. 'Cirkev a svetská politika', 3.

<sup>843</sup> Ján Čarnogurský, 'Piaty snem KDH (1992) Poprad 19 Septembra 1992' in Ján Čarnogurský, *Čestami KDH* (Prešov, 2007), pp. 41-9. p. 43.

<sup>844</sup> Čarnogurský, 'Piaty snem KDH,' p. 43.

<sup>845</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>846</sup> Andrej Gajdoš, 'SNS a cirkevné školy', *Slovenský Denník*, 15 February 1992, 2. Miroslava Kodoňová, 'Nehaňme ľud svoj', *Slovenský denník*, 4 February 1992, 1, 2.

official culture of late Communist era, the sovereignty nationalists fully declared support for promoting the spiritual aspect of the legacy alongside its political interpretation.

Despite criticism from the Christian Democrats, the Catholic hierarchy remained consistent in its support of the declaration of sovereignty. The hierarchy cooperated with the government in presenting nationalist Catholic discourse as related to Slovak independence. The New Year's pastoral letter included a paragraph remembering the anniversary of the constitution of the Slovak ecclesiastical province and emphasized its importance for the newfound independent Slovak Republic. This addition was suggested by Jozef Markuš, the head of Matica.<sup>847</sup>

We accept...[Slovak independence] on behalf of the Church with gratitude and hope. With gratitude, because whilst other states were established as a result of cruel conflicts and bloodshed, Slovak independence was achieved peacefully after prudent ...negotiations with representatives of the Czech nation... We are grateful to God...But also to those who have contributed to [bringing about] this peaceful solution in any way...In this spirit we gratefully remember the 15th anniversary of the papal decree constituting the independent Slovak Church province. In this spirit we entrust the Slovak nation and nationalities at this historical beginning of new Slovak life in [its own nation-] state into the hands of the God of history and under the protection of Ss. Cyril and Methodius...<sup>848</sup>

The Bishops thus basically not only acclaimed the new state as legitimate but also mobilised nationalised public Catholic culture in its support.

The Slovak government and the broader sovereignty movement in return put Christianity, in its Catholic version, at the centre of the symbolic universe of the newly founded Slovak Republic. Slovak sociologist of religion Miroslav Tížik argues that after 1993 'Christianisation of the state' could be observed in Slovakia. This is in his view a process when the state transforms from an 'ideologically neutral state' to a state 'legitimised through Christianity' by using Christian 'mythology and symbols to legitimise itself.'<sup>849</sup> According to Tížik, the first government of an independent Slovakia encouraged special consideration of the mythological and cultural importance of the Churches and Christianity and made explicit the connection

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<sup>847</sup> Jan Chrysostom Korec, Interview with the Author, 17 August 2012, Nitra, Slovakia.

<sup>848</sup> 'Manželstvo a rodina- Nádej Cirkvi i Spoločnosti, Pastiersky List na slávnosť Panny Marie Bohorodičky, 1 January 1993,' In. *Pastierske Listy Biskupov Slovenska (1991-2000)* (Bratislava, 2008), pp. 21-22.

<sup>849</sup> Tížik, *Náboženstvo*, p. 202.

between the various Churches and national consciousness of Slovaks.<sup>850</sup> Great Moravia and Cyril and Methodius would feature prominently in the symbolism of the new state. Symbols of the ancient state – the ninth century’s Prince Pribina and the last prince of Great Moravia, Svätopluk-- were featured on both stamps and currency. The feast of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows was also deemed a state holiday.<sup>851</sup>

The nationalised public Catholic culture which had expanded after 1989 was now effectively employed to celebrate the Slovak Republic as a culmination of Slovak history. The 1993 festivities of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Nitra celebrated the Slovak nation as a historical nation and Slovak independence as the culmination of the nation’s historical development.<sup>852</sup> The feast was co-organised by *Matica Slovenská*, the Bishopric in Nitra, the Centre of Nationalised culture, and the Cyrilomethodian society. This was the beginning of a new tradition which has lasted until the present. That year, the Cyrilomethodian Festivities were turned into Festivities of Cyril and Methodius and Duke Pribina to emphasize the relationship between the Christianisation of Slovakia, the origins of distinctive ethnic identity, and the origins of independent statehood. The Catholic hierarchy and a number of leading Catholic nationalists continue to play a central role in these festivities to this day. However, quite contrary to the original plans of the nationalists who stood at their origins since late 1980s, the festivities, including other events, symbols, and memories of this nationalised public Catholic culture, have since become a source of controversy, rather than of ‘national unity,’ as originally intended by this culture’s creators.

## Conclusion

After 1989, the nationalised public Catholic culture began to develop and expand at a nexus of a growing number of events, memories, and symbols, all of which supported the notion of the Slovak nation as Christian and historical. Initially this expansion was the result of a process during which Catholics of all stripes, both from the underground and the official Church, assumed a central position in the first months of post-Socialist transformation. Soon they began to closely cooperate with émigré Catholic and ex-Communist nationalists who were also convinced that the Slovak

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<sup>850</sup> Ibid., p. 204.

<sup>851</sup> Letz, *Sedembolestná*, p. 107.

<sup>852</sup> ‘Korene tvojho rodu Slovensko,’ *Katolícke Noviny*, 18 July 1993, 3.

nation needed to return to its roots. Together these nationalists began to deepen the fusion between Catholic and national identity through Catholic nationalist events, constructing a national memory and evoking national Catholic symbols which were used to symbolise this role of the Catholic Church. Initially, the essence of post-Socialist change for the Catholic Church was a 'moral renewal', i.e. bringing faith back into public discourse.

This direction of the Catholic culture at first stemmed from the close cooperation between former underground Catholics. However, with the beginning of debates about reform of the Czechoslovak constitution, it became clear that this nationalised public Catholic culture would not be mobilised solely to confirm the historicity of the Slovak nation. As became clear at the events organised by these nationalists, for these actors, this 'historicity' implied an obligation to support Slovak political autonomy. Moreover, at this point it had already become clear that some of these nationalists, called in this chapter 'sovereignty nationalists', understood this 'obligation' as a call to take immediate action, to cease negotiations with Czech representatives, to declare Slovak sovereignty, and to dictate Slovakia's future unilaterally. Nonetheless, despite these differences, these nationalists continued to participate in the creation of this nationalised public Catholic culture: they were unified not only by the belief that they needed to return to historical roots, but also by the belief that they need to defend the Slovak nation from its ideological enemies and from ethnic 'others.' However, as they continued to create this culture together, the 'sovereignty nationalists' began to be more successful in determining the direction that the mobilisation of nationalised public Catholic culture would take: in favour of an immediate declaration of Slovak sovereignty.

The main developments which encouraged this mobilisation of the Catholic nationalised culture in favour of an immediate declaration of Slovak sovereignty were several: first, the assertion of Hungarian Catholics; second, the rise of Christian Democrats to the leading position in the Slovak government; and third, the emergence of a new and popular political force which began to advocate immediate declaration of Slovak sovereignty. Importantly, this use of nationalised public Catholic culture was indirectly supported by the leading representatives of the Vatican, who did not protest the mobilisation of a nationalised public Catholic culture to such an end. Even if they, most notably Cardinal Tomko, did not openly support the

sovereignty nationalists' understanding of the national (including Catholic) memory as not only anticipating but also obligating Slovak elites to seek Slovak independence, they allowed the nationalised public Catholic culture to be used in the mobilisation toward Slovak sovereignty, and supported institutions which promoted a unilateral declaration of Slovak sovereignty as their main agenda. When, in July of 1992, the Slovak parliament declared Slovak sovereignty, leading members of Slovak Catholic hierarchy and sovereignty nationalists were fully prepared to mobilise the nationalised public Catholic culture in support of this step. The mid-1990s thus saw the development of an official, state-sponsored nationalised public Catholic culture which would serve to legitimise the newly-founded Slovak Republic.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis attempted to shed light on the origins and dynamics of the creation and mobilisation of a nationalised public Catholic culture during late Socialism and early post-Socialism in Slovakia. When the first portents of this culture's creation surfaced in the early 1980s, the nationalised public Catholic culture and its repertoires (histories, symbols, and events) had been suppressed for over thirty years. During the late 1950s and 1960s, the communist state took apart the largely nationalised public Catholic culture which had been created over the previous years during the interwar and wartime periods. By the early 1980s, this situation remained largely unchanged. The Catholic Church as such was not an officially recognised creator of the real socialist nationalised culture. Catholics often saw themselves as having a duty to remain 'pure', unsullied by engagement with the official culture. Collective public activities of the Church were confined to liturgies within the Church; pilgrimages were allowed, but the official authorities made sure that these pilgrimages did not acquire nationwide importance or resonance with nationalist thought. Even as the idea of a 'nationalised culture' came to figure more prominently in real socialist culture after the 1960s, nationalised culture involving the Catholic Church had remained excluded from its creation. Catholic collective memories and symbols were not part of the official 'national consciousness,' and patriotic priests remained the only creators of this restricted Catholic culture. The Church was fully subordinated to the Communist party: its ideology and practice. Symbols which in the pre-Communist era had embodied unity between the nation and the Church were now demoted, retaining only local value. Other symbols, such as Cyril and Methodius, were promoted as 'international' – they were no longer employed to symbolise Slovak national identity and its connection with Christianity. Now, they symbolised Slavic brotherhood and the fact that the Slavic cultures had been highly developed materially and culturally for over a millennium.

In the mid-1980s a new nationalised public Catholic culture--- a culture in which the Church was increasingly seen as an integral part of the nation, that is, with Catholicism inherently intertwined with national identity-- began to emerge. In some ways, this process was dissimilar to the building of other nationalised public Catholic cultures elsewhere in the region (Poland, Croatia, or Hungary), especially in that in the 1980s, the central role was played (for the most part) not by the hierarchy, but by

transnational actors (the papacy) and Communist cultural elites. The creation of a nationalised public Catholic culture in Slovakia was a complex process which involved many actors playing a variety of roles.

The initial force in the creation of this culture was an underground community of Catholics which had successfully fused Catholic and national identity through the development of a range of cultural practices that sought to build a new cultural community – they effectively reconstructed the history (especially medieval history) of the Church as part of national history through the construction of basic elements of the national Catholic narrative, and through rituals intended to evoke symbols such as the National Patroness (Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows) and especially saints Cyril and Methodius. The underground Church created this in response to other important actors who also sought to participate in creating the meaning of such commemoration.

At this point, however, not all of these actors sought to use the event to support the fusion between the Catholic and national identities. On one hand there was the papacy, which was instrumental in two ways. From the late 1970s, Pope John Paul II encouraged Catholics to return to the 'Christian roots' of the nation. In promoting this vision, he sought to encourage Catholics to embrace this cultural nationalism and become active and autonomous creators of nationalised culture. The approach of official Communist authorities in the mid-1980s unwittingly helped develop this nationalised public Catholic culture. The official authorities sought to present Cyril and Methodius only as symbols of secular culture, Slavic civilisation, and the historicity and sovereignty of Czechoslovak statehood. Yet by attempting to influence the meaning of this past and symbol, they contributed to the shaping of a nationalised public Catholic culture and the understanding of the Church as an integral part of the nation. First, in an attempt to control the official Church celebrations of this event, they placed Cyril and Methodius, who at that time were not part of the official, not to mention, public memory of the state, closer to the centre of the official nationalised culture. At the same time, by using the event and more broadly the anniversary of their mission to the Slovak lands to promote secular understanding of these symbols and narratives, the official authorities further reinforced the underground community's perception of the current religious situation as one of 'suffering.' The official authorities thus reinforced the position of

underground communities as creators of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows as a central part of the nationalised public Catholic culture. Second, as official authorities sought to place Cyril and Methodius firmly in the official 'historical consciousness,' they opened up space for official cultural elites who were beginning to promote the Slovak nation no longer in terms of class, but in terms of ethnicity and Slovak distinctiveness. In doing so, even official publications began to see Cyril and Methodius not as contributors to the development of Slavic civilisation in general, but more specifically as creators of a distinctly Slovak culture and identity. This official production provided the underground community with important resources for further imagining of the Church as part of a distinctive nationalised culture. In the process, the underground Church's nationalism, which was initially a more spiritual cultural nationalism, acquired a more ethnic character. Each of these actors, the pope, the official Communist authorities and the underground Church, thus contributed in various ways to the nationalised public Catholic culture.

The last two years of state socialism saw attempts at the appropriation of this new culture by the Communist elites. As a result of *perestroika*, Communist authorities across the region and in Czechoslovakia specifically began to ascribe to religion a greater role in the construction of official culture. Accordingly, authorities in Czechoslovakia began to enable the official Church to play a greater role in the creation of the official nationalised culture. During this period, the underground community became an ever more effective creator of the nationalised public Catholic culture. At these events, but also in *samizdat* publications, the underground Catholics continued to imagine the Catholic Church as an integral part of the nation through returning to Catholic national symbols and evoking Catholic history as part of the national history. The papacy continued to play an important role by encouraging Catholics to engage in the construction of a nationalised public Catholic culture autonomously from the state. Following the pope, the underground Catholics were increasingly convinced that creation of a nationalised public Catholic culture needed to be independent from the state. However, at about the same time, the official Church and indeed official authorities began to actively cast the Catholic Church as part of the official 'historical consciousness' and as part of a nationally-conscious nationalised culture. As a result, the nationalised public Catholic culture would be created as a result of co-operation and clashes between the underground and the

official Church (sponsored by the state). Although both of these creators reconstructed this connection from a slightly different angle and with different motivations, the underground Catholics shaped this culture, increasingly influenced by democratising currents. They revived the symbols and pasts not only in relation to the perceived or real suffering of the Slovak nation and the Catholic Church, but also in relation to ideas of civic self-assertion and support for democracy. The official Church, on the other hand, was influenced by homogenising and nationalising efforts of official authorities and sought to create a nationalised public Catholic culture as a symbol of national unity in support of state socialism. The official Church was allowed and encouraged by official authorities to mobilise the nationalised public Catholic culture, but it was not allowed to do so independently of the state. It was expected by official authorities to remain under official control and help suppress any groups (this of course also applied to the underground Church) which were not satisfied with this position of the Church. As a result, whilst the official Church created a nationalised public Catholic culture as a manifestation of national unity and loyalty to the Socialist state, for underground Catholics, this culture was increasingly associated with freedom of expression and assembly. This understanding was maintained by the underground Church's intensifying contacts with civic dissent and Catholic leaders from outside Slovakia (most notably the Czech Cardinal Tomášek), who had associated the nationalised public Catholic culture with the struggle for freedom of religious assembly, human rights, and eventually also democracy. In the process-- and as a result of these influences-- the cultural nationalism of the underground Church became more civic-minded. The official Communist authorities countered by attempting to prevent underground communities from the public creation of Catholic culture, targeting pilgrimages most stringently. The official Church assisted the authorities with this, and used her influence to contain the underground communities. That is, it began to edge the underground community out of the pilgrimages.

We will, of course, never learn what the effects of these different attitudes within the Catholic Church would have been if this situation had lasted longer. What can be said with certainty is that whatever differences there may have been between the underground community and the official Church, the 'Velvet Revolution' of 1989 brought the downfall of the official authorities and of any attempts to create a

nationalised public Catholic culture closely related to the state. Moreover, the 'Velvet Revolution' helped with rapprochement of the two central creators of the nationalised public Catholic culture: the underground and the official Church. Although the official Church reacted with restraint and called for a focus on faith, its leading figure, Archbishop Ján Sokol, lent open support to the revolution. This support meant that the official and the underground Church were preparing the ground for cooperation between Catholics from the underground and the official Church in post-Socialist construction of a nationalised public Catholic culture. These Catholics would not, however, be the only creators of such a nationalised culture after the fall of state socialism. Most notably, official nationalist Communist elites, which momentarily disappeared as creators of the nationalised public Catholic culture, re-emerged soon after 1989 and began to play an important role in the post-Socialist creation of this culture.

After 1989, the nationalised public Catholic culture, already developed in late Socialism, was to lay the cultural foundations for eventual Slovak independence in 1993. The nationalised public Catholic culture was not a by-product of the post-1989 disappearance of state regulation of religious life and had its roots in the 1980s. After 1989 this creation intensified and expanded as the national narrative of historical unity between the Slovak nation and the Catholic Church became an important part of post-socialist official culture; the public use of Catholic symbols increased, as did the number of events during which this collective memory and these symbols were given attention by an increasing number of actors. Initially it was former members of the underground Church spearheading this movement, members who by that time formed the ranks of the post-Communist political and ecclesiastical elite. These formerly underground Catholics were crucial especially in the first months: after years of constructing a national Catholic narrative, they were ready to provide the Catholic Church with an anti-Communist national narrative, fit for the current political context. The expansion of the nationalised public Catholic culture was also supported by non-Catholic post-Socialist political elites, including dissidents-turned politicians (most notably President Havel), and even more importantly, by returning émigrés and re-emerging ex-Communist nationalists. While at the get-go, the main motivation for the creation of this nationalised public Catholic culture was 'moral' renewal as understood in terms of spiritual revival and a shift toward conservative Catholic

values in the public sphere. However, as the issue of Slovak political future became the theme of the day, political nationalists drew upon Catholic culture more and more in support of their agenda of swiftly achieving of Slovak independence. In the process, this national Catholic narrative was increasingly co-constructed by sovereignty nationalists who began to shape its part of the story of gradual emancipation of the Slovak nation, a story which would, it stood to reason, naturally culminate in the achievement of Slovak independence. Along with these nationalists, leading figures of the Slovak Catholic hierarchy, who were now at the centre of creation of nationalised public Catholic culture, began to believe that the fall of state socialism was the historical chance to realise independent Slovak statehood. Even those who did not necessarily fully agree with the goals and strategies of the 'sovereignty nationalists' contributed to this instrumentalisation of the Catholic culture, as they sought to maintain a nationalised public Catholic culture. These post-Socialist creators of a nationalised public Catholic culture were unified by an ethnic defensive nationalism which viewed Slovakia as a historical Christian nation needing to be one, autonomous, and two, protected from outside influences – often a conflated mixture of the Western, liberal, and Czech. As became clear during events (pilgrimages and commemorations at Šaštín, Nitra and Ružomberok) organised by these nationalists, this 'historicity' implied an obligation to support swift achievement of Slovak political autonomy. Especially 'sovereignty nationalists' understood this historicity as an 'obligation' to take immediate action. Towards the end of 1990s, these sovereignty nationalists became dominant in the shaping of Catholic culture mainly as a result of the emergence of a new popular political force (Vladimír Mečiar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia), which began to successfully promote an immediate declaration of Slovak sovereignty. Eventually, repertoires of the Catholic cultural mobilisation (which had been developed in the 1980s and throughout the 1990s and had become associated with debates over Slovak political autonomy) were then used to legitimise Slovak independence, finally proclaimed by the Slovak National Assembly in 1993.

Creation of a nationalised public Catholic culture before 1989 has so far been understood as a question of contestation between the Communist state and the Church. After 1989, it was understood as a function of post-Communism. However, as this thesis has sought to show, neither was the case. This culture is better

understood as a combination of confrontation and co-construction between various actors. Nationalised public Catholic culture has been defined in this thesis as a 'web of meanings' constructed out of symbols, collective memories and events, a conjunction of these cultural forms which variously contribute to understanding of the Church as an integral part of the nation. Exploring how this 'web of meanings' was produced means asking how these symbols and memories were constructed and received as symbols and memories supporting the notion of the Church as an integral part of the nation. This network of meanings, and the specific meanings of which it consisted at different points during this period, was not, for the most part, a result of neatly formulated ideologies, coherent memories, and well-organised events with predictable outcomes. Since the mid-1980s, the nationalised public Catholic culture had been created by various actors, who in the process became capable of engaging in 'meaningful action' without necessarily having the same motivations for engagement in this action. Thus, over this period of less than ten years, the users and creators of this culture formed a meaning-making 'community' in the sense that they were able to engage in 'meaningful action,' but without necessarily agreeing in their emotional, moral, or political evaluations of these memories, symbols, and events.<sup>853</sup> However, they all agreed that Slovak nation was a historical nation and that Slovak cultural distinctiveness needed to be promoted and maintained.

The creation of a nationalised public Catholic culture was a process in which both conscious and unconscious, direct and indirect co-creation and contestation between different creators of this culture played important roles, both before and after 1989. For example, the communist nationalists who became involved in the creation of Catholic national symbols with the goal of de-emphasizing the religious aspect took (unwittingly) the first steps towards placing the Church near the nationalising official memory. This move had important consequences for both the underground Church communities and the Communist nationalists. Whilst the former began to think about the Church's role in Slovak history in terms of Slovak ethnogenesis, the latter began to think about Christianisation as an important part of the process of Slovak ethnogenesis. This thesis has also drawn attention to the importance of considering transnational forces in the creation of the nationalised public Catholic

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<sup>853</sup> Zubrzycki, *Crosses of Auschwitz*, p. 26.

culture in the 1980s, especially the papacy. The first impulse to understand the Church as an integral part of a nation through common Catholic national histories and national symbols came from the pope, who sought to evoke these memories and symbols and to encourage these events with the goal of connecting 'Christian' European nations in one Christian community. In other words, his goal was to utilise nationality to create a more universal community. The group which was most receptive in seeking to follow the papal call-- and indeed the group which began to create a nationalised public Catholic memory-- eventually came to be influenced by other cultural elites in the process who had sought to counter the papal understanding of the relationship between nation and religion. The members of official Church and the Communist cultural elites took on important roles in the creation of a nationalised public Catholic culture, influenced the underground Church and established themselves as important creators of the nationalised public Catholic culture. After 1989, these actors continued to play an important role in the creation of a post-Socialist nationalised public Catholic culture, even in light of their changing position in the public sphere.

This thesis focused on four sub-themes primarily: the creation of a nationalised public Catholic culture, the ways in which the Catholic Church in Slovakia was imagined as a part of Slovak history, how local or transnationalised public Catholic symbols were imagined as national symbols, and how a network of local Catholic events was expanded to support this understanding of the relationship between the nation and the Church. This culture remains an important part of the public sphere and an important repertoire of meanings, especially for Slovak nationalists. Nationalised public Catholic culture dominates the nationalised culture in Slovakia, continues to be created and mobilised by various actors who, in the process, seek to appropriate it according to their ideological orientation and current interests.

Nationalised public Catholic culture remains an important space of struggle for dominance over the character of the Slovak culture and Slovak politics. This applies especially to the symbol of Cyril and Methodius and the national memory cultures and events related to this symbol. These struggles again became clear on 5 July 2013, when a special 'year of Cyril and Methodius' was commenced. Central to these celebrations was a ceremonial mass in Nitra, which was attended by leading

members of political and cultural elites. Among others, Robert Fico, the current prime minister and the leader of the most popular political party in Slovakia, took part. Since the mid 2000s, Fico formed the most popular populist nationalist political party (SMER) and gained a significant following among those nationalists who played a central role in the instrumentalisation of nationalised public Catholic culture in support of the independent Slovak state in the early 1990s. Most notably, Fico has enjoyed full support of one of the central figures of revival of 'Cyrilomethodian tradition' in post-1989 Slovakia, Cardinal Jan Ch. Korec.<sup>854</sup> At the 2013 commemoration in Nitra, Fico gave a speech in which he used Cyril and Methodius to connect the Catholic Church and the development of Slovak statehood. In it, Fico referred not only to the medieval past, but he connected this past with post-1989 developments and referred to Cardinal Jan Ch. Korec as someone who had 'contributed significantly' to the re-emergence of independent Slovak statehood.<sup>855</sup> This interpretation of Cyril and Methodius and more broadly this way of mobilisation of the nationalised public Catholic culture sparked controversy among Catholics. For example, a Catholic anti-abortionist activist, Jana Tutková, argued that it is 'shameful that the Church (hierarchy) does not mind the misuse of Cyrilomethodian heritage' by the leader of a party which takes a 'liberal stance' on the issue of abortion.<sup>856</sup> The leader of the Conservative Christian Party, Vladimír Palko, argued that Fico, as a former member of the pre-1989 Communist Party, 'who never apologised for the atheistisation of this country by the Communists' was not entitled to speak about Cyril and Methodius.<sup>857</sup> According to Palko, Fico, as a former Communist, is a 'gravedigger of Slovak memory', and Slovaks must seek to build a 'culture of memory' against a 'culture of forgetting'.<sup>858</sup> The struggle over the nationalised public Catholic culture in Slovakia is thus not simply a struggle over the interpretation of the repertoires of this culture, but now also a struggle over the memory of their use in the post-Communist era.

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<sup>854</sup> Ladislav Bariak, 'Zneužili kardinála Korca a RTVS v kampani? Biskupi ani Mika nekomentujú,' 23 December 2013, <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/zneužili-kardinála-korca-a-rtvs-v-prezidentskej-kampani-biskupi-ani-mika-to-nekomentuju/slovensko/politika/> (last accessed 26 August 2015)

<sup>855</sup> Record of Speech by Robert Fico, Nitra, 5 July 2013, Personal Archive of the Author.

<sup>856</sup> Jana Tutková, 'Názor Jany Tutkovej: Svätí Cyril, Metod a Robert,' 6 July 2012, <http://postoy.sk/nitra-fico>

<sup>857</sup> 'Fico je podľa Palka komunista a zneužil sviatok, ten mu odkázal, aby sa k vlastenectvu nevyjadroval,' 6 July 2008, <http://www.sme.sk/c/3962975/fico-je-podľa-palka-komunista-a-zneužil-sviatok-ten-mu-odkázal-aby-sa-k-vlastenectvu-nevyjadroval.html> (last accessed 26 August 2015)

<sup>858</sup> 'Fico je podľa Palka komunista.'

Nationalised public Catholic culture has also been related to broader geopolitical developments, especially the increased tensions between the current Russian leadership and the governments of leading Western countries or the question of immigration from Northern Africa. Some Catholics see these developments as an encouragement to reinforce the nationalised public Catholic culture and thus safeguard the integrity of nationalised cultures. Others, in a similar vein, see these new developments not only as a challenge to their national identity, but also as 'a danger to state security' and a call for closer cooperation between Church and state.<sup>859</sup> As I write, a mass demonstration against immigration is being organised in Bratislava; these demonstrations are not related to churches, but Christian symbols, especially national Christian symbols, are used in abundance.. The demonstrators refer to the Christian history of the nation and argue that immigration is a threat to the integrity of the Slovak nation. The Church hierarchy calls for respect for immigrants and is actively involved in helping them.<sup>860</sup> Indeed, some Catholics see these new developments as an opportunity to shed particularism and rediscover Catholic universalism. These are, as this thesis has suggested, not entirely new phenomena. Understanding the origins of these cultures can hopefully contribute to understanding their current role.

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<sup>859</sup> 'Protest proti islamizácii Európy,' <http://www.protiprudu.org/protest-spolocne-za-slovensko-proti-islamizacii-europy-a-imperializmu-usa/> (Last accessed 30 August 2015).; 'V Bratislave sa pripravuje masový portest proti islamizácii Európy,' [www.hlavnespravy.sk](http://www.hlavnespravy.sk), 9 June 2015, <http://www.hlavnespravy.sk/v-bratislave-sa-pripravuje-masovy-protest-proti-islamizacii-europy/630206> (Last accessed 30 August 2015).

<sup>860</sup> Utečenci nie sú teroristi, tvrdí KBS. Cirkev spúšťa informačnú kampaň, [www.pravda.sk](http://www.pravda.sk), 10 August 2015, <http://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/364153-utecenci-nie-su-teroristi-tvrdi-kbs-katolicka-cirkev-spusta-informacnu-kampan/> (last accessed 30 August 2015); 'Leták Katolíckej Charity a KBS o utečencoch,' 10 August 2015, <http://www.biskupstvo-nitra.sk/letak-kbs-o-utecencoch/> (last accessed 30 August 2015).

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