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

Michaela Lenčėšová

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Author

Michaela Lenčėšová
Katedra historických vėd, Fakulta humanitních studií, Univerzita Karlova
Pátková 2137/5
182 00 Praha 8 – Libeň
Czech Republic
Email: lencesova@usd.cas.cz

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Abstract

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

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

1 Slovak orig. Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana.

2 On the fascination of Catholic clerics in the period of the Slovak State and the theory of the fascist effect, see SZABÓ, Miloslav. „Klérofašizmus“? Katolicizmus a radikálna pravica v stredoeurópskom kontexte (1918–1945). In *Historický časopis*, 2017, vol. 65, no. 4, pp. 675–687.

3 Hlinka Youth emerged after 1938 as a youth organisation under the HSLŠ. MILLA, Michal. *Hlinkova mládež 1938–1945*. Bratislava : ÚPN, 2008, p. 73, 90, 205.

4 Zakončenie Politickej školy HSLŠ na Sliachi. In *Slovák*, 30 September 1942, p. 3.

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

Research Scope

During the Second World War, *Volksgemeinschaft* was a construct of society promoted by the Third Reich. Politicians and intellectuals across Europe incorporated the language as a way to bolster their national projects, while also defining themselves vis-à-vis other national schemes. In addition to racial exclusivism, *Volksgemeinschaft* was epitomised by social inclusion, thus racial identity determined entitlement to state social welfare.⁸ Earlier research shows that adoption of the German concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* by Slovak Catholic philosophers was quite marginal. In addition to Štefan Polakovič, Ladislav Hanus (1907–1994) also engaged theoretically in the concept of a people's community and natural law,⁹ and Ľudovít Zachar (1888–1967) described the racial principle as one of the main pillars of Slovak National Socialism.¹⁰ Priest and president of the wartime Slovak State¹¹ Jozef Tiso, who constantly accentuated a social agenda throughout his political career, revered some of the social enterprises of the Third Reich. Nevertheless, it was

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

17 HRUBOŇ 2021, pp.100–123.

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

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

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

18 HANEBRINK 2006, p. 89.

19 Nesieme oheň a meč. In *Nová mládež*, 1942, vol. 5, no. 2, p. 1.

20 For conflicts within the people's populists' camp, see e.g. biographies of J. Tiso and A. Mach: WARD 2018, pp. 245–277; HRUBOŇ, Anton. *Alexander Mach*. Bratislava : Premedia, 2018; SZABÓ 2019, *Klérofašisti*, pp. 84–97.

21 PEKÁR, Martin. Štátna ideológia a jej vplyv na charakter režimu. In FIAMOVIČ, Martina et al. *Slovenský štát 1939–1945: predstavy a realita*. Bratislava : Historický ústav SAV, 2014, pp. 137–152; HRUBOŇ, Anton. Slovenský národný socializmus v koncepciách Štefana Polakoviča a Stanislava Mečiara. In HRUBOŇ, Anton. *Slovensko v rokoch neslobody 1938–1989, II. Osobnosti známe – neznáme*. Bratislava : Ústav pamäti národa, 2014, pp. 20–34; HRUBOŇ 2021, pp. 103, 115–116.

22 SZABÓ 2019, *Klérofašisti*; KALLIS, Aristotle. The 'Fascist Effect': On the Dynamics of Political Hybridization in Inter-War Europe. In PINTO COSTA, António – KALLIS, Aristotle. *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe*. London : Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 13–41.

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

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

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

Polakovič's Concept of the Slovak Nation within Christian Totalitarianism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

framework of Christian totalitarianism resembles an attempt at realizing the Italian myth of national renaissance.³²

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

38 POLAKOVIČ 1939, K základom slovenského štátu, pp. 35–43, 48–54.

39 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. Nové víno do nových nádob. In *Svoradov*, 1935, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 7–8.

40 POLAKOVIČ 1939, K základom slovenského štátu, pp. 50–51; CHLADNÝ HANOŠ, Maxi-milián. *Láska k národu*. Martin: Matica slovenská, 1941; MÜNZ, Teodor. Nacionálna otázka u katolíckych teológov za slovenského štátu. In *Filozofia*, 1992, vol. 47, no. 1, p. 21–29.

41 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. Adeste fideles. In *Svornosť*, 24 December 1939, p. 1.

42 Cf. "theological" work of Karol Körper. SZABÓ 2019, *Klérofašisti*, pp. 73–75.

43 The term "Magyar" refers to a member of an ethnic group or "race" according to the terminology of the time, which is subject to this study. "Hungarian" refers to an inhabitant of the state – either the Kingdom or the Republic of Hungary.

44 TURDA, Marius. "If Our Race Did Not Exist, It Would Have to Be Created." In WEISS–WENDT, Anton – YEOMANS, Rory. *Racial Science in Hitler's New Europe, 1938–1945*. Lincoln; London : University of Nebraska Press, 2013, p. 246.

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

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

Adolf Hitler as the Advocate of Natural Law

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

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

45 POLAKOVIČ 1939, K základom slovenského štátu, pp. 58–59.

46 HEINEMANN, Isabel. Defining "(Un)Wanted Population Addition." In WEISS-WENDT, Anton – YEOMANS, Rory. *Racial Science in Hitler's New Europe, 1938–1945*. Lincoln; London : University of Nebraska Press, 2013, p. 40.

47 Distinctive for some young Italian intellectuals. DAGNINO 2017, pp. 74–75. See also Catholic eugenic thought in the Slovak context. HRUBOŇ, Anton. „Budujme slovenského nadčloveka.“ In *Vojnová kronika*, 2020, no. 2, pp. 4–11. As the case of Croatia shows, it was also possible to build the concept of an exclusive nation on the theory of a mix of several races. BARTULIN, Nevenko. *The Racial Idea in the Independent State of Croatia*. Leiden; Boston : Brill, 2014, p. 151.

48 POLAKOVIČ 1939, K základom slovenského štátu, pp. 59, 61, 131–151, 169–173.

49 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. Bezbožníctvo. In *Svoradov*, 1935, vol. 4, no. 8, p. 4; POLAKOVIČ 1939, K základom slovenského štátu, p. 98.

50 Nitra postaví Svätoplukovi pomník. In *Nitrianska stráž*, 25 February 1940, pp. 1–2.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Natural Law as the Foundation of People's Populism⁵⁹

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

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

56 POLAKOVIČ 1940, p. 350.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

70 POLAKOVIČ 1940, Book review, p. 250.

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

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

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

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

72 POLAKOVIČ 1943, pp. 240–241.

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

74 LORMAN 2019, p. 39.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

77 POLAKOVIČ 1943, p. 239–243; ŠUSTROVÁ 2020, p. 90.

78 DUPKALA, Rudolf. Sociálno-politické myslenie Š. M. Daxnera. In *Spoločnosť a edukácia*, 2011, no. 1, pp. 99–105; HOLLÝ, Karol. Memorandum národa slovenského ako historiografický prameň. In *Studia Academica Slovaca*, 2011, pp. 104–106.

79 POLAKOVIČ 1939, K základom, p. 57.

80 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. Obsah ľudáctva a tradícia politiky. In *Slovák*, 12 June 1942, p. 1.

81 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. Prirodzené práva národov. In *Slovenské pohľady*, 1942, no. 11, p. 710.

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

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

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

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

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

82 POLAKOVIČ 1941, Slovenský národný socializmus, pp. 123–125.

83 FRANEK, Ľudovít. Staré Slovensko a jeho obyvateľstvo z hľadiska antropologického. In *Historica slovacca*, 1940/1941, pp. 138–154.

84 CASE, Holly. *Between States*. Stanford : Stanford University Press, 2009, pp. 182–184.

85 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. *Slovenské národné vyznanie*. Bratislava : HVHM, 1942, Hlava prvá; POLAKOVIČ 1943, p. 9.

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

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

Natural Law as the Foundation of Post-war Europe

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

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

86 POLAKOVIČ 1943, pp. 117–118.

87 POLAKOVIČ 1943, p. 9.

88 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. *Vývin základných myšlienok slovenskej politiky*. Bratislava : Úrad propagandy, 1944, p. 44.

89 POLAKOVIČ, Stephan. *Die Entwicklung der Grundideen der slowakischen Politik*. Bratislava : Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft für das Auslandslowakentum, 1945, p. 56. The German correspondent similarly translated Hanus' concept of natural law in 1941. According to M. Szabó, this was done to distinguish Hanus' idea of natural law from the German concept. SZABÓ, Miloslav. *Kritická diskusia, alebo apológia?* In *Dějiny – teorie – kritika*, 2020, no. 1, p. 132; NISSING, Hanns-Gregor. *Naturrecht und Kirche im Säkularen Staat*. Wiesbaden : Springer VS, 2016, pp. 1–10.

90 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. *Warum eine freie Slowakei?* Bratislava : Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft für das Auslandslowakentum, 1945, p. 16; POLAKOVIČ 1944, pp. 15–38.

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

91 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. *Za život národa, za trvanie štátu*. Buenos Aires : Zahraničná Matica slovenská, 1985, p. 155–157.

92 POLAKOVIČ 1985, pp. 105–118.

93 ŠUSTROVÁ 2020, p. 101.

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

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

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