Ethics and politics of Great Moravia of the 9th century

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Abstract
The author studies the role of Christianity in two forms of 9th century political ethics in the history of Great Moravia, represented by the Great Moravian rulers Rastislav and Svatopluk. Rastislav's conception predominantly uses the pre-Erasmian model of political ethics based on the pursuit of welfare for the country and its inhabitants by achieving the clerical-political independence of Great Moravia from the Frankish kingdom and, moreover, by utilising Christianity for the advancement of culture, education, literature, law and legality, as well as by spreading Christian ethics and morality in the form of the Christian code of ethics expressed in ethical-legal documents. Svatopluk's political conception was a prototype of Machiavellian political ethics, according to which one is, in the interest of the country and its power and fame, allowed to be a lion and/or a fox. Svatopluk abused Christianity in the name of achieving his power-oriented goals. Great Moravia outlived Rastislav; it did not, however, outlive Svatopluk, as, shortly after his death, it broke up and ceased to exist. The author came to the conclusion that Rastislav's conception was more viable, as its cultural heritage lives on in the form of works by Constantine and Methodius.

Keywords: Great Moravia, Christianity, Rastislav, Svatopluk, political ethics

Introduction
The fate of Great Moravia, a country neighbouring the powerful Frankish kingdom, is an example of the historical development of Central Europe in the second half of the 9th century, including a broader medieval context. The relatively brief existence of Great Moravia (approximately 70 years) suggests how thin the line was between its growth, military and territorial expansion on the one hand and, on the other, the break-up and fall of a country which, for a certain period of its history during the reign of Svatopluk, was not only a threat to the neighbouring Slavic tribes, but also the mighty Frankish kingdom. By means of such campaigns, Moravia expanded and gained the name Great Moravia (Berend, Urbańczyk & Wiszewski, 2013; Bowlus, 1995; Bowlus, 2009, pp. 311–328; Curta, 2009, pp. 238–247; Dvornik, 1956; Goldberg, 2006; Hussey, 1990; Jakobson, 1985, pp. 116–119; Kalhous, 2009, pp. 268–285; Macháček, 2009, pp. 248–267; Sommer, Třeštík, & Žemlička, 2013, pp. 214–262; Steinhübel, 2011, pp. 16–18; Stephens, 2012, pp. 302–304; Špiesz, Čaplovič, & Bolchazy, 2006, pp. 19–25; Tougher, 2008, p. 300). Christianity played a significant role in this historical process; be it by spreading the Christian faith (oftentimes using violent means, i.e. by cross and by sword) or its voluntary, or involuntary, adoption. At the beginning, Christianity was primarily spread through Central Europe by Frankish kings, starting with Charlemagne (Goldberg, 2006, p. 110), and later the Great Moravian king, Svatopluk, also played a part. The aim of the present contribution is to compare two forms of political ethics which played a crucial role in the history of Great Moravia and the role of Christianity in its realisation. The conceptions presented came from two Great Moravian rulers, Rastislav (846–870) and Svatopluk (871–894). Following historical resources (however, without further critical inspection) portraying both the rulers, I will try to formulate my own hypotheses regarding political ethics in 9th century Great Moravia.

In describing the fate of Great Moravia in the second half of the 9th century, Stanislav J. Kirschbaum wrote the following: "The history of Great Moravia, like that of many states of

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this period, was one of wars of defence and conquest, personal alliances and betrayals, consolidation and, in this case, ultimate dissolution. The brevity of this history, less than three-quarters of a century, adumbrates to some degree these activities and distracts from the accomplishments and from the fragility of the new state" (Kirschbaum, 2005, p. 26). Similarly, Christopher Brooke claims that, in the Middle Ages, yearly wars and military campaigns were how the nobility made their living – by means of plunder (Brooke, 1987, p. 178). Another cause of such a situation was the fact that medieval rulers and monarchs were successors of barbaric chiefs and, thus, ruled by force and fear rather than ideals, and were motivated by political interests rather than spiritual models (Brooke, 1987, p. 295; Goldberg, 2006, pp. 207–208). Ján Steinhübel also states that the reason why frequent medieval wars (including those in the 9th century) occurred was the fact that there were large numbers of troops to maintain. This could only be achieved by territorial expansion with which came the subdual of its agricultural population, acquiring plunder, forcing out the ruling prince and taking his land (Steinhübel, 2004, p. 81).

In this context, Ján Šafin adds that German rulers continuously expanded their territories eastwards, by sword and cross (Šafin, 2014, p. 20). In his view, Western Europe was born in a synergy between Charlemagne's Frankish Empire and Rome, since the election of a pope was approved by the emperor who, by means of councils and bishops, forced his will upon popes. Frankish bishops under Charlemagne would not hold church councils but rather meet as if military chiefs with other commanders and generals (Bartoňková et al., 1966, p. 79; Goldberg, 2006, pp. 123, 219; Šafin, 2014, p. 362). The church in the Frankish kingdom and its clergy, including bishops, was part of the state and its institutions, i.e. also the army, which meant that the clergy fought in the name of God to spread Christianity and secure its standing within Europe and throughout the world (Bartoňková et al., 1966, pp. 94, 105, 119, 139, 166–167, 347, 357–359, 364). The Frankish kingdom asserted its imperial interests in an integral symbiosis between secular and spiritual power (Bartoňková et al., 1966, pp. 93, 375; Goldberg, 2006, pp. 217, 220). Clerical power, bishops and the clergy were to reinforce the influence of Frankish power in the vassal territories while Frankish kings were well aware of this influence and the importance of the mission pursued by Frankish priests within the vassal territories.

Rastislav's conception of political ethics

The principalities of Moravia and Nitra were likely among vassal territories as early as the early 9th century. Here, apart from other missionaries, important activities were realised by Frankish priests, while, spiritually, they were governed by the bishops of Passau and Salzburg (Bartoňková et al., 1966, pp. 341–342). Approximately in 833, Moravians under the command of Prince Mojmír I forcefully subdued the neighbouring principality of Nitra (probably with the tacit consent of the Franks) and forced Prince Pribina and his military troops out of Nitra (Steinhübel, 2004, pp. 86–88). Mojmír I's policies were, however, directed at gaining independence from the sovereignty of the Frankish kingdom, which is why, in 846, Louise the German invaded Moravia, removed Mojmír I and made his nephew Rastislav the Moravian prince (Bartoňková et al., 1966, pp. 90, 344). Alexis. P. Vlasto claims that Rastislav was not truly as loyal a vassal as Louise the German would have hoped. Although Moravia and Slovakia were dominated by the Frankish kingdom, Rastislav did not follow Pribina's trail in seeking Frankish support (Vlasto, 1970, p. 26). Rastislav's position was quite stable in spite of standing in the face of Louis the German, which is also confirmed in historical annals (Bartoňková et al., 1966, pp. 68, 93, 95, 98–101, 154, 164–165, 342, 346–352). Vlasto further states that Frankish priests active in the country followed Frankish political interests much more closely than those of Christ's church. According to him, it was unlikely that the Frankish church would be willing to grant Moravians their own bishop, which was why

Rastislav turned to Rome with such a request, which, however, was ignored (Vlasto, 1970, p. 26; Betti, 2014, pp. 55–56; Goldberg, 2006, p. 270). Pope Nicholas I was busy with the situation in the Balkans and, apart from it, Louise the German, as a friend of Bulgaria, played, in his eyes, a highly significant role.[2] Rastislav had enough reasons to be displeased with the Frankish clergy in Moravia and, at the same time, felt threatened by the alliance between the Franks and Bulgarians. He had a dilemma, as his country was partly Christian, but, in fact, part of the Frankish kingdom, and its church part of the Frankish church, which did not allow for rule over actual clerical issues within the country. The ferociousness of German laymen as well as the clergy was well known (Vlasto, 1970, pp. 26–27). That is why Rastislav sent a mission to Constantinople whose goal was for the Byzantine Emperor to send Moravians a bishop and teachers of the Christian faith who would spread Christian teachings in the language of the people. Apart from other things, he asked the emperor for such people who would be able to establish law in the country (Kantor, 1983, p. 65; Vlasto, 1970, p. 66; Vašica, 2014). The Byzantine Emperor Michael III, however, only partially met Rastislav's request, as, among the delegated missionaries there was no bishop and at the head of the mission which arrived in the territory of Great Moravia in 863, were the brothers Constantine and Methodius (Kantor, 1983, pp. 65, 67, 111; Ivanov, 2008, p. 316; Sommer, Třeštík & Žemlička, 2013, p. 222; Hussey, 1990, pp. 73–75; Jakobson, 1985, pp. 34–35, 47; Stephens, 2012, pp. 302–306; Dvornik, 1956, pp. 82–84).

Constantine, who came from Thessalonica in Greece, spoke the Slavic language spoken by Slavs in the vicinity of his hometown; while still in Constantinople preparing for the mission to Moravians, he created the first Slavic (Glagolica) alphabet, translated selected parts of the Holy Scripture into this new language, by which he established conditions for Christian teachings to be efficiently spread in the speech of the people living in Great Moravia. During his mission, he himself, his brother and their disciples translated a great number of liturgical texts into the new language (Old Church Slavonic), which allowed for Slavic liturgy in holy services to be conducted in the new language. This came to be a great cultural deed in history (Avenarius, 1992, pp. 91–94; Betti, 2014, pp. 49–50, 75; Dvornik, 1956, pp. 84–85; Ivanov, 2008, pp. 316–318; Goldberg, 2006, p. 271; Jakobson, 1985, pp. 133–134; Kantor, 1983, p. 69; Kučera, 1986, pp. 171, 209; Mahoney, 2011, p. 26; Michalov, 2015, pp. 194–197; Pauliny, 1964, p. 81; Ratkoš, 1990, pp. 114–115; Sommer, Třeštík & Žemlička, 2013, p. 249; Třeštík, 2001, pp. 205–206; Vašica, 2014, pp. 74–92; Vavřínek, 1985, p. 232; Vavřínek, 2013, pp. 203–207; Vlasto, 1970, pp. 59–66). They also translated many further Byzantine and Latin texts into Old Church Slavonic, which gave rise to a set of secular as well as ecclesiastic legal regulations. The following became the cornerstone of Great Moravian law: *Zakon sudnyj ljudem* (*Judicial Law for Laymen), Zapovědi svatych otcov (The Rules of the Holy Fathers), Nomokanon* (*Nomocanon*) and the Methodius' well-known sermon *Vladykam zemle Božie slovo velit* (*Adhortation to Rulers*) from a later period. All these writings were not only of legal but also philosophical-ethical character; they actually functioned as a Christian code of ethics which was used to spread values and norms of Christian ethics and morality among inhabitants of Great Moravia (Ivanov, 2008, pp. 317–318; Sommer, Třeštík & Žemlička, 2013, p. 249; Vašica, 2014, pp. 82, 92, 217). Apart from this, they lay the grounds for literature; Constantine wrote verses introducing the translation of the four gospels known as *Proglas* (Konštantín, 2004).

Dušan Třeštík highly values the voluntary decision of young Moravian princes to accept Christianity and their own state, which allowed Great Moravia significant entry into the then

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[2] Eric J. Goldberg claimed that Pope Nicholas I and King Louise the German perceived their goals within Eastern Europe as complementary (Goldberg, 2006, p. 279). A similar view is held by Maddalena Betti, according to whom, the Roman Curia did not interfere in clerical matters of the Eastern-Roman Empire and gave free hand to the Bavarian clergy (Betti, 2014, p. 207).

political events of Central Europe (Třeštík, 2001, p. 201). He also considers the fact that Moravians decided to build their own state and they asked the Byzantine Emperor Michael III for help in the preparation of a new code of laws (this resulted in *Zakon sudnyj ljudem*; however, it is questionable whether it could be applied to the life of Great Moravian society) (Vavřínek, 2014, pp. 337–339). According to Třeštík, this was living proof, which Moravians tried to use as the foundation for their 'small empire' next to the great Frankish kingdom (Třeštík, 2001, pp. 205–206). In the context of the Byzantine mission arriving in Great Moravia, Vlasto claims that, in the given period, no church affairs could go without a touch of politics. The penetration of civilised power into barbaric countries always comprised two levels. In his view, this was equally true of the Frankish as well as Byzantine Empire (Vlasto, 1970, p. 28). In medieval Europe (including Central Europe), there was a great interconnection between Christianity and politics, since, on the one hand, clerical elites had political ambitions, which meant there was an effort to subordinate secular power to that of the church, while, on the other hand, Christianity was a suitable means of enforcing and reinforcing national and foreign political interests of the secular elites and their power-related position in the country, region and the world. In this way, two constituents of the contemporary political and powerful structures with the highest ideological and political influence allied. The above statement was valid universally and applied not only to secular powers, such as the Frankish and Byzantine Empires, but also Rome. Similarly, Christianity and politics were interconnected in the case of Great Moravia and Bulgaria, which strived for the creation of a self-standing clerical-political organisation independent of the neighbouring powers, which would provide conditions for autonomous internal, as well as foreign, politics free of intervention from their powerful neighbours. That was why they looked for allies in the pope of Rome, the Byzantine Emperor, and the Frankish king in an effort to paralyse the direct influence of a single power. In reality, neither Moravians nor Bulgarians managed to complete this goal. For a period of time, Moravians were more successful to a certain extent; this was, however, a short-lasting victory.

A great number of historians highly value Prince Rastislav's wisdom, foresight and efforts regarding the emancipation of Great Moravia from the Frankish kingdom, not only based on military conquests and his brightness (Bartoňková et al., 1966, pp. 74–76, 93–95, 99–100, 348–350), but primarily thanks to his diplomatic ability to find support for his own country in contemporary political, ideological as well as clerical powers, i.e. in the pope and the Byzantine emperor with the potential result of freeing Moravians from Frankish oppression and besiegers (Barford, 2001, p. 219; Dvornik, 1956, pp. 81–82; Goldberg, 2006, p. 263; Ratkoš, 1990, pp. 37–48; Šafin, 2014, pp. 22–27; Vlasto, 1970, pp. 26–28). One could ask whether it would have been easier to subdue to the Frankish kingdom and live in its shadow, accepting a vassal position with all things befitting it, i.e. paying tributes, military duties, and accepting ideological, political, cultural and clerical hegemony of the Franks and their clergy. That could, however, have led to their assimilation and expiration, which was the case of the Lusatian Sorbs. Rastislav, with his military abilities, as well as the power and courage of Moravian troops were probably aware that long-term Moravian resistance to Frankish attacks and the influence of the Frankish clergy was not guarantee enough, which is why he looked for help elsewhere not only in the form of political protection but also in the interest of statehood building. An effort to create an independent church structure, which he asked from the Byzantine Emperor Michael III, came as part of these efforts, as well as building a legal system independent of the Frankish kingdom and corresponding with the conditions and needs of Moravians. Rastislav pursued a number of strategic goals regarding foreign as well as national politics. The main foreign-political goal was independence from the Frankish kingdom, national politics concerned laying the grounds of law and introducing norms of

Christian morality into the life of the Moravian aristocracy and other inhabitants with the end of stabilising the then Great Moravian social life.

Rastislav imitated the efforts of Charlemagne in supporting Constantine and Methodius' activities, who spread education throughout Great Moravia, founded cultural and educational centres, which, regarding the given period, was rather progressive, and confirms the notion of Rastislav as a wise and capable ruler who strived to pursue intentions aimed at the development of education and culture in, as well as the statehood of, Great Moravia. Based on these historically-grounded facts, it is possible to formulate the hypothesis that Rastislav strived to establish Great Moravian statehood based on the strong identity of its inhabitants lying in linguistic, cultural, literary, religious and moral unity of the people in this territory, i.e. the historical Principalities of Moravia and Nitra. Due to internal, but mainly unfavourable external, conditions, he did not manage to fully realise this goal; however, what Constantine and Methodius achieved through their activities over a three-and-a-half year period in Great Moravia (863–867) and, after Constantine died, Methodius and his disciples (873–885), entered the cultural history of Europe. In spite of the fact that this cannot be compared to the Carolingian Renaissance, it can undoubtedly, at the least, be considered the birth of Central European culture and education.

According to Matúš Kučera, during Rastislav's reign, the process of redesigning Great Moravian society culminated, where the world of Slavic tribal deities was dying out and Christianity started to significantly influence the politics and the organisation of the early medieval state. A new ideology, i.e. Christianity, was undoubtedly a progressive element, as it was closely linked to culture in a broader sense (Kučera, 1986, p. 88). Kučera, however, holds the opinion that the Byzantine mission slowed down further development of Great Moravia, as Rastislav, by inviting Constantine and Methodius to Great Moravia, angered the Frankish clergy as well as rulers, who considered Central Europe their missionary territory, which is why they did everything they could to paralyse the activities and influence of the Byzantine mission (Bartoňková et al., 1969, pp. 165, 167–168, 169–170; Kantor, 1983, pp. 119–127; Kučera, 1986, p. 141). In his views, Rastislav's conception of an independent state through long-standing battles with the Franks reached a dead end, as neither side managed to force its political power onto the other, in spite of the fact that, thanks to these battles, Great Moravia grew stronger internally as a state and became better militarily equipped. That is why, in his view, Svatopluk, who was Rastislav's nephew and the Prince of Nitra, decided to solve the situation by submitting to Carloman, Louise the German's son. Rastislav, however, did not consider this a good decision, as he was a long-term enemy of the Moravians, which is why he decided to remove Svatopluk (Kučera, 1986, p. 85). In the end, though, Rastislav himself fell victim of conspiracy, when, in 870, he was captured by Svatopluk and handed over to the Franks who sentenced him to death; he was, however, pardoned by Louise the German and 'merely' deprived of his eyesight and spent the rest of his life in prison (Bartoňková et al., 1966, pp. 77–78, 102–103, 165, 353, 356–357; Dalewski, 2008, pp. 140–141; Goldberg, 2006, p. 300).

Svatopluk's politics of power

In this way, Svatopluk came to power in Great Moravia. He was, however, soon after accused of treason by the Franks and Carloman had him imprisoned (Bartoňková et al., 1966, p. 103). A rebellion against the Franks broke out in Great Moravia lead by Slavomir, a Moravian Prince. Svatopluk, who, at the time, was being kept captive by the Franks, undertook to, together with Frankish troops, suppress the riot. Svatopluk, however,

> "[…] took with him Carloman's army as if he wanted to fight Slavomír, which he had slyly promised to Carloman, should he be allowed back in his homeland. Just like most of those who

are careless and too assured, the army also covered itself in disgrace; when others were building camp, Svatopluk entered Rostislav's old town and at once went back on his word forswearing his oath (as is common in Slavs), turned his forces and efforts not to fighting Slavomír but rather avenging the disgrace brought onto him by Carloman. In short, he used a large army to attack the Bavarian camp which was not sufficiently guarded as there was no cause to be suspicious. Those few who were not killed or were foresightful enough to leave the camp ahead of time, he captured alive; which is why all Noriks' joy of many a former victory turned into grief and sorrow. When Carloman heard the news of the fate of his army, he, startled and helpless, had all the hostages in his kingdom gathered and returned to Svatopluk only to get, with difficulty, one and only one half-dead man called Ratboda back" (Bartoňková et al., 1966, pp. 104–105).

The above mentioned historical narrative from 870–871 aptly describes Svatopluk, his military and political thought, as well as his characteristic features (Bartoňková et al., 1966, p. 102). In order to gain power, Svatopluk first betrayed Rastislav and submitted to the Franks. When he, however, realised that the Franks are not actually on his side, he turned against them and cruelly and shamefully defeated them on the battlefield (Bartoňková et al., 1966, pp. 104–105, 166; Bowlus, 1995, p. 173).

A majority of information on Svatopluk comes from German historical sources, which, oftentimes, were, or could have been, marked by bias, as a long-term and dangerous enemy of the Frankish kingdom was concerned. That is why Svatopluk was often described as "a mind full of trick and deceit" who "[...] furiously and bloodily murdered like a wolf […]" (Bartoňková et al., 1966, p. 114). According to a chronicle, during Svatopluk's reign "… for two and a half years, Panonia was continuously ruined within large spaces to the East of the river Ráby. The vassals, men and women, were, together with their children, murdered while some magnates were captured, others killed or – which was even more humiliating – returned with their hands, tongues and genitals cut off" (Bartoňková et al., 1966, p. 115). In another battle, Svatopluk, once again, defeated the Bavarian troops and the generals had their genitals, tongue and right hand (all others just their right or left hand) cut off (Bartoňková et al., 1966, p. 363). After his death, in spite of great hostility, Regensburg annals assessed him as "the brightest and the most stable" among Slavs (Bartoňková et al., 1966, pp. 139–140). Also based on this information it could be stated that Svatopluk was an extraordinary and dreadful commander, as well as a capable ideologist who, similarly to Frankish kings, managed to find sufficiently apt ideological and religious reasons to justify his military raids. It was not only the Franks anymore who posed as protectors of Christianity; Svatopluk also assumed their ideological equipment and, in the name of protecting Christianity, he ravaged, burnt, and killed his enemies as well as those of his country.

What followed was a great number of military campaigns and battles between the Franks and Moravians (Bartoňková et al., 1966, pp. 359, 362–363); the latter, though, with Svatopluk at the head, also led waged battles against other neighbouring countries.[3] It is likely that one of Svatopluk's goals was to become a feared and respected ruler who, similarly to Charlemagne had the status of protector and promoter of Christianity. His power-political ambitions also included an effort to reach clerical-political independence from the Frankish kingdom, which he eventually managed to achieve with the help of Methodius who, after Constantine's death, first became the Bishop of Sirmium (Srem) and, several months later, in 869, Pope Hadrian II named him the Archbishop of Pannonia and Great Moravia, which meant they became clerically and politically independent from the Frankish kingdom and were directly subordinated to Rome. An even more significant act was the *Industriae tuae* bull

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[3] Vojtech Dangl states that, during its existence, Great Moravia experienced 65 historically recorded military events, which is, however, likely to be merely part of the entire number of battles that took place in the approximately 70 years of its existence (Dangl, 2005, p. 16).

issued by Pope John VIII (880), which considerably strengthened Svatopluk's international prestige and position, as the pope included Moravians in the Roman universe of Christian nations. He equally credited Methodius' true faith and allowed for continuous use of Slavonic as the language of liturgy (Bartoňková et al., 1969, pp. 199–208; 217–225; Bowlus, 1995, p. 195; Hussey, 1990, pp. 75–76; Kantor, 1983, pp. 113, 115; Sommer, Třeštík & Žemlička, 2013, pp. 223–224; Stephens, 2012, p. 303). In this context, Maddalena Betti's claim can be mentioned that Svatopluk's reign "...contributed a brief period of stability to the political formations of central and south-eastern Europe during his cooperation with Archbishop Methodius" (Betti, 2014, p. 2).

The presence of Frankish clergy in Great Moravia and the powerful position of Wiching, the Bishop of Nitra, who was of German origin, as well as his great influence on Svatopluk, makes the achieved success rather relative, since, as it turned out shortly after Methodius died in 885. Svatopluk used and abused Christianity for his own power-political and foreign-political goals at the start of his rule in Great Moravia. This first happened during military and political expansion of Great Moravia, when, under the slogan of spreading Christianity, he subdued the Czech tribes, Lusatian Sorbs, and later, the Polish people of the Vistula, Pannonia and the Tisza Region (Kučera, 1986, p. 162). On the other hand, he realised the power of the Frankish kingdom, which is why he strived to use Frankish priests led by Wiching for his own profit, he participated in internal conflicts within the Frankish kingdom, supported several Frankish princes (or the king's sons) in opposition to others (Bartoňková et al., 1966, pp. 362–364; Havlík, 1985, pp. 193–194).

As early as the 9th century, Svatopluk could be considered a prototype of such a ruler who, in the name of the country and its interests, but also for the sake of his own power-political ambitions, was able to do anything. It is questionable to what extent such behaviour and actions were typical or exceptional for the given era. Taking contemporary chronicles regarding, for instance, the Frankish kingdom, into consideration, one finds out that, within the ruling elite, anybody fought anybody, including fathers and sons (Bartoňková et al., 1966, pp. 67, 74–76, 99–100, 166, 348–349). The situation was similar in the Byzantine Empire where the closest relatives were murdered should the ruler's seat be in question.[4] The battle for the pope's seat was no easier, as at the turn of the 9th century, popes were often poisoned, strangled, stabbed with a dagger, etc. Some popes only kept their papal seat for several days (Kelly, 1990; Michalov, 2015, pp. 234–236; Ullmann, 2003, p. 41).

After Methodius died, Svatopluk used the opportunity and, with the help of Wiching, the Bishop of Nitra, openly joined the Latin, i.e. Frankish, clergy, with whom he could consider his political and power interests, as Pope Stephen VI, who took the post after John VIII died, was not inclined to the Slavic church or Old Church Slavonic language. According to Charles R. Bowlus, "Zwentibald [Svatopluk], who had always preferred the Latin ritual, was at the height of his power and influence. He probably surmised that he no longer needed Methodius nor the latter's clergy trained in the Slavonic liturgy" (Bowlus, 1995, p. 216). Svatopluk ultimately joined Wiching and the Frankish clergy in the context of a conflict between Methodius' disciples and the Frankish clergy regarding the issue of filioque.[5] The course of the conflict is described in *Life of St. Clement of Ochrid*, according to which Svatopluk could not decide this theological controversy and, thus, claimed that he who sooner swears the veracity of their faith would be proved right. Frankish priests beat Methodius' disciples and,

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[4] In general, the morality of the given era can be considered an example of breaking Christian moral rules at the highest level, i.e. by the rulers of the contemporary world (kings, emperors as well as popes), while, on the other hand, there was a war against pagan customs waged by inhabitants of individual countries and strict punishments were introduced for theft, kidnapping of virgins, polygamy, etc. This, actually, proves a duality of contemporary Christian morality, or the way it was understood in relation to the population and the then ruling elites.

[5] In filioque, the origin of the Holy Spirit is derived not only from the Father but also the Son.

based on that, Svatopluk, supposedly, conceded the point to the Frankish priests. Methodius' disciples were then forced to accept the Western view of filioque, which they refused, as, in the spirit of Eastern Christianity, they considered it heresy that had not been justified by any ecumenical council. Based on that, they were persecuted, imprisoned, tortured and sold as slaves or expelled from the country by Frankish priests led by Bishop Wiching (Bartoňková et al., 1967, p. 231).

St. Clement of Ochrid, one of those disciples of Methodius who were, after his death, expelled from Great Moravia and left for Bulgaria, had himself heard talking highly disrespectfully about Svatopluk and his understanding of theological issues, including the final decision regarding filioque, as well as his moral qualities.

> "The Prince, however, understood very little of what was said, as he was too completely and utterly dumb to comprehend any divine matter; he was brought up in a sheer barbaric manner, briefly said, with no education whatsoever, and also [...] because vicarious pleasures rid him of all his sense. How could a man entirely distanced from the sanctity of modest life, without which no one lays his eyes on the Lord, ever penetrate any contemplations of the Trinity?" (Bartoňková et al., 1967, p. 225).

This was, however, a rather tendentious statement about Svatopluk, as contemporary German chronicles also describe Svatopluk as a brave and bright man (Bartoňková et al., 1966, pp. 139–140), while St. Clement of Ochrid, later on, probably influenced by the trauma of persecution and expulsion, took the opposite evaluative viewpoint of Svatopluk.

According to Vladimír Vavřínek, "although this story is of legendary nature, one need not doubt that it, in its own way, describes an actual event. In the medieval judicial system, swearing an oath undoubtedly played an important role. It is possible that Svatopluk's decision was directly influenced by this. It is, however, hard to believe that the verdict was to solely depend on who would be first to take the oath..." (Vavřínek, 2013, p. 309). I hold the same opinion; Svatopluk was sufficiently intelligent and too bright a ruler to decide on key issues concerning the country based on such methods. At best, it could be considered a joke on his part which he made of the two opposing sides in order to find out to what extent they are truly to believe the decision could be based on who first swears the verity of their faith. I offer the idea that it is much more likely is the fact that it was merely a game by which Svatopluk tried to cover his decision to, in a way, save face before Methodius' disciples, as, earlier, Methodius and the entire Byzantine mission played a vital role in solving clerical-political independence of Great Moravia. No one could accuse him of an alibistic attitude should he not unambiguously take a stand in this matter. I believe it was rather one of Svatopluk's Machiavellian steps, as he left enemies to first destroy each other and he then merely reaped the fruits of his smartness, or politics.

Svatopluk, however, made a grave mistake in his plans by relying on Wiching and the Frankish clergy. Most likely, he did not expect Wiching's betrayal when he later changed sides and joined the Frankish King, Arnulf (Bartoňková et al., 1966, p. 372). This suggests that the Franks knew about Svatopluk's military-political and power-oriented intentions, or, at least, King Arnulf who later used it in order to defeat Svatopluk's troops on multiple occasions and to plunder the territory of Great Moravia. The Franks learnt their lesson from the previous defeats and failures of Carloman and other German rulers in battles with Svatopluk, and Arnulf finally defeated him using his own weapons – shrewdness and slyness, i.e. by means of Wiching's betrayal.

Svatopluk managed to flexibly respond to the political situation that had arose, which is testified by cheating the Franks after his imprisonment in 871, when he, at the head of Frankish troops, set off to quash a rebellion in Great Moravia; he, however, joined the Moravians and, together, they meted out a cruel defeat to the Franks. These were 'merely'

tactical steps by a military chief, or commander. In my view, Svatopluk was a brave soldier and a bright commander; he, however, lacked domestic political vision and a long-term strategy regarding realisation of domestic political goals and, especially, their sustainability. The game of political and clerical-political independence of the Slavic church was merely an instrument of realisation of his foreign political and power-focused ambitions, insufficiently thought-out long-term goal and strategic vision to build his own state on the internal solid foundations of an independent church, albeit subservient to papal authority, but one that could be attractive for other Slavic tribes in Central Europe.

Due to his incongruent relationship to Methodius, he was unable to use the chances presented to create a political conception based on Methodius who had gained a significant position in the clerical hierarchy of the Western Christian church, found support in Pannonia, and also, likely, in other Slavic principalities and, equally, in Byzantium. There was a chance to create a political conception of a Great Moravian state based on a Slavic church ecumenically integrating the religious and cultural features of Eastern and Western Christianity, which would culturally, religiously, legally, as well as philosophically, ethically and morally enriched the entire Europe (Jakobson, 1985, pp. 121–23, 133–134).

I suppose that Svatopluk's incongruous relationship towards Methodius could lie in hostility of a brave soldier towards scholars, men of letters, although Methodius was originally a lawyer, but gave up his career to become a monk and scholar (Marsina, 1985, p. 54). Another reason for Svatopluk's reserved attitude towards Methodius could lie in the reproach, be it direct or merely suspected, Methodius could have had towards Svatopluk for his betrayal of Rastislav. And, last but not least, it could also be based on Methodius' honest and powerful personality that could, by its moral virtues, irritate Svatopluk, who liked better the manipulative Wiching than the honest Methodius. Yet another reason for Svatopluk's dismissive view of Methodius could be the fact that Methodius represented Rastislav's political conception, which was also the reason why he and his brother Constantine led the Byzantine mission to Great Moravia.[6] Svatopluk tried to enforce a different idea regarding the existence and future of Great Moravia, which was also the primary cause of conflicts between himself and Rastislav and, in the end, led to betraying Rastislav and his handing over to the Franks. There are probably more than enough reasons why Svatopluk held a highly ambivalent view of Methodius.[7]

"One of the paradoxes of the history of Great Moravia is that its greatest ruler, Svatopluk, was also the one who inhibited rather than encouraged and fostered the work and activities of two Greek religious scholars and priests, Constantine (Cyril) and Methodius, whose contribution to the establishment and development of Central and East European civilization and culture is second to none" (Kirschbaum, 2005, p. 30). Kirschbaum described Svatopluk's share in the liquidation of Constantine and Methodius' Central and Eastern European cultural and civilising contribution as Svatopluk's paradox, which is undoubtedly true. I believe, however, that another of Svatopluk's paradoxes lies in his significant contribution to the destruction of what he had been building, i.e. the Great Moravian Empire. There are two possible forms of Svatopluk's paradox, i.e. cultural-civilising and power-political. The first one created conditions for the other, which means that the liquidation of Slavonic liturgy, the Slavonic church, and, in the end, also Slavic language, culture, and literature aided the debilitation of the internal unity of Great Moravia and, after Svatopluk died, also contributed to its breakdown and fall.

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[6] Here, Svatopluk's discrediting of Methodius' true faith could be considered a manifestation (Bartoňková et al., 1969, pp. 199–208; Betti, 2014, pp. 87, 147–148, 152, 163).

[7] Nevertheless, Betti claims that "we can deduce that the release of the missionary bishop was followed by a fruitful period, characterized by ample collaboration between Methodius and Svatopluk" (Betti, 2014, p. 151).

Historical annals do not directly mention Svätopluk's domestic politics, much more can be found on his foreign politics in contemporary German documents. It is, therefore, unknown to what extent he also strived for its internal unity or formation of a Great Moravian statehood based on political, cultural, social, religious, educational, as well as the ethical and moral identity of its inhabitants. According to historical annals, he aspired to be a powerful ruler who, by means of military force, managed to brutally and cruelly subdue and control neighbouring territories and ethnic groups.

He managed to conquer large territories; he, however, did not manage to effectively make them into part of the country, since, after he died, they quickly broke off, and complied with the Franks rather than staying under the domination of the Moravians (Bartoňková et al., 1966, pp. 121, 124, 169). Should one ignore the foreign policy of the Frankish kingdom, which, in a very efficient way, used the church and missionaries to pursue its foreign-political goals in the neighbouring countries, it could be assumed that one reason why Great Moravia broke up so quickly and the controlled territories broke off was the cruelty of Svatopluk's troops present in the territories in question. Although, after Svatopluk's death, the threat of brutal suppression of resistance in the controlled territories vanished, his sons, not being sufficiently capable or powerful military leaders, exhausted their energy in internal conflicts (Bartoňková et al., 1966, pp. 124, 169, 370–374), and the princes of the subdued countries strived to break off from Great Moravia as soon as possible and to come under the potentially more moderate control of the Franks, which would, under certain circumstances, probably provide more freedom and a lesser threat to their internal politics and security than Great Moravia.

Comparison of Svatopluk's and Rastislav's political ethics

The power-political paradox of Svatopluk's reign, thus, lay in him not being able to integrate Slavic tribes and create from them a united Slavic state, as he primarily strived to control them in a military and economic way, and use them in favour of his combative politics. My hypothesis is that Svatopluk did not build Great Moravia as a state with a complex infrastructure, necessary to provide for its inhabitants,[8] but rather as a military power, which needed further economic resources to provide for the increasing number of soldiers. That is why he aspired to, in a military way, subdue and economically control, or exploit, the surrounding territories and population; in order to ensure a sufficient supply of warriors, he created the economic environment for his campaigns. The fact he left this key area of internal Great Moravian policy in the hands of the Frankish clergy with Wiching, the Bishop of Nitra at its head, proves that the matters of building Great Moravian statehood based on cultural, linguistic, religious, political, educational, as well the ethical and moral identity of the Great Moravian population was foreign to him.[9] He even made the situation easier by enabling them to expel Methodius' disciples from Great Moravia, by which he most likely declared the ultimate verdict over the future fate of Great Moravia. As it turned out, it was only a matter of time before Great Moravia broke up due to its internal inconsistencies. Although external factors aided this to a great extent, Great Moravia was not internally ready or capable to survive the external pressure, since no internal identity of the country, unifying all strata of the population including those of the subdued countries, was present. Svatopluk wasted a great chance to build a powerful country in Central Europe, strong not only in the military way, but also in the area of politics, culture, language, religion and morality. Combined with

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[8] According to Jiří Macháček, "during its brief existence, Great Moravia never reached the level of social and political organization typical of the rise of states in early medieval Europe" (Macháček, 2009, p. 265).
[9] Vavřínek, in this context, wrote: "Svatopluk ... fully entrusted Wiching with the administration of clerical matters, who exploited it to the fullest" (Vavřínek, 2013, p. 309).

military force, this would have created much better conditions for its survival and the ability to keep resisting external pressure even after Svatopluk's death.

On the other hand, Rastislav had a clear internal-political as well as foreign-political goal – that is the independence of Great Moravia. He strived to achieve this mainly by means of the ability to protect itself from attacks by external enemies as well as by pursuing consistent internal policies lying in the enhancement of religion, language and culture of Slavic inhabitants. Svatopluk, on the other hand, primarily saw a chance for Great Moravia to gain independence in aggressive foreign power-driven policies, supported by military campaigns and expanding the country's borders. These are two considerably different conceptions of building an independent Great Moravia. Rastislav's conception was primarily based on defensive wars and building internal homogeneity in the country and its inhabitants, which meant strengthening the internal ties between the people and the state, forming common statehood based on a shared language, writing system, culture and, ultimately, also religion, or clerical-political independence from the Frankish kingdom and its clergy. Christianity was one of those tools by means of which, during Rastislav's reign, the homogeneity of the country and its people, common statehood and general welfare of Great Moravia were built. Svatopluk's conception of Great Moravian independence was based on expansion, military campaigns and exploiting Christianity to justify the expansive foreign policies of subduing surrounding countries and their inhabitants with fire, sword and cross. While Rastislav's conception was mainly defensive, that of Svatopluk was, above all, expansive and offensive. In his politics, Svatopluk copied the expansive foreign policies of Frankish kings, which, on the one hand, provided him with power and fame; however, on the other hand, ultimately caused the break-up and fall of Great Moravia.

I hold the opinion these were two diverse foreign-political conceptions – Rastislav's and Svatopluk's. As far as the role of Christianity and the church in these conceptions is concerned, in both Christianity and the church were used as an instrument for political goals. What they, however, differed in was that in Rastislav's Christianity and the church primarily served to gain independence of Moravia from the Franks and to build Great Moravian statehood based on the internal unity of the state and its people, while under Svatopluk, they predominantly served for the expansion of the empire and its power under the slogan of Christianization the neighbouring countries, or ethnic groups. In Svatopluk's conception, it also manifested in him striving to fully subdue the church and its hierarchy to his power and power-related goals, similarly to the case of the Frankish kingdom (Betti, 2014, pp. 190–191, 213). Should the church hierarchy (such as Archbishop Methodius) not be willing to fully conform to the power-oriented interests of the ruler, he did not hesitate in finding ways to get rid of it (Bartoňková et al., 1967, p. 231; Stephens, 2012, p. 305). His support of the Frankish clergy and Wiching, whom he himself nominated for the pope to appoint as bishop serves as an example (Bartoňková et al., 1969, pp. 199–208). In this way, Methodius' status was intentionally weakened and, at the same time, was a source of many conflicts which he sought to use for his own profit. In the end, he managed to achieve this to the full extent after Methodius died and he could then focus on the pursuit of his intentions with the Latin Church in the context of power-related ambitions.

Dvornik stated the hypothesis that, had Great Moravia and Constantine and Methodius' Church held up longer, the formation of Central and Eastern Europe would have had a different course, as the Great Moravian Empire was sufficiently strong and had enough to offer to the cultural development of Europe in the 9th century (Dvorník, 1999, p. 35). This idea sounds very interesting and is true in many respects regarding the cultural dimension of the existence of Great Moravia; on the other hand, however, I do not find it all that realistic. Although Great Moravia was an earnest political rival of the Frankish kingdom, in reality it was, in a sense, a giant standing on clay legs, which was proved by its incredibly fast break-

up and fall after Svatopluk died. Had it been sufficiently strong and resistant to internal and external threats, the Czech principalities would not have broken off as early as a year after Svatopluk's death only to become subordinate to the Franks (Bartoňková et al., 1966, pp. 124, 169, 370–374; Berend, Urbańczyk, & Wiszewski, 2013, p. 85). And the further break-up of Great Moravia and breaking off of other subdued areas followed suit.

In my opinion, Svatopluk's betrayal of Rastislav, his capture and imprisonment effectively buried the idea of the Great Moravian state being built by Rastislav followed by Svatopluk's political Machiavellianism. Based on my research so far it could be stated that Svatopluk gave priority to military and power-related international political goals and intentions to long-term visions that would be a realisation of Rastislav's intentions to build an independent state able to outlive its rulers. Great Moravia outlived Mojmír as well as Rastislav; it, however, did not outlast Svatopluk's death. That means that, while in the case of the first two rulers the idea of statehood was viable, it was not so after Svatopluk had died, as it was not based on the deeper internal interests of the country and its people, but, to a considerable extent, rather on its ruler's personal interests and power-related ambitions (as well as those of the Moravian aristocracy) whose power and 'attraction' vanished in less than no time after his death, since it was captivating for neither Great Moravians nor for the subdued and controlled countries and their inhabitants. Svatopluk predominantly controlled the subdued countries in a military way which, however, as it turned out after he died, was not enough to keep the aristocracy and the commons of the countries in question on side, or convince them of the importance and need for such a common Empire.

Mahoney wrote the following:

"In the end, the confluence of political and religious conflicts undermined the developing Great Moravian state, which had brought the Slavic peoples of Central Europe into the sphere of Greco-Roman civilization and Roman Catholicism. Frankish expansion and the concurrent spread of religious authority in the hands of the Frankish high clergy proved a very formidable obstacle for the Moravian rulers to overcome, even with the support of a papacy determined to limit the influence and independence of the East Frankish clergy in the region. The arrival of the Magyars helped to hasten the fall" (Mahoney, 2011, p. 33).

It is a great overall characteristic of what the endeavours of Great Moravian rulers resulted in; their efforts encountered permanent opposition, intrigue, punitive military campaigns of the Frankish rulers with an effort to keep Great Moravia in governmental, political, ideological, as well as economic, cultural and religious servitude of the Frankish kingdom. In my view, during Svatopluk's reign, the Great Moravian Empire outgrew itself, which caused it to meet its fate. Territorial expansion during Svatopluk's rule was not supported by sufficiently strong or, especially, efficient cultural, ideological and religious activities of missionaries, as well as civil servants, who would manage to create a sufficiently strong cultural, political, linguistic, as well as religious and moral identity of the Slavic population of the Great Moravian Empire. One of the reasons could have lain in Svatopluk predominantly relying on military force, which sufficed while he was alive but which was primarily dependant on his commanding skills and the size of his army (Bartoňková et al., 1966, pp. 114–115, 145–146, 369; Bowlus, 1995, pp. 214–215, 320). That was probably why, after Methodius died, he gave direct, or indirect, consent for the liquidation of a Great Moravian cultural and educational centre established by Constantine and Methodius. Svatopluk underestimated or (did not think through) the role and importance of Slavic culture and education in the building of statehood and identity in the population of the Great Moravian Empire, especially regarding the subdued territories and in the long run. Another reason lay in the fierce opposition and activities of the Frankish clergy with Wiching, the Bishop of Nitra at its head, who, with Svatopluk's tacit consent, pursued the interests of a foreign power. Svatopluk planned to use them for his own

profit; however, as it turned out later, this was a greatly mistaken political decision which was the seed of the later defeat of Svatopluk II, his son, the break-up and fall of Great Moravia.

Conclusion

When assessing Great Moravia, Kirschbaum wrote: "The internal politics of Great Moravia now acquired a religious dimension that two rulers, Rastislav and Svatopluk, used in different if not contradictory ways […], to enhance the power and independence of Great Moravia" (Kirschbaum, 2005, p. 31). Unlike the author, I hold the opinion that Rastislav's and Svatopluk's church policies were partially opposing. I believe that Rastislav used the Byzantine mission of Constantine and Methodius not only in an effort to achieve clerical-political independence but also for the building of Great Moravian statehood, culture, language, literature, ethics, morality and law, i.e. Great Moravian identity, which could be a homogenous element of the internal unity of Great Moravia. Based on the above historical annals (Bartoňková et al., 1966, pp. 74–76, 93–95, 99–100, 348–350), Rastislav and his conception of political ethics can be labelled as a prototype of the ruler, later described by Erasmus of Rotterdam in his *Education of a Christian Prince* (*Institutio principis Christiani*), in which he especially placed to the forefront such virtues as wisdom, fairness, self-control, ability to predict and efforts for common good (Erasmus, 1997, p. 5). Among other significant virtues necessary for a Christian prince were the greatness of his mind, moderation and honesty. According to Erasmus, a Christian ruler does not win recognition over others by the extent of his fortune, wealth or the power of his army, but rather the extent to which he can avoid corruptness, lustfulness, arrogance, impulsiveness and blind actions (Erasmus, 1997, p. 24).

Svatopluk, unlike Rastislav, achieved his goal, i.e. achieved clerical-political independence, or, in other words, direct subordination to Rome, which, however, merely resulted in formal independence, as the clerical-political organisation of Great Moravia continued, in reality, to be under the direct influence of the Frankish clergy and the Frankish bishop Wiching, although he did not reside in Salzburg or Passau, but in Nitra. Wiching had more influence over Svatopluk than the Frankish bishops in Salzburg and Passau; nevertheless, they all pursued the same policy and realised Frankish interests irrespective of where they resided.

Machiavelli recommended that a ruler to either pamper or destroy people, as they take revenge for minor offences and cannot do so for grave ones, which is why should he hurt someone, he should do so in the way he cannot be avenged (Machiavelli, 2005, p. 11). This was most likely based on his rather pessimistic perception of people and their characteristic features, as he wrote that people are ungrateful, unreliable, hypocritical, cowardly, and money-grabbing; briefly, they are malicious and capable of any betrayal, should they consider it profitable for themselves (Machiavelli, 2005, pp. 57–58). He further stated that "[...] there is no secure means of holding on to cities except by destroying them. Anyone who becomes master of a city accustomed to living in liberty and does not destroy it may expect to be destroyed by it, because such a city always has as a refuge in any rebellion the name of liberty and its ancient institutions, neither of which is ever forgotten either because of the passing of time or because of the bestowal of benefits" (Machiavelli, 2005, p. 19). In the spirit of the Machiavelli's above recommendations to a ruler it could be stated that Svatopluk was primarily a lion, but were it necessary, he could also be a sly fox, which proved to be true, for instance, in the context of the expulsion of Methodius' disciples, and also prior to that, when he switched from the Franks to Moravians and inflicted a cruel defeat on them, as well as in a great number of other events, as described by contemporary resources (Bartoňková et al., 1966, pp. 118, 120, 362–366). Svatopluk, in his politics of power mainly relied on the army and military force; he did not really assign Christianity a decisive role in the pursuit of his

power-oriented interests in foreign politics. It could, at most, be a means which, in certain situations, could come in handy in the realisation of his goals. If he did not assign Christianity a great role in the pursuit of his power-related ambitions, even less did he understand the importance of culture, language and literature for the internal, as well as the foreign politics of his country.

During Svatopluk's reign, Great Moravia could be primarily considered a military economy, which means that all was subordinated to the needs of military campaigns and providing for the army. Everything else served as a means to support the soldiers. The national as well as foreign policy of Great Moravia, during Svatopluk's reign, responded to this aim. To realise his power-political goals, he would use anything, including Christianity. The question arises what led him to betray Rastislav. On the one hand, certainly, it was his political ambitions which he could not fully realise while Rastislav was in power. On the other hand, some authors point to the diverse nature of the geopolitical conceptions of both rulers, which is true (Kirschbaum, 2005, p. 31; Kučera, 1986, pp. 141, 149). One could assume that Svatopluk came to the conclusion that the direction Great Moravia was taking while Rastislav was in power was not prospective and, under such a reign, could never gain independence from the Franks, while Rastislav's efforts to achieve clerical-political independence yet further irritated the Franks. That is why one could assume he decided to achieve independence for Great Moravia with the help of the Franks; they would retain control over the internal politics of Great Moravia while he would accept the Frankish clergy in his territory. The main focus, however, remained on building a powerful army, which would make him an equal military and political partner of the Frankish kingdom and he could enforce independence from the Frankish kingdom by military force, which would compel them to accept his political goals in Central Europe. It could be stated that he partially succeeded in his foreign-political intentions, as he actually managed to build a large and powerful army which he used to subdue the neighbouring countries and to make Great Moravia a significant power in Central Europe. He, however, sealed its ominous fate by not paying sufficient attention to internal politics, which, in effect, became the domain of the Frankish clergy with Wiching at the head, who, after they expelled Methodius' disciples, could pursue the full internal destruction of Great Moravia, since they were given free reign to realise Frankish goals in Great Moravia. Although Franks did not manage to defeat Svatopluk and Great Moravia by military force, they defeated and destroyed it from the inside, by intrigue and supporting mutual hostility between Svatopluk's sons (Bartoňková et al., 1966, pp. 124–126, 169, 370–374) and, most likely, also supporting further internal opposition, be it directly in Great Moravia or in the subdued countries, which manifested in the life of Great Moravia in a highly negative manner shortly after Svatopluk's death. The ill fate of Great Moravia can thus, to a certain extent (although not exclusively), be a result of Svatopluk's policies, which was a representation of the contemporary model of Machiavellian politics of power.

Rastislav's political conception was based on building the Great Moravian state by more moderate means with the main emphasis on creating linguistic, cultural, political, religious, as well as the ethical and moral identity of Great Moravia, which was to be the core and could aid in resisting external pressure and events. Rastislav's foreign policies was an instrument for achieving goals that were part of internal policies, i.e. building lasting Great Moravian statehood based on an identity unifying its inhabitants and expressing national interests. During Rastislav's reign, Great Moravia came to be one of the most significant political, clerical, and especially cultural and educational powers of Europe. It could, therefore, be considered a prototype of Erasmian political ethics of the given era.

Svatopluk founded its politics in different intentions, as he strived to build Great Moravia as a military power, which he succeeded in, albeit at the expense of destroying Rastislav's

work lying in the creation of Great Moravia as a cultural and educational centre of Central Europe. Moreover, after Svatopluk died, Great Moravia ceased to exist as a military power in less than no time, while Rastislav's work survived and became the heritage of the entire Europe, although it, first of all, happened thanks to Bulgarians and, later, the Kievan Rus', who followed Constantine and Methodius' work in Great Moravia especially during Rastislav's (but, partially, also during Svatopluk's) reign (Jakobson, 1985, pp. 134–135; Stephens, 2012, p. 304).

It could, therefore, be stated that while the victory of Svatopluk's geopolitical conception was great, it was only temporary, since Great Moravia ceased to exist shortly after his death, while the heritage of Rastislav's geopolitical conception survived for millennia, albeit not directly in Great Moravia, but among southern and eastern Slavs. Based on that it can be stated that Rastislav's Erasmian conception of political ethics, albeit indirectly, was more viable than Svatopluk's Machiavellian conception of power, which was proved by the actions of Constantine and Methodius' disciples in Bulgaria, and, later, by developing this heritage in the Kievan Rus'. In this way, the cultural heritage created thanks to Rastislav's conception of political ethics survived to the present day as a significant part of European and world-wide cultural heritage.

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