For God and which Nation? The Ideology of František Jehlička, Priest, Politician and Pariah of the Slovak National Movement

Author(s): Tom Lorman

Source: *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 96, No. 3 (July 2018), pp. 507-540

Published by: the Modern Humanities Research Association and University College London, School of Slavonic and East European Studies

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5699/slaveasteurorev2.96.3.0507

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at https://about.jstor.org/terms

Modern Humanities Research Association and *University College London, School of Slavonic and East European Studies* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Slavonic and East European Review*

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

For God and which Nation? The Ideology of František Jehlička, Priest, Politician and Pariah of the Slovak National Movement

TOM LORMAN

For the last years of his life, František Jehlička placed a copy of a painting by the Italian baroque artist Pompeo Girolamo Batoni on the walls of his cell in the Capuchin monastery in Vienna. The painting, completed in 1773 and entitled 'The Return of the Prodigal Son', portrays a father tenderly embracing his long-lost and half-naked son who, according to the famous parable, had taken 'his journey into a far country, and […] began to be in want'.[1] It is likely that Jehlička first came across the painting in the House of Habsburg's Imperial and Royal Gallery in Vienna's Belvedere Palace where it was hung following its acquisition by the Empress Maria Theresa. Jehlička, a devout Catholic who had committed himself to becoming a priest at the age of fifteen, may have seen himself in Batoni's painting as the wandering son who could look forward to the moment, at the end of his life, when he would be welcomed with open arms by his Father in heaven.[2]

Alternatively, Jehlička's attraction to Batoni's painting may be explained by his estrangement from his fellow Slovaks that led him to reside in Vienna's Capuchin monastery. Exiled from Czechoslovakia in 1919 due to his hostility to the new state, Jehlička regarded himself as a 'spiritual father' forced to watch his beloved Slovak nation condemned to a life of want. In Batoni's moving depiction of the act of reconciliation, Jehlička may have found the comforting hope that he too would eventually be reconciled with his fellow Slovaks. Both his detractors and his admirers have, however,

Tom Lorman is Teaching Fellow in Modern Central European History at UCL SSEES.

[1] Luke, 15:11–32, King James Version.

[2] See János Lutter, 'Jehlicska Ferenc', in *Katolikus Szemle*, 1939, pp. 99–100. See also, Anthony M. Clark, *Pompeo Batoni: A Complete Catalogue of his Works with an Introductory Text*, Oxford, 1985, p. 326.

Slavonic and East European Review, 96, 3, 2018

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

disagreed about what form of reconciliation he actually desired. Did he hope to be welcomed back to an independent Slovakia as a national hero, or did he hope to welcome the Slovaks back into a greater Hungary from which they had been separated in 1918?

Certainly, Jehlička always portrayed himself as a devoted servant of the Slovak nation. As an ordained priest he had been a popular and inspiring figure among his Slovak parishioners — he had placed himself at the forefront of the Slovak national movement before the First World War, he had helped the Slovaks break away from Hungary in 1918 and he had devoted the remainder of his life to the struggle against what he regarded as the 'godless Czechs'' maltreatment of the Slovaks in Czechoslovakia, and insisted that he had always remained true to the Catholic Slovak nationalist slogan: 'For God and Nation' (*Za Boha a národ*).[3]

Nevertheless, many of his contemporaries and a number of scholars have viewed Jehlička as one of the most unscrupulous figures in modern Slovak history. He stands accused, above all, of having repeatedly betrayed the Slovak national movement. His call for an independent Slovak nation state has been, for example, dismissed as a canard aimed at detaching the Slovaks from Czechoslovakia and subjecting them once again to rule by Budapest. That the Hungarian government funded his activities after 1918 appears to confirm that his ultimate allegiance was to the cause of Hungarian irredentism rather than Slovak independence. Confusingly, even the admiring author of his solitary obituary, János Lutter, insisted that his loyalty to Hungary was 'unbreakable'.[4]

The inability to neatly categorize Jehlička as a Slovak or Hungarian nationalist has also ensured that his long and influential career as a leading Catholic theologian, publicist and politician has been, until recently, almost completely expunged from the historical record. There is no statue or plaque commemorating his achievements — even his grave in Budapest is untraceable. No biography of him has, hitherto, been published and references to him by scholars were, for decades, scarce and scathing.[5] Recently, however, there is new interest in his academic writings,[6] and

[3] See, for example, Jehlička's short account of his activities up until 1920 in František Jehlička, *F. Jehlička, Kto on je a čo chce*, Cleveland, OH, 1920.

[4] Lutter, 'Jehlicska Ferenc', p. 100.

[5] See, for example, Juraj Kramer, *Iredenta a separatizmus v slovenskej politike*, Bratislava, 1957, and Maroš Hertel, 'Jehlička František. Nočná mora politického života', in S. Michálek and N. Krajčovičova, *Do pamäti národa: osobnosti slovenských dejín prvej polovice 20. storočia*, Bratislava, 2003, pp. 263–66.

[6] See the recent reprint of Ferenc Rezső Jehlicska, *Pikler belátásos elmélete: Pikler jogbölcséletének és világnézletének kritikai vizsgálata*, Budapest, 2010.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

scholars have begun to offer a more balanced assessment of Jehlička's career that portrays him as neither a patriot or a renegade but as someone whose career, in István Jenek's words, was a 'quest for the road among contemporary national ideas'.[7]

Some recent scholarship has also alluded to the importance of Jehlička's Catholic faith in estranging him from the interwar Czechoslovak Republic, but no attempt has hitherto been made to explore in detail the way in which his Catholic faith shaped his politics and his national identity throughout his career.[8] Up until World War One, as Alexander Maxwell has persuasively argued, most Slovaks in Hungary, including Jehlička, possessed a 'Hungaro-Slavic' Hungarus identity which combined loyalty to a Hungarian territorial identity with awareness of a Slovak, Slavic or even Czechoslovak ethnic identity. After 1918, and the break from Hungary, Slovaks were forced to choose whether they belonged to the official Czechoslovak nation, a distinct Slovak nation, or remained Hungaro-Slavic Hungarians.[9] Jehlička, who publicly and enthusiastically embraced all three of these identities, provides valuable insights into their appeal to Catholic Slovaks. The challenges he faced in attempting to accommodate himself to the shifting borders of Central Europe and defend the traditions of his faith in an era of radical change, sheds fresh light on the shifts and ambiguities that characterized the efforts of many of his fellow Slovak Catholics to accommodate themselves to the succession of states, pre-war Hungary, interwar Czechoslovakia, and the wartime Slovak state, that occupied present day Slovakia in the first half of the twentieth century.

Although Jehlička's national identity is the particular focus of this article, attention will also be paid to the entirety of his remarkable career. He was a brilliant student, a popular parish priest and a masterful public speaker who served in both the Hungarian parliament and the Czechoslovak National Assembly, was an influential lecturer at the universities of Budapest, Warsaw and the Catholic University in Washington D.C. and began the work of founding the Comenius University in Bratislava. In

[7] István Janek, 'František Jehlička and His Activity in Support of the Hungarian Revision in Czechoslovakia in 1919–1938', in *Dvaćaté století = The Twentieth Century*, Prague, 2015, p. 44. See also, Miroslav Michela, 'František Jehlička politikai pálfordulatai 1918–1920-ban', in *Pro Minoritate*, Tél, 2005; Miroslav Michela, *Pod heslom integrity: Slovenská otázka v politike maďarska, 1918–1921*, Bratislava, 2009; Miroslav Michela, 'Plans for Slovak Autonomy in Hungarian Politics, 1918–1920', *Historický časopis*, 58, 2010, pp. 53–82; Balázs Ablonczy, *NYOMbiztosítás, letűnt magyarok*, Pozsony, 201, pp. 72–78.

[8] Ibid., p. 53.

[9] Alexander Maxwell, *Choosing Slovakia: Slavic Hungary, the Czechoslovak Language and Accidental Nationalism*, London and New York, 2009, pp. 34–55.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

addition, he added his influential voice to the successful campaign for women's suffrage in interwar Czechoslovakia, helped avoid a schism among the Slovak Catholic clergy in 1919, spent over thirty years as the editor of various newspapers and published almost two dozen books in seven different languages including serious studies of contemporary philosophy, Catholic social ethics and the Hungarian civil law code, as well as an outpouring of propaganda against the interwar Czechoslovak state that helped tarnish its reputation and facilitate its dismemberment at the Munich conference in 1938.

By considering the entirety of his career as priest, politician and publicist, this article will demonstrate that Jehlička's national identity, and his ideology, was, contrary to appearances, remarkably consistent. Jehlička appeared to undergo dramatic ideological shifts, jettisoning earlier principles and betraying his closest allies but, in reality, his primary loyalty was always to the Catholic Church which he, and many of his fellow clergymen, believed to be under assault, notably by liberalism, socialism, Protestants, Freemasons and Jews. His belief that he was engaged in a 'culture war' between the Catholic Church and its secular enemies, ensured that although he always regarded himself as a Slovak, this mattered less and could even be concealed when necessary. Nation states were, for him, only deserving of loyalty if they adequately defended the Church's interests, and participation in nationalist politics was always primarily a means of defending the Catholic faith. It was not, therefore, unprincipled opportunism but his rigid adherence to long-standing principles that turned him into a pariah.

František Rudolf Jehlička was born in 1879 into a devout Catholic Slovak-speaking family in the small town Kúty (Hungarian: Jókút) which was then located in the northwest of the Kingdom of Hungary which formed the eastern half of the Habsburg Monarchy. The predominantly mountainous northern region of Hungary, where Jehlička grew up, was colloquially known as 'the highlands' (Hungarian: *felvidék*) but was still regarded as an integral part of Hungary and its entire population was formally described as members of the 'Hungarian nation' although they could identify themselves as belonging to a ill-defined 'Slovak nationality' (Hungarian: *tót nemzetiségi*). The identities of much of the population of the region was, therefore, often characterized by ambiguity and flexibility even before 1918. A growing number of the Slovak-speaking inhabitants of this region nevertheless described themselves as Slovaks not Hungarians although it was still unusual at the end of the nineteenth century for

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

this region to be referred to as 'Slovakia'. Jehlička's parents, for example, were both self-consciously Slovak and devoutly Catholic. Both worked as teachers and his father, Ján, also served as a church organist and community organizer, founded a flourishing cooperative (*Gazdavsko-potraviný spolok*) to obtain lower-priced goods for its members, and was a active supporter of the Slovak nationalist movement that promoted Slovak culture and sought autonomy for Slovakia within Hungary.[10]

Blessed with an enquiring mind and a talent for picking up languages (he was certainly fluent in Slovak, Hungarian, English, French, German and Latin), young František initially suffered no discrimination in spite of his family's political activities. He gained entry to the grammar school in the nearby town of Skalica (Hungarian: Szakolcza), where he marked himself out as the best student in his class. He excelled in every subject he studied (including sport), was awarded a series of prizes (including for his mastery of Hungarian), and ultimately won a scholarship to the Pozsonyi Királyi Katolikus Főgimnasium, one of the best schools in the country in the regional capital of Bratislava (Hungarian: Pozsony, German: Pressburg).[11] By this point, aged fifteen, he had already resolved to become a priest and after two years of intense schooling and a further set of excellent marks for his studies, he was admitted into the seminaries of Esztergom and Budapest before becoming, in 1899, one of only eleven students from Hungary that year to be selected to study at the elite Pazmaneum theological college in Vienna as a final preparation for their ordination to the priesthood.[12]

Bright Slovak-speaking priests did reach the very pinnacle of the Hungarian Church hierarchy. To do so, however, they had to ensure that their Slovak identity did not provoke concerns about their Hungarian patriotism.[13] All appointments of priests were monitored and occasionally vetoed by the responsible Ministry of Education and Cults which was

[10] Jehlička, *F. Jehlička, kto on je a čo chce*, p. 4; Michela, 'František Jehlička politikai pálfordulatai', p. 32; *Ľudové noviny pre krestanský slovenský ľud*, 17 January 1902.

[11] *A Szakolczai kir. kath. algymnasium értesítője az 1890/91 iskolai tanévről*, Szakolcza, 1891, pp. 24–25; *A Szakolczai kir. kath. algymnasium értesítője az 1891/92 iskolai tanévről*, Szakolcza, 1892, pp. 26–29; *A Szakolczai kir. kath. algymnasium értesítője az 1892/93 iskolai tanévről*, Szakolcza, 1893, pp. 24–29; *A Szakolczai kir. kath. algymnasium értesítője az 1893/94 iskolai tanévről*, Szakolcza, 1894, pp. 26–35.

[12] See also, *A Pozsonyi kir. kath. főgymnasium értesítője az 1894/95 iskolai évről*, Pozsony, 1895, p. 62; *A Pozsonyi kir. kath. főgymnasium értesítője az 1895/96 iskolai évről*, Pozsony, 1895, p. 62; István Fazekas, *A Bécsi Pazmaneum Magyarországi hallgatói, 1623–1918*, Budapest, 2003, p. 419.

[13] Stephan Moyses (1797–1869) was a solitary exception, rising to the rank of bishop while helping to instigate the Slovak national awakening.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

determined to stamp out Slovak nationalist sentiments within the clergy. In response, Slovak-speaking priests often downplayed their ethnic origins to prevent suspicion. Jehlička, however, spoke Slovak rather than Hungarian whenever possible, and apparently even launched a Slovak-language student journal, *Zora*.[14] Threatened with expulsion, he was fortunate to receive the support of the Slovak-speaking rector of the Pazmaneum and future bishop of Košice (1907–25), Augustín Fischer-Colbrie, who himself was occasionally accused of insufficient patriotism and 'panslav' tendencies.[15] His report on Jehlička's time at the Pazmaneum defended him as a 'praiseworthy young man' of 'exemplary' morals who 'writes and speaks excellently and is highly proficient in singing the liturgy'. Fischer-Colbrie also addressed head-on Jehlička's dangerous reputation as a Slovak nationalist. He insisted that, as regards Jehlička's relations with his fellow Hungarian students, 'nothing vicious has been found', but also urged the Church authorities to 'resist the temptation to place him among Hungarians' and instead assign him to a Slovak-speaking parish.[16]

The Church authorities acted on Fischer-Colbrie's recommendations and following Jehlička's ordination in November 1901 he was posted the following summer to a small parish in the predominantly Slovak-speaking town of Modra (Hungarian: Modor), not far from his birthplace, where he immediately threw himself into the work of promoting both the Catholic faith and Slovak culture among his parishioners. Even though most of the leading figures in the Slovak nationalist movement had always been Lutherans, Catholic priests had also devoted themselves to the promotion of Slovak culture, and Jehlička placed himself squarely in that tradition. He oversaw religious instruction at the local state school, organized catechism classes, set up a local Slovak-language Catholic club (Katolický kruh), and inspired several of his students to study for the priesthood. This angered the local Hungarian mayor to such an extent that he was transferred to a parish in Bratislava in 1904. There too he devoted himself to organizing his parishioners, and he established a popular local Slovak Catholic workers' organization (*munkásegylet*) which aimed to recruit small businessmen and workers and attracted 800 members within its first year of operation.[17]

[14] Jehlička, *F. Jehlička, kto on je a čo chce*, p. 4. See also, Mihály Kmosko, 'A tót-kérdés történeti mérlege', in *Uj Magyar Sion*, 1920/2, p. 313.

[15] See, for example, *Esztergom*, 25 March 1906.

[16] Primási Levéltár Esztergom, Vaszary Katalógus (hereafter, VK), 7/2483, 1902; Michela, 'František Jehlička politikai pálfordulatai', p. 32.

[17] Primási Levéltár Esztergom, VK, 9/4133, 1906. See also, Jehlička, *F. Jehlička, kto on je a čo chce*, pp. 4–5.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

In addition, Jehlička had already begun to establish a reputation as one of the leading intellectual lights in the Slovak nationalist firmament. From 1901, he became a regular contributor to the *Katolícke Noviny*, the in-house journal of the Slovak-speaking Catholic clergy. One indication of his prodigious output is that, in his first year as a contributor, he published twelve poems and three articles. He wrote under the pseudonym 'Margin', in part because his contributions occasionally strayed onto political topics. For example, in June 1901, Jehlička added a theological twist to his opposition to the government's magyarization policies, which included an attempt to promote the use of the Hungarian language in religious instruction, by insisting that the ability to praise God in one's mother tongue was a God-given gift.[18]

At this point, Jehlička was also a part of the Hlasist movement, led by a group of Slovak-speaking students, most of whom had studied in Prague, who launched the monthly journal *Hlas* in 1898 to propagate their ideas. The Hlasists rejected the passivity of the Slovak national movement's Lutheran-dominated leadership which, cocooned away in the small town of Turčianský Sväty Martin (Hungarian: Turócz Szent Márton), persisted with a fruitless electoral boycott, and clung to the fantasy that imperial Russia would free Hungary's Slavs from their bondage. The Hlasists, in contrast, drew inspiration from the increasingly assertive Czech nationalist movement in neighbouring Moravia and Bohemia and the unorthodox ideas of their academic mentor, the future president of the Czechoslovak State, Tomáš. G. Masaryk. Under Masaryk's guidance the Hlasists called for a new campaign to mobilize the Slovak-speaking peasantry, and argued that Czech- and Slovak-speakers constituted one single Czechoslovak nation. They also urged the Slovak nationalist movement to embrace the progressive ideas that flourished in Prague and criticized the innate conservatism that animated both Slovak society and the Catholic Church.[19]

Jehlička initially supported the Hlasists' programme. He attended joint meetings of Czech- and Slovak-speaking students and even wrote to Masaryk in 1901. Claiming to be 'a true son of the Slovak nation' he also declared that he wanted to come to Prague to study philosophy, and asked Masaryk for recommendations about which philosophical works he should

[18] *Katolické Noviny*, 5 June 1901.

[19] For a clearly written account of the Hlasist movement, see Josette Baer, *Revolution, Modus Vivendi or Sovereignty: The Political Thought of the Slovak National Movement from 1861 to 1914*, Stuttgart, 2010, pp. 179–220. See also Alexander Maxwell's astute comments on the Hlasists's continuing acceptance of the Hungarus ideal in *Choosing Slovakia*, p. 51.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

read.[20] He then proceeded to publish several articles in *Hlas* in which, for example, he proclaimed the essential unity of Czech- and Slovak-speakers, writing that there is 'an urgent need for spiritual [and] cultural reciprocity with our brothers from whom our race, our faith, our language is divided only by the borders of the state.' He also contributed a peculiar article in 1902 which denounced the ideologies of liberalism, socialism and 'clericalism' from the supposed standpoint of a 'young priest'.[21]

By 1903, however, Jehlička had conducted an ideological U-turn and aligned himself with the unapologetically Catholic, Christian Social movement to which he would remain faithful for the remainder of his life. His embrace of Christian Social thinking had already begun under the mentorship of the rector of the Pazmaneum, Fischer-Colbrie, but it was crystalized during his continued studies for a doctorate at the University of Vienna which he obtained in 1904 with a dissertation entitled 'Modern Theologians' Views of Workers' Contracts'. This dissertation was awarded a personal commendation in the form of a diamond ring by the Emperor Franz Jozef (1830–1916) although as the Slovak-language Catholic journal *Literárne listy* pointed out, Jehlička's Slovak patriotism ensured that he received no public praise for becoming only the second priest from Hungary to receive the emperor's praise for a doctoral dissertation.[22]

During his doctoral studies Jehlička became imbued with the new Catholic Christian Social thinking that had become popular in Vienna at the turn of the century. Inspired by the encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII and Pius X, and propagated at the university of Vienna by Professor Franz Martin Schindler (1847–1922), who held the chair of moral theology and whose brilliant lectures Jehlička almost certainly attended, and in public life by the mayor of Vienna Karl Lueger (1844–1910). Christian Social thinkers urged Catholics to engage with and improve the world about them in order to counter the dangers of liberalism, socialism and all forms of secular thinking.[23] For the rest of his life, Jehlička was enthused by

[20] Josette Baer, *A Life Dedicated to the Republic: Vavro Šrobár's Slovak Czechoslovakism*, Stuttgart, 2014, pp. 61–62.

[21] Štefan Janšák, *Život Dr. Pavla Blahu*, 2 vols, Trnava, 1947, vol. 1, pp. 292–96. See also, Margin, 'Stanovisko najmladšieho kat. Kňazského dorostu k smeru', in Vavro Šrobár (ed.), *Hlas. Mesačník pre literatúru, politiku a otázku sociálnu*, vol. 4, 1902, pp. 132–36.

[22] Curiously, the only other student from Hungary to be awarded an imperial diamond ring was another Hungarus Slovak, Augustín/Ágoston Fischer-Colbrie, who went on to become bishop of Košice. See *Literárne Listy*, 1904, p. 41.

[23] Among the students in Vienna who embraced Professor Schindler's ideas were Jehlička's fellow priests Ignaz Seipel (1876–1932), one of the leading politicians in interwar Austria, and Jozef Tiso (1887–1947), who became the head of the Slovak independent state

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

this combination of confidence and paranoia that emanated from these Catholic intellectuals and politicians who were convinced that they were at the forefront of a revival of the faith across Europe, but also worried that this revival was threatened by a 'culture war' waged by the church's critics who sought to undermine the faith for their own nefarious purposes.[24]

Worried about the durability of the Catholic faith among Slovak-speakers, 70 per cent of whom formally adhered to the Church of Rome, but also confident that he possessed the intellectual ability to confront and defeat the enemies of Catholicism among his fellow Slovak-speakers, Jehlička turned on his former companions in the Hlasist movement who had evidently embraced secular, socialist and progressive ideas. In 1903 he proceeded to publish a series of articles in the premier Slovak nationalist newspaper, the *Národnie noviny*, as well as in several Slovak-language Catholic journals, that denounced the Hlasists' ideas as 'an attack on the truth and the Slovak nation' and accused them of attacking 'religious consciousness and the highest ideals of Slovakia', singled out Masaryk for particular scorn, and called for 'those who have respect for the truth and carry in their hearts at least a spark of love for the Slovak nation' to join him in 'the war against this false and dangerous trend'.[25]

The response from the Hlasists was ferocious. Jehlička was denounced as a bigoted hypocrite, while the leading Hlasist Vavro Šrobár (1867–1950), dismissed him as someone 'who knows everything […] but who does not know what Jesus Christ taught'.[26] Nevertheless, Jehlička's arguments drew plaudits from conservative Slovak nationalists who admired his passionate writing style, the erudition of his arguments and his familiarity with the latest works of Catholic and European philosophy, which earned him a

from 1939–1945. See Klemens von Klemperer, *Ignaz Seipel: Christian Statesman in a Time of Crisis*, Princeton, NJ, 1972, pp. 32–34, and James Ward, *Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia*, Ithaca, NY, 2013, pp. 23–24.

[24] For an excellent overview of the clash between Catholicism and its critics, see Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser (eds), *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Cambridge, 2004, esp. pp. 11–46 and 313–35.

[25] See Roman Holec, 'The Slovak Worker between God and Marx', in Jiří Hanuš, Lukáš Fasora and Jiří Malíř (eds), *Secularization and the Working Class: The Czech Lands and Central Europe in the 19th Century*, Eugene, OR, 2011. See also, Katya Kocourek, 'Patriots and Renegades: Andrej Hlinka and Rudolf Medek as Case Studies of Right-Wing Czechoslovakism', unpublished PhD thesis, University College London, 2009, p. 157, and Rudolf Margin, *Novoveká filosofia a Slováci*, Martin, 1903. See also, *Literárne Listy*, 1903, pp. 17–18. On wider Slovak Catholic concerns about the Hlasists, see Ward, *Jozef Tiso*, pp. 28–29.

[26] Vavro Šrobár, *Boj o novy život*, Ružomberok, 1920, pp. 430–41. See also, Vavro Šrobár (ed.), *Hlas. Mesačník pre literatúru, politiku a otázku sociálnu*, vol. 4, 1904, pp. 121–24 and 155–58.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

reputation as one of the leading Slovak-speaking Catholic intellectuals of his generation.[27]

When, therefore, the *Katolícke Noviny* was purchased by František Skyčák (1870–1953), a Catholic businessman and aspiring politician who was determined to relaunch the paper as a vehicle for Slovak national and Christian Social ideas, Jehlička was an obvious choice to appoint to the editorial board. He was joined by Ferdiš Juriga (1874–1950), another energetic priest from Bratislava, the brilliant populist Catholic writer Anton Bielek (1857–1911) and Dr Pavol Blaho (1867–1927), one of the more conservative figures among the Hlasists, who had made a name for himself establishing agricultural cooperatives and Catholic associations throughout northwest Hungary. These men transformed the paper from a rather tame journal for the Slovak-speaking clergy into the fiery standard-bearer of a new populist and viciously antisemitic Catholic Slovak nationalism that resulted in a rise in sales from 1,500 copies to almost 10,000 copies per edition.[28]

Under the new editorial board the paper also became an increasingly sharp critic of the Catholic People's Party (Katolikus Néppárt) with which it had previously been aligned. Following its launch in 1894, the Catholic People's Party had attracted strong support from Slovak-speaking Catholic priests and intellectuals who regarded the 'liberal' government in Budapest as both ideologically and culturally alien and were furious at its assault on the privileges of the Catholic Church, its philosemitism and its support for free-trade and urbanization. The Catholic People's Party had also bolstered its support among Slovak-speakers by making vague calls for a more tolerant attitude towards Hungary's minorities who comprised over half the entire population for, as Robert Nemes has noted, its 'emphasis on faith rather than on language or culture allowed for a conception of Hungarian patriotism that embraced non-Hungarian speakers' and initially chimed with Jehlička's Hungarus identity.[29]

[27] Roman Holec, *Tragédia v Černovej a Slovenská spoločnosť*, Martin, 1997, p. 19. For a broader discussion of the various factions within the Slovak national movement, see Imre Polányi, *A szlovák társadalom és polgári nemzeti mozgalom a század fordulón, 1895–1905*, Budapest, 1987, and Milan Podrimavský, *Slovenská Narodná Strana v druhej polovici XIX. Storočia*, Bratislava, 1983.

[28] For a discussion of Jehlička's anti-Socialist and antisemitic rhetoric in this period, see Miloslav Szabó, *"Von Worten zu Taten". Die Slowakische Nationalbewegung und der Antisemitism 1875–1922*, Berlin, 2014, pp. 213–18.

[29] See Robert Nemes, 'The Uncivil Origins of Civil Marriage: Hungary', in Clark and Kaiser (eds), *Culture Wars*, p. 328. See also, Julius Popély, 'Zichyho strana a nacionálno-klerikálne hnutie na slovensku v rokoch 1895–1905', in *Historický Časopis*, 26, 1978, 4, pp. 581–609.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

The *Katolícke Noviny* had, therefore, initially continued, even after its relaunch in January 1905, to laud the Catholic People's Party, and argued that government's liberal policies and its chauvinistic attitudes towards the minorities sprang from the same godless principles. By the latter half of 1905, however, Jehlička and his fellow editors had grown dissatisfied with the Catholic People's Party's unwillingness to clearly condemn the government's policy of 'magyarization' and accused its leadership of contempt for its Slovak Catholic supporters by refusing to endorse the principle of universal suffrage. In December Skyčák and the editorial board of his paper, including Jehlička, formally broke with the Catholic People's Party and established a new party that they called the Slovak People's Party (Slovenská Ľudová Strana, hereafter SĽS). The following year, Jehlička stood for election on the new party's platform but revealingly justified this decision primarily on the grounds that he was serving the Catholic Church's larger interests. As he himself insisted, 'if the national struggle of the Slovak parties occurs without the participation of priests it could lead in an anti-clerical direction'. [30]

Ably assisted by his father, who managed his election campaign, and his younger brother and fellow priest Ján, who took charge of his clerical duties, and benefiting from the fame, charisma and connections that he had built up over the previous four years, Jehlička became one of six members of the SĽS who were elected to the Hungarian parliament in 1906. As his fellow priest Pavol Jantausch (1870–1947) explained to the readers of the *Katolícke Noviny*, Jehlička's election was due to the fact that 'the people know about him, his deeds and his determination, his boldness and above all else his love for the oppressed', adding that he had earned their support by sacrificing everything 'for the people', including his 'wealth, health, career [and] status'.[31] Even his fellow editor and candidate, Juriga, who became one of his fiercest critics, would later concede that Jehlička 'was an extremely nice, highly cultured man, an exquisite orator and a brilliant stylist and writer', although he added that 'he didn't possess the toughness of a peasant' and his emotional character, hunger for money and 'yearning for a lordly position' would ultimately lead him to abandon the Slovak national movement.[32]

[30] Primási Levéltár Esztergom, VK, 9/2301, 1906. See also, František Jehlička, *Cteni voličia*, Nagytapolcsany, 1907, pp. 1–2.

[31] *Katolícke Noviny*, 18 April 1906.

[32] Ferdiš Juriga, *Blahozvest kriešenia slovenského národa a slovenskej krajiny*, Trnava, 1937, p. 73.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

In parliament, Jehlička marked himself out as a remarkably persuasive speaker. Previously, Slovak nationalists who had been elected to the Hungarian parliament tended to adopt a policy of passivity and avoided participating in debates. Jehlička, however, relished the back and forth of parliamentary debate. In one particularly brilliant speech he skewered the government's magyarization policies by comparing them with Franz Joseph's attempt from 1780–90 to weaken the Catholic Church and promote the German language in Hungary, reminding his audience that their forefathers had opposed Habsburg chauvinism just as he now opposed the chauvinism of magyarization.[33] As he captured the attention of the parliament with his defence of both the Catholic faith and Slovak culture, Jehlička appeared to have comfortably reconciled the two ideals of his party's slogan: 'for God and nation.'

His parliamentary career and with it his self-confidence was, however, cut short. During his election campaign, the Church authorities had ordered him to resign his candidacy and transferred him to the small rural, Hungarian-speaking parish of Mostová (Hungarian: Hidaskürt) about forty miles east of Bratislava. Jehlička subsequently insisted that he had not received these instructions until the election was over, but after the post office contradicted his claims, he was transferred to the even more remote Hungarian-speaking parish of Endrefalva, northeast of Budapest, and ordered to immediately resign his parliamentary mandate. The extreme pressure he was under is demonstrated by an increasingly frantic series of letters he dispatched in the summer of 1906 to various Church figures, including the Prince Primate of Hungary and his former mentor at the Pazmaneum, Fischer-Colbrie. In these letters he promised that he would refrain from addressing 'political questions' in parliament, begged to be transferred to a parish closer to Budapest, and warned that 'I feel I will die in a short time if this situation continues'.[34]

Meanwhile, the civil authorities launched judicial proceedings against him on the grounds that his election campaign had involved nationalist agitation against the state.[35] The Hungarian government had already used this tactic after the 1901 elections to force two Slovak nationalist MPs to resign their seats, and they now employed the same approach to force Jehlička and his fellow MP and editor Juriga to either resign or face a prison sentence. Both men were stripped of their parliamentary immunity

[33] *Országgyűlési Napló, 1906–1911*, Budapest, 1906, vol. 1, pp. 235–41.
[34] Primási Levéltár Esztergom, VK, 9/2301 and 4213, 1906.
[35] Jehlička, *F. Jehlička, kto on je a čo chce*, p. 7.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

by a committee dominated by government-supporting MPs, and both men were summoned to appear in court, while additional pressure was placed on Jehlička after the authorities arranged for his father to be removed from his post as a school teacher.[36]

He was also confronted with the unyielding anger of his ecclesiastical superiors, faced criticism from within his own party over his moderate stance in parliament and was suffering from overwork. He had still been editing the *Katolícke Noviny* in Skalica, carrying out his parish duties in Bratislava, as well as commuting to the Budapest parliament. As a consequence of these multiple pressures Jehlička plausibly claimed that he had a physical and mental breakdown.[37] He disappeared to the German spa town of Worishofen and informed his constituents that he had resigned his parliamentary mandate.[38]

It is possible that Jehlička came to an arrangement with either the civil authorities or the Church hierarchy although no evidence of any such deal exists. His case was dropped by the Ministry of Justice, but that did not occur until June 1908, a year after he resigned his seat in parliament, with the prosecutor simply noting that because Jehlička had withdrawn from politics, a continuation of the case against him was 'inappropriate'.[39] His fellow Slovak nationalist MPs and editors were, however, furious, especially as Jehlička had chosen to affect a rapprochement with the same Hungarian authorities who had not only imprisoned his former fellow journalists and party members but also, in 1907, carried out the infamous Černová (Hungarian: Csernova) massacre of October 1907 when gendarmes shot dead fifteen Slovak villagers who were protesting at the magyarizing policies of their local church officials. Juriga, who was subsequently sentenced to a year and a half in prison, gave vent to his own sense of betrayal when he publicly denounced Jehlička as a traitor who had 'caused harm to the dear Slovak people' and had behaved like the biblical Cain.[40]

[36] Slovenský národny archív (Slovak National Archive, hereafter, SNA), *Hlavné štátne zastupiteľstvo v Bratislave* (Pozsonyi Királyi Kuria), 30, 321, 225–46.

[37] Referring back to this withdrawal from politics in 1918, Jehlička publicly blamed his youth and 'weak nerves', *Slovenské Ľudové Noviny*, 5 December 1918. See also, Ľudové Noviny, 18 January, 1907, and Jehlička, *F. Jehlička, kto on je a čo chce*, pp. 4–6. Jehlička, *Cteni voličia*, pp. 1–2.

[38] Ibid., pp. 1–2.

[39] SNA, *Hlavné štátne zastupiteľstvo v Bratislave* (Pozsonyi Királyi Kuria), 30, 321, 225–46.

[40] Alois Kolísek, *U Ferdiše Jurigy*, Hranice, 1907, p. 13. See also, Ferdiš Juriga, *Kriminálne Pisma*, Bratislava, 1923, p. 59.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

His ecclesiastical superiors meanwhile offered him scant reward for his resignation. He was demoted to chaplain and transferred to Budapest's Tabán district, the poorest district of the city, now largely demolished, which had a sizeable Slovak-speaking population and where he could be watched over by the local parish priest. Cut off from his former colleagues, he was reduced to living in a room with a single chair, and would later reminisce about receiving visitors while sitting on his bed.[41]

From these straightened circumstances, Jehlička, nevertheless, rebuilt his career; although he appears to have made no effort to organize his parishioners or engage in Slovak nationalist activities he covertly co-edited two Slovak-language clerical journals and several books in Slovak under pseudonyms.[42] Publicly, however, he directed his efforts towards ingratiating himself with the Hungarian Catholic hierarchy. As early as the autumn of 1908 he had begun contributing reviews to the Hungarian-language Catholic journal *Religio*, he resigned from the Slovak Catholic association, Spolok Svätého Vojtecha (Society of Saint Adalbert), joined the premier Hungarian Catholic association, the Szent István Társulat (Society of Saint Steven) and obsequiously endeared himself to the Prince Primate János Csernoch who became head of the Catholic Church in Hungary in 1912.[43]

His scholarly reputation was, however, determined by a series of articles, pamphlets and several major works that he published in Hungarian between 1908 and 1916. Each of his publications in this period was concerned with ethics. All of them were written in a clear and engaging style, advanced arguments in a systematic manner that served as exemplars of neo-scholastic reasoning, and they all displayed Jehlička's familiarity with the leading works of classical and contemporary philosophy. They also all provided a staunch defence of the Catholic faith and savaged the leading liberal and socialist intellectuals of the period. Thus, although Jehlička had temporarily abandoned active politics, his enthusiasm for the Catholic-secular 'culture war' remained undiminished. It is also notable that although these works made occasional references to 'nation' and 'homeland', Jehlička never spelled out which nation and which homeland he was actually referring to.[44]

[41] Jehlička, *F. Jehlička, kto on je a čo chce*, p. 7.

[42] See, for example, Pater Salesius, *Sociáldemokracia a náboženstvo*, 1913.

[43] See, for example, Prímási Levéltár, Esztergom, Csernoch János magánlevéltára, Box 20, 105 and Box 21, 180. See also, Michal Potemra (ed.), *Slovenská Národná Bibliografia. Séria C. Bibliografia článkov. Bibliografia článkov zo slovenských novín a časopisov 1901–1918. Vol. III, Robotnícke hnutie na Slovensku*, Martin, 1969, pp. 92–93 and 494–96.

[44] For a brief outline of Jehlička's prodigious literary output and philosophical

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

His first book, a full-blown attack on one of Hungary's leading legal philosophers, Gyula Pikler (1864–1937), was typical of Jehlička's literary output in this period. Pikler was a Jew who had obtained a prominent post at the University of Budapest and was Hungary's foremost exponent of 'legal positivism' which rejected claims that law should be formulated according to 'moral' (religious) principles. With understandable exaggeration, Jehlička described him in the introduction to his book as 'Hungary's leading protagonist of modern European intellectual trends' who had 'gathered around him all those who want to build a "new Hungary" in place of the historical Hungary'.[45] He then spent the next 308 pages picking apart Pikler's writings and exposed serious flaws in his reasoning including his deficient grasp of Latin and Greek.[46]

Jehlička then followed up this success with another book published the same year entitled 'The Social Question and Ethics' which denounced liberalism for permitting unfettered capitalism, denounced unfettered capitalism for the growth of the socialist movement and denounced socialism for paying no attention to 'morality, justice and love'.[47] In spite of allegations that he remained an unreconstructed supporter of the Slovak nationalist movement, these two books earned him a lectureship at the theological faculty of the University of Budapest in 1909. He became a full member of the faculty in 1915 and was promoted to full professor (*rendes tanár*) in April 1918.[48]

If the authorities assumed that a teaching post at Hungary's leading university would complete Jehlička's transformation into a docile academic they were mistaken. Within a year of his appointment he published an article in the leading Catholic academic journal, *Katolikus Szemle*, in which he denounced the government's 'liberal' policies for having produced a 'modern social crisis' and, returning to a theme that had always been popular in Slovak nationalist circles, blamed the authorities for the 'modern social sickness' of rapid urbanization which sucked the rural people into cities such as Budapest and stripped them of both

convictions, see Július Pašteka (ed.), *Lexikón katolíckych kňazských osobností Slovenska*, Bratislava, 2000, pp. 606–07. For a solitary critique of his writings from this period, see Ľudovit Turčan, 'Sociálna otázka v kresťanskej sociológii na Slovensko v prvej polovici 20. Storočia (II. časť)', in *Sociológia – Slovak Sociological Review*, 4, 2001, pp. 1–8.

[45] Ferenc Jehlicska, *Pikler belátásos elmélete. Pikler jogbölcseletének és világnézletének kritikai vizsgálata*, Budapest, 1908, p. ix.

[46] Lutter, 'Jehlicska Ferenc', pp. 96–100.

[47] Ferenc Jehlicska, *Társadalmi kérdés és etika*, Budapest, 1908, pp. 10–11.

[48] Ablonczy, *NYOMbiztosítás, letűnt magyarok*, pp. 72–73; *Budapesti Közlöny*, 1 May, 1918.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

their health and their morals.[49] He then followed this up with a detailed examination of the emerging Hungarian civil law code which asserted that it was infected by the erroneous ideas of legal positivists like Pickler and deviated from Catholic moral teaching. Although it received a harsh review in the Catholic journal *Religio*, the Minister of Justice was so impressed by Jehlička's work that he awarded him 500 crowns and ordered ten copies of the book for his fellow officials.[50] At the same time Jehlička continued to denounce the Left in Hungary, using another article in the *Katolikus Szemle* to slam 'our freemason, social democratic and Jewish press' for having 'organized a concerted attack on the entirety of Christian public opinion', and warned that 'to the extent that they are successful in fomenting a revolution in the [people's] heads, so sooner or later they will foment one in life as well'.[51]

Caught up in the patriotic fervour that greeted the outbreak of the First World War, Jehlička wielded his pen in support of the official Austro-Hungarian narrative that the conflict had been caused by the manipulative policies of Great Britain. In an article he published at the end of 1914 in the *Katolikus Szemle*, Jehlička methodically examined a range of possible causes of the war and concluded that the only possible explanation was that Britain occupied 'the leading role' as she needed to crush Germany in order to defend her empire.[52] As the war progressed, however, he grew preoccupied with more sombre themes. He published a booklet which provided a range of philosophical and theological justifications for accepting the loss of a loved one on the battlefield. [53] He also published a detailed study of the rising popularity of suicide in Hungary in which he predictably concluded that 'as with every type of crime, the main nests of suicides are in the cities' and added that 'the primary reason for suicides nowadays is modern individual's atheism'.[54] He also published another scathing study of the contemporary press in which he accused the social

[49] Ferenc Jehlicska, 'A modern érkölcsi válságnak társadalmi okai', *Katolikus Szemle*, 24, 1910, pp. 814–15. See also, Ferenc Jehlicska, 'Az urbanizmus', *Katolikus Szemle*, 25, 1911, and the Slovak-language periodical *Sv. Adalbert Vojtech?*, December, 1910.

[50] Ferenc Jehlicska, *A modern polgári jog és a kath. Keresztény erkölcstudomány: különös tekintettel a jövendő magyar polgári törvénykönyvre*, Budapest, 1913. See also, Prímási Levéltár, Esztergom, Csernoch János magánlevéltára, Box 21, 229.

[51] Ferenc Jehlicka, 'A közvelemény', *Katolikus Szemle*, 27, 1913, pp. 367–68.

[52] Ferenc Jehlicska, 'A jelen világháborúnak jellege', in *Katolikus Szemle*, 28, 1914, pp. 874–75.

[53] Ferenc Jehlicska, *Uralkodjunk fájdalmunkon!: vigasztalások az elesettek hozzátartozóink*, Budapest, 1915.

[54] Ferenc Jehlicska, *Öngyilkos felebarátaink*, Budapest, 1916, pp. 7–22.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

democratic and 'freemason' newspapers of undermining Hungary's war effort by fomenting revolution, appealed to his readers to increase their support for Catholic publications and added the sensible advice that all journalism should be read with considerable scepticism.[55]

Jehlička's finest work from this period was, however, his substantial study of what constituted ethical and unethical behaviour, which he published in 1916 under the title, 'The Moral and Social Good Life'. Written in a clear and often beautifully poetic style Jehlička once again displayed his familiarity with the leading figures of classical and modern philosophy in defence of his assessment of a wide range of modes of behaviour. The result could serve, even today, as a useful introductory guide to Christian Social philosophy and Catholic ethics. In places, however, Jehlička reached some strikingly radical conclusions. For example, he argued that 'the entire [feminist] movement should not be dismissed with one or two phrases. The women's movement seeks to make women more cultured, more self-aware, more liberated and better equipped for life'. It is worth noting, in this regard, that he had already published an article in 1914 calling for more occupations to be opened up to women, and he became a vocal proponent of women's suffrage after the First World War ended.[56]

At the same time, parts of the book were infused with radical antisemitic rhetoric. Describing the Jews as 'foreign elements', Jehlička claimed that they both dominated the economy and were profiteering from the war, writing that 'our commerce is largely in the most selfish and unconscionable hands while the war has nurtured the most terrible sins, evil and lack of patriotism in our commerce', and he concluded his work with the pessimistic declaration that 'optimism's only place is in the eternal homeland beyond the grave'. [57]

Jehlička's pessimism was affirmed in November 1918 by the unconditional surrender of the Habsburg army, the abdication of the last emperor Charles I and the immediate collapse of the Monarchy. Hungarian politics, meanwhile, took a dramatic turn to the Left when on 31 October 1918 the 'Red Count' Mihály Károlyi (1875–1955), seized power in Hungary by a *coup d'état* and promised not only national independence for Hungary but also radical social reform. By dissolving parliament and appointing to his government men like Oszkár Jászi (1875–1957), one of Hungary's

[55] Ferenc Jehlicska, *A közvélemény*, Budapest, 1916, pp. 15–17.

[56] Ferenc Jehlicska, *Erkölcsi és társadalmi jólét: társadalmi etika*, Budapest, 1916, p. 86. See also, Ferenc Jehlicska, 'A nőkérdés a háború után', in *Magyar Kultúra*, 1914, 2, p. 475.

[57] Jehlicska, *Erkölcsi és társadalmi jólét*, pp. 244–45 and 278. For a broader discussion of Slovak antisemitism during World War One, see Szabó, "*Von Worten zu Taten*", pp. 266–88.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

most prominent radical thinkers, who was also of Jewish origin although he had converted to Calvinism, and entrusting him with formulating Hungary's policies towards its minorities, Károlyi made clear his intention to transform Hungary in ways that Jehlička regarded as intolerable.

There was, however, a new alternative to life under the Károlyi government. A self-proclaimed Slovak National Council had, on 30 October, declared that Hungary's Slovak minority had broken away to join the Czechs to create a new Czechoslovak Republic. Throwing in his lot with these (Czecho) Slovak nationalists, which included many of his old colleagues in the SĽS, including Hlinka, Juriga and Skyčák, Jehlička resigned from the faculty of the university and moved from Budapest to Bratislava.

Both the nationalist and the conservative elements of his thinking were on display in the first newspaper articles he published in response to the collapse of the Monarchy. Writing under another of his pennames, 'Salesius', in the *Slovenské Ľudové Noviny*, edited by his former colleague and critic Ferdiš Juriga, he dismissed the Habsburg Monarchy as a state whose existence had only benefited the Jews, and went on to laud the Slovak-speakers' incorporation into the new Czechoslovak Republic, adding that they should not be concerned about preserving their national identity in the new Republic because 'the Czech nation loves the Slovak language like its own language'.[58]

Three weeks later, on 5 December 1918 he submitted an open letter that he entitled 'a reply (*ohlas*) to the Slovak nation', presumably in response to concerns about his earlier 'abandonment' of the Slovak national movement. He began his reply by patiently refuting the allegation that his resignation from parliament in 1907 had been a betrayal of the Slovak cause. He explained that even after he had been transferred to Budapest he had quietly but effectively served the Slovak national movement and he cited his publication of Slovak-language books and his editing of Slovak-language journals as proof of this enduring loyalty. He then expressed his determination to help build the new Czechoslovak Republic, adding that it was not personal vanity but 'the leaders of the [Slovak] nation' who 'had summoned him to new work'. This planned work included the founding of a new theological academy, the establishment of a new Slovak-language seminary, the drafting of a new textbook for schools and the drawing up of a proposal to grant the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia 'autonomy' by freeing her from state oversight and a dependence on state subsidies.

[58] *Slovenské Ľudové Noviny*, 15 November 1918.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Although the enthusiastic tone of the article was tempered by Jehlička's warning to his readers that Slovaks would have to resist some of the 'ideas of Prague', he nevertheless insisted that this would be an easier task than having to defend themselves against the 'ideas of Budapest', which he and his fellow Slovak nationalists had struggled against during the previous decades, and he rousingly concluded his reply by declaring, 'Let this be our slogan: To hell with old Hungary, let it be only for the Hungarians. Long live the Czechoslovak state!'[59]

The most prominent of the 'leaders of the nation' who had summoned Jehlicka 'to new work' was another of his fellow priests who had also helped found and later lead the SĽS, Andrej Hlinka (1864–1938). It was Hlinka who had already encouraged Jehlička to contribute to a new Catholic journal he had launched in 1917, *Duchovný Pastier*, and on 11 November he built on these links by appointing Jehlička to a new seventy-two- (later 100-) member Council of Priests (Knažská rada) which he had tasked with overseeing the reconstruction, and slovakization, of the Catholic Church in the predominantly Slovak-speaking populated part of Czechoslovakia that was now formally referred to as Slovakia.[60] Jehlička rapidly became one of Hlinka's most trusted lieutenants. He attended the re-founding of the SĽS, again headed by Hlinka, on the 13 December 1918 in Žilina, and was then appointed to the executive committee of the party in March 1919. He was also responsible for the establishment of the party's newspaper, *Slovák*, helped draw up the party's first manifesto and, according to Juriga, 'ruled the People's Party' through the spring and summer of 1919.[61]

Hlinka also appointed him to the twelve-man executive committee that oversaw the new Slovak Clerical Council. Only one full meeting of the Council took place, in January 1919, but it was a crucial meeting which Jehlička dominated with the force of his intellect and a talent for persuasion. At that meeting, he headed off an attempt to radically reform the local Catholic Church by brokering a compromise between the reformist and conservative wings of the Slovak nationalist clergy. This compromise

[59] *Slovenské Ľudové Noviny*, 5 December 1918. See also, Karel Sidor, *Andrej Hlinka, 1864–1924*, Bratislava, 1934, pp. 339–40.

[60] SNA, *Osobný Fond Andrej Hlinka*, 21, 976–79. See also, *Slovenský Denník*, 16 November, 1918. For an overview of the activities of the Clerical Council, see Peter Mulík, 'Emancipácia Slovákov na pôde katolíckej cirkvi v rokoch 1918–1945', in *Na ceste k štátnej samostatnosťi*, Martin, 2002, and Thomas Lorman, 'The Making and Breaking of the Slovak Clerical Council, 1918–1919', *Central Europe*, 11, 2013, 1, pp. 46–66. See also, *Duchovný Pastier*, 1917.

[61] Maroš Hertel, 'Jehlička František. Nočná mora politického života', p. 264. See also, *Slovenské Ľudové Noviny*, 7 March, 1919; Juriga, *Blahozvest*, p. 195.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

ensured that the Council affirmed its loyalty to the Czechoslovak state and endorsed the expulsion of the Hungarian bishops from Slovak soil but rejected calls for potentially schismatic reforms (abolition of celibacy, abolition of the Latin mass), unless they received the Vatican's approval.[62]

As well as immersing himself in the reinvigoration of Slovak Catholicism, Jehlička also threw himself into the wider political debates surrounding the creation of Czechoslovakia. In a series of articles in the foremost Slovak Catholic newspaper, *Slovenské Ľudové Noviny*, Jehlička repeatedly affirmed his support for the new Czechoslovak state. Although he warned that the new head of state, Masaryk, displayed in his writing 'considerable hostility to Catholicism',[63] and predicted that Slovak-speakers would have to defend themselves against some of the ideas emanating from their new capital, Prague,[64] he also expressed his confidence that the Czechs meant well, that they would not harm the faith of Slovak speakers, and that in any case the 'Slovak nation' would be in a stronger position against the Czechs than it had been against the Hungarians.[65] He also gave several speeches in his home region of western Slovakia during which he began to flesh out his ambitions for the new Republic, including the hope that its economy would be reorganized on the basis of Christian Social principles. He also called for the enfranchisement of women and urged them to fully participate in the electoral process and political life in Czechoslovakia, convinced that they would use their new electoral influence to support conservative parties such as the SĽS.[66]

Jehlička's energy and obvious ability even earned him the admiration of the Prague government's chief representative in Bratislava, the old Hlasist Vavro Šrobár who in spite of his earlier clashes with Jehlička was still prepared to put enmities aside to ensure that Slovak speakers were smoothly incorporated into the new Czechoslovak Republic. Thus, he not only arranged for Jehlička to be appointed as one of fifty-four members of the Czechoslovak National Assembly who represented the 'Slovak' part of the new Czechoslovak Republic, but he also appointed him as a government 'Commisar' with the specific responsibility to establish a new university in Bratislava as the old Hungarian Royal Elizabeth University, which was founded in 1912, and transferred to Pecs following the break-

[62] SNA, *Osobný Fond Andrej Hlinka*, 10, 613, 1–13. See also, Vavro Šrobár, *Oslobodené Slovensko, Pamäti z rokov 1918–1920*, Bratislava, 2004, pp. 90–94.
[63] *Slovenské Ľudové Noviny*, 22 November, 1918.
[64] *Slovenské Ľudové Noviny*, 5 December 1918.
[65] *Slovenské Ľudové Noviny*, 20 December 1918.
[66] See, for example, *Slovenské Ľudové Noviny*, 28 March and 18 April 1919.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

up of the Kingdom of Hungary. Moving with remarkable speed Jehlička ensured that the renamed Comenius University of Bratislava resumed its teaching on 18 February 1919 and by the following month had re-established its faculties of theology, law and philosophy and was drawing up plans for the re-establishment of the faculty of medicine, the establishment of new chairs of Hungarian literature and legal history, and the gradual expansion of Slovak-language teaching throughout the university.[67]

Gradually, however, Jehlička's misgivings over the 'ideas of Prague' grew stronger. He rejected the Czechoslovak government's insistent claim that Czech and Slovak speakers constituted one Czechoslovak nation, which reminded him of claims by Hungarian politicians before 1918 that there was no separate Slovak nation.[68] He was also, as he would explain later, angered by the Czechoslovak Republic's new constitution, 'which made no reference to the Slovaks or to Slovak autonomy', and by an (exaggerated) fear that Czech-speakers rather than Slovak-speakers were being appointed to all the key positions in the new Czechoslovak government.[69] His primary concern appears, however, to have been the anti-clerical policies of the new Czechoslovak government, such as the enforced closure of a number of denominational schools, restrictions on religious instruction and the building of the first crematoria.[70] He was also furious at the failure of local officials in Slovakia to curb the central government's restrictions on the Catholic Church which eventually led him to join Hlinka and thirty-eight other Slovak Catholic priests in writing an open letter demanding that Šrobár's chief advisor for Catholic affairs, Karol Anton Medvecký (1875–1937), should resign.[71]

Jehlička's sharp criticisms of the Czechoslovak government dovetailed with Hungarian claims that Czechoslovakia was an illegitimate country and that its Slovak and Hungarian speaking minorities wanted to be reincorporated into Hungary. It is unsurprising that by August 1919 allegations had surfaced that Jehlička (and many of his fellow Catholic clergymen in Slovakia) were 'maďarón' (Slovaks) who secretly remained loyal to Hungary, and were cooperating with Hungarians inside and outside Cechoslovakia to undermine the legitimacy of the new republic.[72] This allegation appeared to be confirmed when, later that month, Jehlička

[67] *Slovenské Ľudové Noviny*, 21 February and 28 March 1919.
[68] Janek, 'František Jehlička', p. 45.
[69] Francis Jehlička, *Father Hlinka's Struggle for Slovak Freedom*, London, 1938, pp. 17–18.
[70] *Slovenské Ľudové Noviny*, 4 and 11 April 1919.
[71] *Slovenské Ľudové Noviny*, 25 April 1919.
[72] See, for example, *Slovenské Ľudové Noviny*, 8 August 1919.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

embarked on a secret mission with Hlinka to visit Paris and put the case for Slovak autonomy to the representatives of the victorious Allied Powers, who were engaged in redrawing the map of Central Europe in the Trianon Palace. This entirely fruitless gambit was triggered by the news that Masaryk had, during the war, implied that he would support Slovak autonomy when he served as a 'witness' to the 'Pittsburgh agreement' of May 1918 between prominent Czechs and Slovaks in America which laid out a plan for a decentralized Czechoslovak state.[73]

The idea of Slovak autonomy appealed to Jehlička and Hlinka, as it would endorse their claim that Slovak speakers constituted a separate nation from the Czechs and would protect them from both the liberalizing, secularizing policies of the central government in Prague and reincorporation into Hungary. Both Jehlička and Hlinka were convinced, however, that only the Great Powers could force Masaryk to grant Slovakia autonomy, and they eagerly showed their representatives in Paris a facsimile of the totemic Pittsburgh agreement.[74] They also submitted a further memorandum drafted by Jehlička that elaborated additional arguments for Slovak autonomy. It asserted, among other things, that not only did the Slovaks constitute a distinct nation from the Czechs but also that they were being discriminated against in the Czechoslovak Republic, that the new Czechoslovak constitution enshrined this discrimination into law and that the only possible recourse was autonomy for Slovakia or a plebiscite that would determine whether the Slovaks should be permanently incorporated into Czechoslovakia.[75]

Jehlička also drafted a separate memorandum during a brief visit to the Vatican, which denounced in detail the new Czechoslovak Republic's anti-clerical tendencies and argued that the only way that 'the Slovak nation' could preserve its Catholic identity was if it obtained 'complete independence'. Although the memorandum he drafted for the representatives of the Great Powers toned down the anti-Czech rhetoric and made no mention of an independent Slovak state, the Vatican memorandum is evidence that Jehlička was prepared to gamble everything on the trip to Paris because of his profound concern about the future of the Catholic faith in Czechoslovakia.[76]

[73] Jehlička, *Father Hlinka's Struggle for Slovak Freedom*, p. 18.

[74] For the text of the Pittsburgh agreement, see Joseph Mikuš, *Slovakia: A Political and Constitutional History (with documents)*, Bratislava, 1995, pp. 156–57.

[75] Jehlička, *Father Hlinka's Struggle for Slovak Freedom*, pp. 23–25. See also, Karol Sidor (ed.), *Andrej Hlinka. Zápisky z Mírova*, Bratislava, 1991, p. 6.

[76] Emília Hrabovec, 'Andrej Hlinka – kňaz a politik očami Svätej stolice 1918–1927',

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

The Great Powers comprehensively rejected their proposals. The French authorities ordered the Slovak delegation to leave French territory within twenty-four hours, and during their return trip from Paris they became aware that they had been stripped of their parliamentary immunity and were liable for arrest upon their return to Czechoslovakia. According to Jehlička, Hlinka specifically asked him to serve as his 'foreign secretary' and to 'plead our cause before the governments and in the press of the world'.[77] Hlinka returned to Slovakia and was promptly imprisoned on the charge of treason, while Jehlička initially took up residence in Vienna before moving again to Budapest. In seeking support and funding from the Hungarian government Jehlička once again appeared, however, to affirm that he had betrayed his fellow Slovaks and was a paid stooge of Hungarian irredentism.

Both contemporaries of Jehlička and a number of Slovak historians have speculated that he was already espousing a 'pro-Hungarian platform' and was even in the services of the Hungarian government prior to his trip to Paris.[78] However, as István Janek has noted, there is no documentary evidence to support this speculation.[79] It is certainly implausible, in light of Jehlička's longstanding devotion to Catholicism, that he served as an agent of the anti-clerical Károlyi regime that seized power in Hungary in November 1918 or the Bolshevik regime which governed Hungary until August 1919.[80] Such claims also ignore Jehlička's earlier calls for Slovaks to support the establishment of the new Czechoslovak Republic and his support for the expulsion of the Hungarian bishops who had remained in Slovakia after the break-up of the Kingdom of Hungary in 1918.

An alternative explanation, initially offered by Medvecký, was that Jehlička was embittered by his failure to obtain a bishopric and thus devoted his efforts to poisoning relations between the Slovak clergy and the new Czechoslovak government.[81] This explanation has been accepted by Kramer who concluded that it was the 'non-fulfilment of [his] personal

Pohľady na osobnosť Andreja Hlinku, Martin, 2009, pp. 134–36.

[77] Jehlička, *F. Jehlička, kto on je a čo chce*, p. 13; Jehlička, *Father Hlinka's Struggle for Slovak Freedom*, p. 31.

[78] James Felak, *At the Price of the Republic: The Slovak People's Party, 1929–1938*, Pittsburgh, PA, 1994, pp. 27–28. See also, Juriga, *Blahozvest*, pp. 194–96.

[79] Janek, 'František Jehlička, p. 46.

[80] Aladár Boroviczény, an extremely well-connected Hungarian contemporary of Jehlička, claimed that he did have secret negotiations with conservative Hungarian politicians in Vienna in the summer of 1919 but failed to produce any evidence to back up his allegation. See Michela, *Pod heslom integrity*, pp. 47–48.

[81] SNA, Osobný Fond Vavro Šrobár, 10, p. 612.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

ambitions' that led him first to Paris and then to Budapest.[82] Certainly, the Slovak clerical council was eager, in early 1919, to have its favoured candidates appointed as bishops, and nominated Jehlička as the head of a new episcopal see in Bratislava. It is, however, unlikely that his failure to immediately obtain a bishopric turned Jehlička against Czechoslovakia as the final decision on who would be appointed to the Slovak bishoprics was not reached until 1921.[83]

The most likely explanation for Jehlička's rapprochement with the Hungarian authorities in the autumn of 1919 is that it was a result of the situation that confronted him after his trip to Paris. At this point, Hungary was one of the few countries willing to support his call for Slovak 'self-determination' as a means of dismantling Czechoslovakia and regaining its lost territories. Moreover, as Miroslav Michela has noted, Hlinka's immediate arrest and imprisonment after he returned to Czechoslovakia confirmed that Jehlička would also be arrested as soon as he returned to Czechoslovakia. It is plausible that just as he had done so in 1907, he changed sides to avoid a prison sentence.[84]

His pragmatic alliance with Hungary was, however, at the very least reinforced by a growing conviction that the Catholic church in Czechoslovakia would lose the culture war in Czechoslovakia. His concerns about the 'godless' and 'freethinking' policies of the new government in Prague were intensified by an awareness that left-wing parties were growing in popularity in the new Czechoslovak state and were likely to do well in the forthcoming elections, which did indeed result in them joining a governing coalition in 1920. In contrast, Hungary had taken a dramatic 'turn to the Right' in August 1919 when the Bolshevik regime was overthrown and a new counter-revolutionary regime took power in Budapest. Even the relatively moderate Hungarian Social Democratic Party (MSZDP), which had severed relations with the Soviet Union, had been temporarily banned and would not be able to contest any parliamentary elections until 1922. The new Hungarian regime publicly extolled, therefore, the very same Christian and conservative values which Jehlička now believed were under mortal threat in Czechoslovakia.[85]

[82] Michela, 'Plans for Slovak Autonomy', p. 65. See also, Kramer, *Slovenské autonomistické hnutie v rokoch 1918–1929*, pp. 70–71, and František Bielik and Štefan Borovský (eds), *Andrej Hlinka a jeho miesto v slovenských dejinách*, Bratislava, 1991, pp. 77–78.

[83] Hrabovec, 'Andrej Hlinka', pp. 128–29.

[84] Michela, 'Plans for Slovak Autonomy', p. 69.

[85] For an insightful discussion of attempts to 'rechristianize' Hungary after 1919, see Paul Hanebrink, 'Christianity, Nation and the Judaeo-Bolshevik Myth in Hungary,

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Hungary also appeared willing to adopt a more conciliatory policy towards its minorities than Czechoslovakia and had appointed an ethnic German Catholic, Jakab Bleyer (1874–1933), to draft its new minority policies. As a result, in November 1919, Bleyer issued government decree 4044/1919 which renounced the pre-war ambition to magyarize the minorities, recognized that Slovak-speakers did constitute a separate nation and promised them full language rights and genuine administrative autonomy.[86] Essentially, therefore, the Hungarian government now offered the Slovaks the same autonomy that the Czechoslovak government had refused to grant, while the new Hungarian government was far more ideologically compatible with Jehlička than was the government of Czechoslovakia.

Indeed, it was precisely for these reasons that Jehlička publicly justified his return to Hungary in 1919 and his new-found conviction that the Slovaks should voluntarily reincorporate themselves into a greater Hungarian state. Writing in the Slovak émigré press in Budapest in November 1919, he argued that 'Hungarians and Slovaks' had lived together peacefully for a thousand years, that they were bound by natural geographical and economic links, that the Hungarians have proved that they can run a state effectively, and that Hungary is a 'Christian Kingdom' whereas Czechoslovakia is a godless republic.[87] Most importantly, Jehlička insisted, 'no one [in Hungary] today thinks of seeking to magyarize the other nationalities' because 'the Jewish and chauvinist spirit is buried. Here Christian truth and justice has triumphed'.[88]

The Hungarian government's apparent willingness to jettison the old chauvinistic policies in favour of a rapprochement with Hungary's minorities was taken sufficiently seriously by Jehlička that he proceeded to draw up a wide-ranging plan for the Slovaks' future autonomy within Hungary, which he compiled with another Slovak-speaking priest and former colleague from the University of Budapest, Mihály Kmoskó (1876–1931).[89] A separate Slovak region within Hungary would have its own governor (*vladára*), overseen by a separate assembly (*snem*), and would possess a separate administration and court system. This autonomous

1890–1920', *The Journal of Modern History*, 80, 2008, 1, pp. 55–80.

[86] Béla Bellér, 'Az ellenforradalmi rendszer első éveinek nemzetiségi politikája (1919–1922)', in *Századok*, 97, 1963, pp. 1284–97. See also, Michela, 'Plans for Slovak Autonomy', pp. 65–66; Jehlička, *Father Hlinka's Struggle for Slovak Freedom*, p. 33.

[87] *Slovák Zahraničný*, 27 December 1919.

[88] *Slovák Zahraničný*, 22 November 1919.

[89] Michela, 'Plans for Slovak Autonomy', p. 69.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Slovak territory would also possess its own archbishop (based in the town of Trnava), its own gendarmerie, would form its own separate regiments in the Hungarian army, and would use Slovak as the primary language of instruction in its school system. Hungarian would be taught only as a second language. Convinced that this plan would obtain widespread support among Slovak nationalists in Czechoslovakia, Jehlička forwarded a copy to Hlinka who, however, offered him no public support and simply filed the plan away amidst his personal correspondence.[90]

As his former colleagues in Czechoslovakia were unwilling to propagate his ideas, Jehlička embarked on his own propaganda campaign and established a new newspaper in Budapest, the *Slovák Zahraničný*, that was funded by Bleyer's ministry for national minorities. This paper bitterly denounced the behaviour of the 'hussite' Czechs and their Lutheran allies in Slovakia, lauded the new conservative, Christian and tolerant policies of the regime in Budapest and assured its readership that Hungary would grant autonomy to the Slovaks along the lines drafted by himself and Kmoskó.[91]

Since the import and sale of the *Slovák Zahraničný* in Czechoslovakia was banned, Jehlička had to rely on a network of contacts in Slovakia for its distribution but they still managed to smuggle a sizeable number of copies across the border. Between January and May 1920, for example, 25,000 copies of *Slovák Zahraničný* and 25,000 copies of other pamphlets written by Jehlička were smuggled into Slovakia. He also sought to re-launch his political career by founding, on 10 December 1919, in Budapest, a new party that aimed to mobilize those Slovaks who had remained in Hungary.[92] His Uhorsko-Slovenská Ľudová Strana/Magyarbarát Tót Néppárt (Hungarian-Slovak People's Party/Pro-Hungarian Slovak People's Party), which he headed as 'president' proved, however, incapable of gathering any meaningful support. Matters were not aided by Jehlička's inability to foster good relations with his fellow Slovak exiles in Budapest, some of whom launched a rival newspaper, *Slovenský národ*, and the Tót Függetlenségi Párt (Slovak Independence Party), which were both funded by the Hungarian foreign ministry.[93]

[90] SNA, *Osobný Fond Andrej Hlinka*, 14, 912, unnumbered. See also, Bellér, 'Az ellenforradalmi rendszer', pp. 1293–96.

[91] Michela, *Pod heslom integrity*, pp. 63–64.

[92] Ibid., pp. 66–67.

[93] Times Veres, 'The "Slovak Question" after the Founding of Czechoslovakia: The Role of Béla Tuka in the Slovak Autonomy Movement', in László Szarka (ed.), *A Multiethnic Region and Nation-State in East-Central Europe*, New York, 2011, pp. 208–09. See also,

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Frustrated by the inability of the Slovak émigré community in Budapest to effect meaningful change in Slovakia, Jehlička relocated to Poland to take up a teaching post in the University of Warsaw where he propagated the neo-scholasticism that he had absorbed at the University of Vienna.[94] Among his students was Jan Salamucha (1903–44), who went on to become one of modern Poland's outstanding modern Catholic philosophers.[95] In Poland he also flirted with plans for a Slovak-Polish or even a Slovak-Hungarian-Polish federation, turned down a guaranteed seat in the Hungarian parliament, on 25 May 1921 announced the formal establishment of a new Slovak National Council, with himself as President, and became the first Slovak politician in the modern era to demand the creation of an independent Slovak state.[96] His enthusiasm for Slovak independence rather than the immediate reincorporation of all Slovak speakers into a greater Hungary infuriated his fellow émigrés in Budapest. His former colleague Kmoskó published a mock obituary of Jehlička in which he reiterated the familiar allegations that his 'self-consuming ambition' had turned him into a serial traitor who had repeatedly betrayed his allies ever since he first abandoned the Slovak national movement in 1907. Jehlička, Kmoskó concluded, was a 'pan-slav', and a 'dastardly Czech' (*čechúň*), adding 'he is dead to our party'.[97]

Bizarrely, however, after Jehlička travelled to America and conducted a popular speaking tour, his enemies in Budapest appear to have had a change of heart. He was once again permitted to publish articles in the émigré press and was again described as the 'president' of the Hungarian-Slovak People's Party in Budapest.[98] His rapprochement with the Slovak exiles in Budapest may also have been facilitated by yet another ideological about turn as he confidentially promised the Hungarian government that he would continue to work to reincorporate the Slovaks into a re-enlarged Kingdom of Hungary.[99] Rather than returning to Budapest,

Michela, 'Plans for Slovak Autonomy', pp. 70–75; Kramer, *Iredenta a separatizmus*, pp. 11–18, and Ferenc Boros, 'O protičeskoslovenských revizionistických plánech horthyovské reakce (1919–1920)', in *Československý časopis historický*, 1967, 15, pp. 349–51.

[94] Neoscholastic/neothomist philosophers sought to apply the 'scholastic' method of enquiry used by the great medieval philosopher St Thomas Aquinas (1225–74) to solve modern philosophical and theological conundrums.

[95] Jacek Julis Jadacki, 'Warsaw: The Rise and Decline of Modern Scientific Philosophy in the Capital City of Poland', in *Axiomathes*, 5, 1994, 2–3, p. 233.

[96] Janek, 'František Jehlička', p. 51. See also Kramer, *Iredenta a separatizmus*, pp. 47–54, and Michela, *Pod heslom integrity*, p. 39.

[97] *Slovák Zahraničný*, 26 September 1920.

[98] *Slovák Zahraničný*, 12 March 1921.

[99] Michela, *Pod heslom integrity*, pp. 117–88.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

however, Jehlička alternated his time between Poland and America. He made three lengthy trips across the Atlantic between 1920 and 1926, published yet another version of the Catholic Catechism in English, took up a part time lectureship at the Catholic University of Washington, D.C., abandoned his schemes for a Polish-Slovak federation, and instead focused on the immediate task of turning Western public opinion against Czechoslovakia.[100]

By 1926 he had abandoned his efforts to turn public opinion in America against Czechoslovakia, and relocated to Vienna where he took up permanent residence in a cell in the Capuchin monastery that also housed the personal crypt of the House of Habsburg. He also began spending part of his time in Geneva where he lobbied delegates to the League of Nations. In addition, he relaunched the American Slovak newspaper, *Samostatné Slovensko*, as the weekly *Samostatnosť* (Independence) in 1927, which he published in conjunction with Father Stanislaus Moravek of Connellsville, Pennsylvania, with the help of funds provided by the Hungarian foreign ministry.[101]

Samostatnosť now became his primary vehicle for denouncing the depredations of the Czechoslovak state and its maltreatment of the Slovaks. He also used the newspaper to denounce Slovak Jews, Lutherans, and even his former colleagues in the SĽS, for having betrayed the Slovak nation by supporting Czechoslovakia.[102] Jehlička was particularly outraged by the party leadership's decision to join the coalition government in Prague in 1927, a move that gave the Czechoslovak state additional legitimacy by undercutting allegations that it discriminated against Slovak speakers.[103] In response, Jehlička compared Hlinka to Judas and the coalition's policies to biblical plagues.[104] The impact of this rhetorical bluster is, however, difficult to gauge. The SĽS did withdraw from the coalition in 1929 but the *Samostatnosť* newspaper's distribution in Slovakia was negligible as it had to be smuggled into the country illegally.

It would also be easy to dismiss Jehlička's writings in *Samostatnosť* as another sign of his penchant for duplicity. Although, for example, he continued to use its columns to demand the creation of an independent

[100] Kramer, *Iredenta a separatizmus*, pp. 108–31. See also, Franz Rudolf Jehlicska, *Graded catechism, according to the instruction of the motu proprio 'Orben Catholicum' of Pius IX, June 29, 1923. Based on the Baltimore catechism*, New York, 1923.

[101] Kramer, *Iredenta a separatizmus*, p. 140; Ablonczy, *NYOMbiztosítás, letűnt magyarok*, p. 75.

[102] See, for example, *Samostatnosť*, 10 and 24 March and 14 April 1928.

[103] Ward, *Jozef Tiso*, p. 101.

[104] Ferenc Jehlicska, *A tíz cseh csapás Szlovenszkóban*, Budapest, 1928, pp. 34–36.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Slovak state, he also offered private assurances to the Hungarian government that this would only serve as a half-way house for the Slovaks before they once again consented to being governed by Budapest.[105] Perhaps, however, Jehlička was simply keeping his paymaster happy, for throughout this period he remained a paid informer of the Hungarian government whom he continually supplied with confidential and invariably self-aggrandizing reports on his contacts with Slovak nationalists in Czechoslovakia.[106] These reports tapped into the enduring fantasy in Hungarian government circles that the Slovaks were eager to be reincorporated into the Hungarian State and earned Jehlička a discreet position as an unofficial advisor to the Hungarian Prime Minister, István Bethlen (1874–1946), who after his resignation from office in 1931 sought to reinvent himself as an expert on foreign affairs in order to promote Hungary's campaign for territorial revision.[107]

Jehlička's cooperation with Bethlen, made evident by a joint visit of the two men to London in 1933, forced even his few remaining friends in the SĽS to join in with the periodic denunciations of Jehlička's anti-Czechoslovak propaganda which emanated from the Czechoslovak foreign ministry and the Czechoslovak National Assembly. They too, after some hesitation, for example, signed the declaration of the National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Republic, issued on 20 December 1933, which asserted that Jehlička was a 'simple instrument of the Magyar propaganda for revision [whose] aims and policy are determined, not by the needs and interests of Slovakia, but by the efforts and tendencies of the revisionist activities in Budapest'.[108]

Indeed, Jehlička's inability to comprehend how isolated and unpopular he had become in Slovakia is revealed by the variety of inconsistent explanations he offered for the criticism that was now directed at him by Hlinka and other leading figures in the SĽS. He claimed, for example, that his old party had never formally denounced his activities, that any such denunciations were merely a ruse that 'served to conceal the true nature

[105] See, for example, *Samostatnosť*, 28 January 1928. See also, Kramer, *Iredenta a separatizmus*, pp. 128–29.

[106] See, for example, Magyar Országos Levéltár (Hungarian State Archives), K.64, 7/1, 66–67; Michela, *Pod heslom integrity*, p. 117.

[107] Ablonczy, *NYOMbiztosítás, letűnt magyarok*, p. 74; The National Archives of Great Britain, Foreign Office 371, 1934, 18383, 2.

[108] See, for example, Jan Rychlík, Thomas Marzik and Miroslav Bielik (eds), *R. W. Seton-Watson and His Relations with the Czechs and Slovaks, Documents 1906–1951*, 2 vols, 1, pp. 456–59. See also, Felak, *At the Price of the Republic*, pp. 111–12, and Ablonczy, *NYOMbiztosítás, letűnt magyarok*, p. 76.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

of [his] relations with [Hlinka] and other members of the party', and that these denunciations were due solely to the Czechoslovak authorities' blackmailing of Hlinka, whose personal bank had received a government bailout.[109] In reality, the SĽS's attacks on Jehlička may have been designed to refute allegations that they were a pawn of Hungarian irredentism but they also reflected the widespread conviction among Slovaks that rule by Prague remained preferable to rule by Budapest, as well as the attendant fear that an independent Slovak state would be swiftly swallowed up by its more powerful neighbours.[110]

Slovak opposition to Jehlička's campaign for Slovak independence certainly did not deflect him from seeking to garner international support for the dismantling of Czechoslovakia. Throughout the 1930s he frenetically published books, pamphlets and newspaper articles denouncing the Czech 'occupation' of Slovakia in English, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Polish and Slovak, and in 1933 he established a new Slovak National Council in Geneva which assisted in churning out his propaganda.[111] From 1934 onwards, however, obtaining the support of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy became the focus of his activities and he proceeded to blend his hostility to the new Czechoslovak regime with vituperative denunciations of Soviet and Jewish influence in Czechoslovakia.[112]

Jehlicka's attraction to fascist and right-radical thinking can be traced back to the antisemitic and anti-Socialist element in Christian Social thinking. It was also inspired by his hostility to the Czechoslovak First Republic which had enacted a series of progressive policies, adopted a tolerant policy towards its Jewish minority and freemasons, permitted the Czechoslovak Communist Party to operate legally and flirted with a pro-Soviet foreign policy. As early as 1928 he had claimed in his newspaper *Samostatnosť* that Czechoslovakia was 'the reddest nation after Russia'.[113]

[109] Jehlička, *Father Hlinka's Struggle for Slovak Freedom*, pp. 35–38. In 1907, Slovak patriots had founded the Ľudová banka in Ružomberok to provide Hlinka with a revenue and a position to further the Slovak nationalist cause. On Hlinka's mismanagement of the bank's funds and the subsequent bail-out by the Czechoslovak government in 1924, see Jozef Rynik, 'Ako farár šefoval banke. Andrej Hlinka a Ľudová banka', in *Storocie skandalov. Afery v modernych dejinach Slovenska*, Bratislava, 2008, pp. 79–88.

[110] See, for example, Jan Mlynárik's discussion of Slovak nationalists' loyalty to Czechoslovakia in 'The Nationality Question in Czechoslovakia and the 1938 Munich Agreement', in *Czechoslovakia: Crossroads and Crises, 1918–1988*, London, 1989, p. 92.

[111] See, for example, Franz Jehlička, *Reply to Mr. R. W. Seton-Watson's Slovakia, Then and Now*, Vienna, 1932; Jehlička, *Father Hlinka's Struggle for Slovak Freedom*; *The Daily Mail*, 16 December 1933.

[112] Janek, 'František Jehlička', pp. 51–52. See also, Ablonczy, *NYOMbiztosítás, letűnt magyarok*, p. 76.

[113] *Samostatnosť*, 24 March 1928.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Jehlička's fascist leanings were also reinforced by the Concordat between Mussolini's regime and the Catholic Church, which provided Italian fascism with a veneer of Catholic legitimacy, and by the Spanish civil war of 1936–39 which required Catholics and Fascists to fight together against their enemies on the Left.[114] As Miroslav Michela has noted, Jehlička's outrage at the Left's persecution of Spanish Catholics during the civil war exacerbated his hostility (and the hostility of many of his fellow Slovak clergymen) to Bolshevism and instilled in him an increased admiration for both Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. In a Slovak-language pamphlet he published under the auspices of the Slovak National Council in 1937 entitled 'Bolshevik Crimes in Spain' (*Boľševické peklo v Španielsku*), he lauded Hitler and Mussolini for having come to the defence of the Church in Spain, enthused over Hungary's increasingly close relations with both Fascist states, and urged the Slovaks to join Hungary, Germany and Italy's 'anti-Bolshevik front'.[115]

Clearly, Jehlička's enthusiasm for Hitler and Mussolini was partly tactical. By highlighting his fascist sympathies he sought to obtain the support of right-radicals in Slovakia for his pro-Hungarian policies while at the same time obtaining Germany's and Italy's support for his campaign to dismember Czechoslovakia. In support of his lobbying efforts in Berlin and Rome he insisted that a new Hungarian-Slovak federation be a natural ally of both fascist powers and dredged up an old argument that he had first put forward in 1920, that the dismantling of Czechoslovakia would prevent the Soviet Union using Czechoslovakia as a corridor through which it could spread Bolshevism into Europe.[116]

Fleshing out this argument he also published a book in Bavaria in 1937 that was peppered with praise for Hitler's propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels (1897–1945), and which elaborated on his claim that Czechoslovakia was assisting the Soviet Union in spreading its 'judaeo-marxist tyranny' across Europe.[117] This book earned him the admiration of some German diplomats and was, curiously, included by the war-time American government in a compilation of important 'Nazi' texts, although its actual influence again appears negligible.[118]

[114] Michela, 'František Jehlička politikai pálfordulatai', p. 42.

[115] See Miroslav Michela, 'Občianska vojna v Španielsku v politike HSĽS v rokoch 1936–1939', in Peter Száraz (ed.), *Španielsko a stredná európa. Minulosť a prítomnosť vzájomných vzťahov*, Bratislava, 2004, pp. 75–76.

[116] Kramer, *Iredenta a separatizmus*, pp. 221–44. See also, Michela, *Pod heslom integrity*, pp. 110–11.

[117] Franz Jehlička, *Moskaus Hand in Mitteleuropa*, Herrsching, 1937, pp. 9–15.

[118] Library of Congress, *Nazi Movement*, Washington, D.C, 1943.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Characteristically, Jehlička also attempted to use his claims about a Czechoslovak-Soviet alliance to undermine the reputation of Czechoslovakia in Great Britain and France. In a book published in 1937 under the auspices of the Slovak Council in Geneva entitled, *Should Great Britain go to War for Czechoslovakia?*, he concluded a litany of allegations against Czechoslovakia with the claim that it was 'conspiring with Moscow, which endeavours to tear her colonies away from England and is bolshevizing them systematically'.[119]

Although British and German pressure did persuade the Czechoslovak government to relinquish a substantial amount of its territory to Germany and Hungary and grant Slovakia substantial autonomy, there is no evidence that the British government paid any attention to Jehlička's propaganda. He may, however, have played a role in persuading Hitler to publicly declare his support for Slovak independence in September 1938. As František Vnuk has noted, Hitler's speech at the Sportpalast in Berlin on 26 September, in which he declared that the Slovaks were a separate nation, quoted 'almost verbatim' from a telegram Jehlička had sent the German leader four days earlier appealing for him to support the cause of Slovak independence.[120]

Hitler's speech helped encourage Slovak nationalists to establish a new autonomous government on 6 October 1938 and proclaim independence on 14 March 1939. Jehlička would not, however, live that long. Returning from a visit to Budapest, he died of a 'heart malady' in his cell in his monastery in Vienna on 3 January 1939. He was 59 years old.[121]

It was his younger sister Vilma, who lived in Budapest, who decided that his body should be buried in the Hungarian capital. The funeral, which took place on 7 January in the Farkasréti Cemetery, was not, however, a private family affair. The city of Budapest paid for the headstone, a delegation of priests headed up the large crowd of mourners, a series of speeches were given at the graveside in both Hungarian and Slovak and the ceremony received substantial coverage in the leading Hungarian newspapers. Hungarian nationalists were already busy staking their claim to his reputation. Representatives of various Hungarian revisionist organizations attended his funeral and journalists reporting on the funeral lauded his efforts to rejoin Slovakia to Hungary.[122]

[119] Francis Jehlicka, *Should Great Britain go to War for Czechoslovakia? An Appeal to British Common Sense for the Sake of World Peace*, London, 1937, p. 38. See also, Francis Jehlicka and Victor Dvorchak, 'Shall Millions Die for "this Czechoslovakia…"?'; Memorandum of the Slovak Council, London, June 1938, pp. 53–57.

[120] František Vnuk, 'Slovakia's Six Eventful Months (October 1938–March 1939)', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Adelaide, 1960, FOOTNOTES–CHAPTER II, note 3.

[121] *The New York Times*, 5 January 1939.

[122] *Pesti Napló*, 4 & 8 January 1939; *Pesti Hirlap*, 4 January 1939; *Budapest Hirlap*, 6 January 1939.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

At first glance, this review of Jehlička's career appears to describe him as entirely devoid of any ideological consistency. He abandoned the Hlasist movement in 1903, he twice abandoned the SĽS in 1907 and 1919, and he abandoned Hungary in 1918, Czechoslovakia in 1919 and plans for a Polish-Slovak-Hungarian federation in 1920. He even appears to have jettisoned his long-standing commitment to parliamentary democracy and his concerns about the over-weaning power of the State which were replaced by a new admiration for fascist strongmen and authoritarian rule which he, nevertheless, juxtaposed with a fawning admiration for British 'common sense' and a desire to win the support of the Western democratic powers for his anti-Czechoslovak proposals. This long series of apparent about-turns has understandably led one scholar to describe Jehlička as a 'political chameleon'.[123]

Nevertheless, there was also an ideological consistency that underpinned his actions. From his time as a doctoral student in Vienna in 1902–04 he remained to the end of his life committed to the cause of defending Slovak Catholicism against all its supposed foes, including the pre-war Hungarian liberal regime, the revolutionary governments of Mihály Károlyi and Béla Kun, the progressive politicians who dominated interwar Czechoslovak politics, and finally the spectre of Soviet 'Judaeo-Bolshevism'.

We can resolve this paradox by recognizing the changing context within which Jehlička operated. Putting aside his passing infatuation with the progressive Hlasist movement as a young student at the Pazmaneum, Jehlička spent his entire career convinced that he was a participant in a culture war between the Catholic church and its secular enemies who threatened the survival of the Catholic faith. These secular enemies had, according to Jehlička, transformed Hungary before 1918 and were unleashed again by the creation of the 'New Europe' in 1918. They were embodied before the First World War by the Hungarian liberal regime and the 'ideas of Budapest', and afterwards by the liberal Czechoslovak First Republic and the 'ideas of Prague'.

Before 1918 Jehlička struggled against the 'ideas of Budapest' first as an activist parish priest, then as a politician, then as a writer and academic and finally as a supporter of the new Czechoslovak state. After the war he struggled against the 'ideas of Prague' by embracing Slovak autonomy, Hungarian irredentism, Polish expansionism, Slovak independence and finally fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. It was this consistent struggle against what he regarded as the enemies of the Catholic faith in all their various manifestations, irrespective of whether the threat emanated from

[123] Michela, *Pod heslom integrity*, p. 116.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Budapest or from Prague and irrespective of whether it was fomented by 'godless Liberalism', Czech progressivism or 'Judaeo-Bolshevism', that infused Jehlička's entire career as a priest, a philosopher and a politician.

Jehlička's own sense of national identity also appears, at first glance, equally inconsistent and even manipulative. Nevertheless, both his rhetoric and his actions were consistent with the Hungarus dualism that Alexander Maxwell has identified as a key feature of Slovak national identity before 1918 and which Jehlička retained throughout his entire life. Both before and after 1918 he always referred to himself as a Slovak, except when he was writing for a Hungarian nationalist audience, in which case he concealed his national identity within vague and ambiguous language. Crucially, however, his own national identity did not automatically determine his loyalty to a particular 'nation state'. That loyalty was inherently pragmatic. It was determined by his own assessment of whether a particular state was best placed to defend the Catholic faith among the Slovaks. This was not an exceptional attitude in Central Europe in this period. Many of his fellow Slovak speakers, for example, also altered their assessment of which state best served their interests. They were loyal to Hungary before 1918, to Czechoslovakia until 1938 and then to an independent Slovak state during the Second World War.

Jehlička's dualist national identity was not, therefore, merely a self-serving façade, just as his struggle to defend the Catholic Church against all its foes was not merely an unscrupulous effort at self-advancement. Actually, it was his rigid adherence to his own understanding of the Catholic faith and the Slovak nation that estranged him from his fellow Slovak nationalists and left him at the end of his life an exiled pariah, contemplating Batoni's portrait of the prodigal son and seeking consolation in its promise of an ultimate reconciliation.

This content downloaded from
128.41.35.151 on Wed, 09 Jan 2019 13:08:20 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms