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THE CONTROVERSIAL SAINTS:

REPRESENTATIONS OF CYRIL AND METHODIUS IN MODERN SLAVIC HISTORIES

Chronology and Theses

The subject of this paper is the construction of Cyril and Methodius as pan-Slavic and national Slavic identity symbols. It analyzes the mechanisms and the actual process of transforming the ninth-century Byzantine missionaries into eponymic Slavic forefathers destined to play a major role in the nesting of Slavic identities and in the legitimization of various political organisms in the modern Slavic world. The paper therefore does not deal in the alleged “historical truth” and deliberately avoids historical objectivism as far as the medieval events related to Cyril and Methodius are concerned. Furthermore, its primary sources are not historical documents about the actual Cyrillo-Methodian mission and its medieval aftermath, but rather the modern scholarly and other media interpretations of these “historical facts” applied to justify contemporary political aspirations.

The basic theoretical precepts that underline my analysis are Benedict Anderson’s view of nations as “imagined communities,” and Eric Hobsbawm’s thesis about invention (or “manufacturing”) of national traditions. The time scope of the material studied encompasses only the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. This restriction is based on the premise that it was namely the nineteenth century that brought to the fore the figures of Cyril and Methodius in relation to both the birth of the political idea of Pan-Slavism and the emancipation of modern Slavic states.

The main target of ideological speculations and manipulations in the Slavic world are in fact not Cyril and Methodius themselves, but their Slavonic mission understood as

(1) *epistemological* endeavor (the invention of the Slavonic alphabet and the creation of a written Slavic language);

(2) *confessional* achievement (confirmation of Christianity among the Slavs).

In the first part of this paper I systematize the landmark events in the development of the “Cyrillo-Methodian question” in a chronological table. It is only a first approximation to a historical background section of a future more detailed study. In the second part I will present some preliminary theses in an attempt to conceptualize the source material. They are articulated in three paradoxes of contemporary Cyrillo-Methodiana (an obvious semi-parodistic tribute to the celebrated article by Ihor Ševčenko 1964): Cyril and Methodius – the unforgettable / imagined past of the Slavs; the national / pan-Slavic saints; the Cyrillo-Methodian mission as an emancipating communion with European civilization.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE “CYRILLO-METHODIAN QUESTION” (19 TH - 20 TH C.)

1845 A group of Ukrainian intellectuals, including Mikola Kostomarov, Taras Ševčenko and Panteleimon Kuliš, create a secret society named the *Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood*. The program documents define as the ultimate purpose of the brotherhood the national and the social revival of Ukraine. Some of the documents allude to Pan-Slavic ideas but characteristically excluding Russia from the notion. In order to legitimize their claim to be teachers of the people and heralds of the truth, the “brothers” represent themselves as successors of the Cyrillo-Methodian apostolic mission. The society is short-lived. Founded in December 1845, it is banned and *de facto* destroyed by the Third Division of the tsarist police in March 1847 (Kozak 1990).

1851 In Slovenia the Catholic bishop Anton Martin Slomšek founds the highly influential *Prayer-society of St. Cyril and Methodius for the Reunion of all Slavs in Catholic Faith*. At the pick of its existence (1883) the society has over 150 000 members (Martelanc 1985).

1853 First officially printed appeal for a all-national celebration of the feast of Cyril and Methodius (May 11/24) as a secular holiday of education in Bulgaria. The holiday is considered the first official national holiday and since 1853 has been celebrated annually. After Bulgaria gained independence, the celebration of the Day of Cyril and Methodius was sanctioned by a special decree of the Ministry of Education

(1879). With only a minor interruption (1953-1957) May 24 has been celebrated in Bulgaria as an official state holiday under the title *Day of the Bulgarian / Slavic Enlightenment and Literacy* (Simeonova 1994).

1861 Cyril and Methodius are proclaimed patron saints of Slovakia in the *Petition of the Slovak people* from December 12 to the Emperor of Austria-Hungary Francis Joseph. The petition demands recognition of the Slovak language as the official language within an autonomous Slovak administrative territory (Náhalka 1972; more about the role of the so-called “political Cyrillo-Methodianism” in Slovak history see Kirschbaum 1963, Kolejka & Štastny 1965 and Vragaš 1991).

1863 Millennial celebration of Cyril and Methodius’ Moravian mission in Velehrad (July 6 -12). The celebration is used by the Czechs and the Slovaks to boost their national self-confidence through propagation of their “Great Moravian cultural heritage” (Vrablec & Bagin 1970). In the spirit of commemorating the Moravian mission the cultural-cum-political organization *Matica slovenská* (1863-1875) is founded.

1871 A.F. Gil’ferding publishes in St. Petersburg his book *Common Slavic Alphabet*. In it he proposes a unified graphic system to be used by all Slavs based largely on the Russian version of the Cyrillic. This effort succeeds a long tradition of attempts at graphic unification that includes the experiments of Jurij Križanić, Jan Herkel, Matija Majar, Jan Kollár, and others (see Roucek 1954; Lencek 1989).

1880 Pope Leon XIII publishes his encyclical *Grande munus* (September 30), in which he designates July 5 as the official feast of Cyril and Methodius to be celebrated by the Catholic Church. This document actually serves as the Catholic *canonisatio aequipolens* of the saints. In 1881 the feast is celebrated by a gratuitous pilgrimage to Rome by representatives of the entire *Slavia Catholica* (Chodkiewicz 1991: 130).

1885 All Slavic Millennial celebration of Methodius’ death. Two jubilee centers are formed: a Catholic one in Czechoslovakia, and an Eastern Orthodox in Russia, which mutually accuse each other in betrayal of the Cyrillo-Methodian traditions

and the Slavic idea. In Velehrad the official celebration under the patronage of Austria-Hungary, which gathered over 30 000 pilgrims of mainly Czech and Polish origin, is juxtaposed to the unofficial celebratory acts propagating Methodius as a banner in the struggle against the German influence. The Russian newspapers condemned the events in Velehrad as an expression of a “Catholic Pan-Slavism,” evidently worried about its undermining effect on Russian imperial politics, especially the aspirations of Russia to be the single unifying center of the Slavs and the all-Slavic patron. The newspaper campaign explicates Russia’s ambition to monopolize Cyril and Methodius for the purposes of her own Orthodox Pan-Slavism (Kiril 1971; Zlatkova 1989). In Bulgaria the celebrations are used to forward the idea of ethnic unity within the so-called “San Stefano Bulgaria” (e.g., the Bulgarian three-color flag was decorated during the celebration in Plovdiv with a black mourning ribbon with the inscription “Cyril, Methodius, Macedonia”). The jubilee becomes also the source of enriching the Cyrillo-Methodian ritual system (e.g., planting of the so-called “Cyrillo-Methodian trees,” etc.; see Simeonova 1986).

1907-1936 Seven consecutive “Cyrillo-Methodian” theological conventions are held in Velehrad. Their purpose is defined as establishment of dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the separate Slavic Orthodox Churches (Esterka 1971; Kasalaj 1972; Górká 1982).

1947 The Soviet Union initiates a highly politicized linguistic discussion over the hypothetical existence of a pre-Cyrillo-Methodian Slavic (viz. Russian) alphabet (Ivanova 1963; Nikolova 1983: 351-353, 361-363; cf. Goldblatt 1986). The discussion, which continues throughout the 1950s, is based entirely on the unclear reference in *Vita Constantini* to the so called ‘roushki letters’ /роушкы писмене/. Its purpose is to prove the “big brother’s” role of Russia in the history of all the Slavs. Late echoes of the same discussions, adapted for different political purposes, can be found in the attempts of some Croatian scholars to prove that the Glagolitic alphabet was in fact created in 7-8 c. in Croatian ecclesiastical circles (Tadin 1966), as well as in the “conclusions” of the Slovak

scholarship that Cyril and Methodius created the alphabet on the base of the Moravian and not of the Thessalonian Slavic dialects (Lacko 1970: 203-206).

1963 A reliquary containing six cms. of bone labeled “Ex ossibus S. Cyrilli” (‘from the bones of St. Cyril’) is discovered in the family chapel of the noble Italian family of the Antici-Mattei in the city of Recanati. The Pope Paul VI is officially offered the relics of St. Cyril in a ceremony held at the Sistine Chapel on September 14. On November 17 he solemnly returned them to the tomb of St. Cyril in San Clemente Chapel in Rome (Boyle 1964). In 1974 the Pope Paul VI sent the reliquary to the Patriarch of Constantinople Dimitrios I, so that it passed on by him to the church of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Tesselonike (Stormon 1987: 269-272, #322-324).

1963 The jubilee celebrations of the 1100th Anniversary of the Moravian mission provides a pretext for some Austrian scholars to forward the thesis that the Franko-Bavarian civilization contributed to (and did not hamper) the creation and the dissemination of the Slavonic alphabet. The major forum at which the discussions culminate is the Cyrillo-Methodian congress in Salzburg (Kantor 1993: 328). Years later the Austrian newspaper *Die Presse* resumes the discussion in a series of articles published in 1982 (Mareš 1982; Katičić 1982; Kronsteiner 1982a/c).

1963 On May 12 the National Library in Sofia is officially renamed after Cyril and Methodius. In 1975 a monument of the two brothers is erected in the park in front of the library (Simeonova 1991). Both events are interpreted by Yugoslavian officials and the Yugoslav media as an attempt to expropriate Macedonian historical heritage. The situation is complicated by the fact that the University of Skopje, founded in 1949, has the same name.

1969 Yugoslavia introduces official celebrations in honor of the Slavic apostles on May 24. This year starts also the tradition of annual rallies in Rome under the slogan “Macedonia honors St. Cyril” with the participation of high government and church officials from the Republic of Macedonia (see, e. g., Paskuchi & Jovanovska 1994). The visits of Macedonian church dignitaries to Vatican as part of the annual celebrations are

viewed by the other Eastern Orthodox churches as an attempt at their manipulation into recognizing the autonomy of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, considered to date schismatic (see Gajek & Górka 1991 I: 221, n. 37).

1980 The “Slavic” Pope John Paul II /Karol Wojtyła/ issues the apostolic letter *Egregiae virtutis* (Dec. 31) in which he declares SS. Cyril and Methodius co-patrons of Europe together with St. Benedict.

1985 Pope John Paul II issues the encyclical *Slavorum Apostoli* (June 2) in which he appeals toward unity of all the Slavs in both the ecclesiastical and the political spheres, based on the concept of Christian humanism. The document emphasizes the role of SS. Cyril and Methodius as a “spiritual bridge” between Catholicism and Orthodoxy as well as between the people of Eastern and Western Europe (M. P. 1985b: 9-12). The entire year (1985) is proclaimed by the Pope “Year of St. Methodius” (a review of the celebrations see in Gajek & Górka 1991 I: 207-271).

1985 The 1100th Anniversary of St. Methodius death is celebrated lavishly in Czechoslovakia under the patronage of Cardinal František Tomášek. The Czech government, in fear of anti-communist demonstrations, declares extraordinary “safety measures” and undertakes massive ideological propaganda to discredit Cyril and Methodius as religious figures. A Party document is issued to attack the “political clericalism” and the “misuse” of the cult of the two brothers for the benefit of the Vatican’s Eastern politics. Despite the governmental disapproval, however, the religious celebrations culminate on July 7 in an impressive gathering of over 150 000 Christians at the symbolic tomb of St. Methodius in Velehrad (M. P. 1985a & 1985b: 3-7).

1985 Yugoslavia (viz. Macedonia and Serbia) and Bulgaria resume again their publicity battle for monopoly over the Cyrillo-Methodian heritage. In response to the Bulgarian jubilee celebrations of Cyril and Methodius as “native Bulgarians” and “founders of the Old Bulgarian language” (see, e. g., Smilov & Pavlova 1985; cf. Kronsteiner 1987; Dimitrov 1993; Krustanov 1994) the Yugoslav information agency *Tanjug* emits a special remonstrative document. It objects above all “the claims of Sofia

that the Bulgarian people gave to the world something of extraordinary value” (G. S. 1985; Stankovic 1985). In a series of propaganda materials Macedonia asserts that the Slavdom owes its culture, and even its very existence, exclusively to the Macedonian people (Dimevski 1985; Georgievski 1985a/b; Ristovski 1985; Svetovrachki 1994). The Croats also renew their claims for a Croatian authorship of the Glagolitic alphabet. They accuse Cyril and Methodius in plagiarism, stating that the two saints merely “stole the alphabet” from the Croats (Heres 1985a/f & 1987; Japundžić 1987). On the other hand, the anniversary is commemorated in Croatia by the establishment of a symbolic “Glagolitic alley” to connect the cities of Roč and Chum in Istria (Ondruš 1985: 11).

1992 The newly erected monument of Cyril and Methodius on the Slavonic Square in Moscow is consecrated by the Patriarch of All Russia Aleksy II. A *lampada* with “a grace-giving light” is imbedded in a niche of the monument. It has been lit on Easter from the Sepulcher of the Lord in Jerusalem, solemnly carried through all the Slavic countries, and finally brought to Kremlin, and, by the Procession of the Cross, to the monument itself on May 24. The entire ceremony is designed as a ritual of the Slavic identity and is centered on three basic ideological values: Slavdom, Orthodoxy and the Cyrillic alphabet. According to media reports the monument quickly acquires the status of a “national shrine” (Klykov & Kozyreva 1992, Hearst 1992). Less than a year later (March 1993) the *lampada* is damaged by revolver shots (Karpov 1993).

1992 Greece gives as a gift to Bulgaria part of the relics (viz. the skull) of St. Clement of Ohrid, the most celebrated disciple of SS. Cyril and Methodius. The relic is passed on to the church of the SS. Seven Disciples in Sofia, where the hand of the saint has been preserved. The Republic of Macedonia voices in response its disapproval and accuses Bulgaria and Greece in an anti-Macedonian conspiracy aimed at the “hellenization” of Aegean Macedonians by depriving them of the symbols of their ethnic identity (Bojadzhiski 1993).

1993 The celebration of the Day of Cyril and Methodius, introduced as state holiday in former Czechoslovakia in November 1989, stirs a controversy in the Czech Republic: the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition is juxtaposed to the legacy of Jan Hus.

According to press “the President Havel took an anti-Husist stand,” whereas the Prime Minister Klaus apparently shared “anti-Methodian sentiments.” Some radical voices even contend that Cyril and Methodius were “Russian spies” (Popovski 1993).

1993 Independent Slovakia proclaims July 5, the Catholic feast day of SS. Cyril and Methodius, as its official holiday. The first emission of the Slovak National Bank (Aug. 15) consists of banknotes of 50 crowns with the impression of St. Methodius and of 20 crowns with the Glagolitic alphabet (Frický 1994).

1994 The unsuccessful attempt to ratify the agreement for cooperation between the Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria during the official visit of the Macedonian President Mr. Gligorov to Sofia (April 25-27) stirs the so-called “linguistic argument” between the two countries. The Bulgarians refuse to sign the documents written in both Bulgarian and Macedonian, the corresponding official languages of the two countries, sustaining that Macedonian is only a Bulgarian dialect. The Bulgarian mass-media sporadically voice out the opinion that the Republic of Macedonia is “a second Bulgarian state” or “a twin state” of Bulgaria (Trichkovski 1994) and that Macedonian literary language is “an alternative written form of Bulgarian” (Vidoeski 1994). The discussions renew the old controversial questions “whose are Cyril and Methodius” and “who gave them to the world.” Assertions of the Tatar or Hun origin of the Bulgars proliferate in the Macedonian press to prove invalid Bulgarian aspirations toward the heritage of the *Slavic* apostles (Pirinski 1995; Makedonets 1995).

1995 In Macedonia the IMRO *Tatkovinska partija* appeals for a revision of the “serbofied” Cyrillic alphabet (*‘karažica’*) in use since 1945, and for the restoration of the “traditional Russian and Bulgarian” Cyrillic script. The party considers such a change “a return to the Cyrillo-Methodian roots” (Trichkovski 1995; Tsrnomarov 1995). The proposition is unanimously evaluated by the Macedonian mass media as an anti-Macedonian provocation (Petrevski 1995; Ivanovski 1995).

1995 The official annual rallies on May 24, the Day of Cyril and Methodius, are restored in Bulgaria after an interruption of 5 years. The participation of students in this

rallies is declared mandatory by a regulation of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education (Todorov 1995). The polls show that this “most Bulgarian holiday” is the only one, which can bring the Bulgarians together, regardless of their political differences (over 96 per cent of the polls’ participants approved of the official mass celebration; see Jachkova 1995). The media publicizes the idea to replace the patron-saint of the biggest cathedral in Sofia and the landmark of the Bulgarian capital, the Russian saint-warrior Alexander Nevsky, with SS. Cyril and Methodius (Dimovski & Takhov 1995).

THE THREE PARADOXES OF CYRILLO-METHODIANA

Paradox One: *O, past unforgettable, o, past imaginary*¹

1. 1. One of the constant identity marks of the Slavic historical subject across shifting identity paradigms (ethnic, national, state, supranational, like Slavdom, or even supra-state, like Communist Block) is the *kinship* with Cyril and Methodius, despite the fact that this “kinship” is a construction of what we may call a double genetic fallacy type (cf. the implied ambiguity in the title “the Slavonic brothers” as designating not only the relation between Cyril and Methodius themselves but possibly also their kinship to any Slavic collective *we*).

1. 2. The suitability of the figures of Cyril and Methodius to function as Slavic identity symbols is based on at least three factors:

1. 2. 1. the historiosophic myth, extremely powerful among communities with hesitant or insufficient identity, that historical significance is a function of ancientness (the reflex “the older, the worthier”);

¹ The title is a periphrasis of a verse from the Bulgarian *Hymn of Cyril and Methodius*: “О, минало незабравимо // О, пресвещени старини!” [‘Oh, past unforgettable, oh most sacred old times!’]. The text was written by the famous poet Stoian Mikhailovski at the close of the 19 century, and set to music by the composer Panaiiot Pipkov in 1902. The song has become the emblematic Bulgarian text about the Slavic Apostles, known by heart and readily sung by each and every Bulgarian.

1. 2. 2. the fact that the events related to Cyril and Methodius generally belong to the earliest period of Slavic civilization and therefore they can easily be appropriated by any subsequent separate Slavic “histories”;

1. 2. 3. as it was aptly pointed by Ševčenko, the peak achievement of Old Slavic culture “stands at its beginning [the Cyrillo-Methodian period], not at the end of a leisurely development” (1964: 231) and thus Cyril and Methodius can be identified not only with the roots but also with the pinnacle of Slavic culture.

1. 3. The leading strategies of this construction are *pragmatic selection* of historical facts and the *substitution* of facts with mythologies:

1. 3. 1. censoring of inconvenient facts, e.g. the loyalty of the two brothers to Byzantium against the background of its emphatic reiteration by the Greek Cyrillo-Methodian scholars (see, e. g., Salachas 1985);

1. 3. 2. neglect of aspects of their mission, peripheral for the Slavdom such as their work among the Khazars;

1. 3. 3. padding of insignificant details, e.g. the unclear passage from *Vita Constantini* about the so-called ‘roushki letters’ (see Goldblatt 1986);

1. 3. 4. preoccupation with myths passed on as facts, like the Cyrillo-Methodian victory over the alleged “Trilingual heresy” (see details in Thompson 1992).

1. 4. Such historical manipulations posit a historical Slavic subject frozen in time and unchangeable, one who is identical with the medieval Slavs and thus directly exemplifies the continuity of the Slavic connection with Cyril and Methodius. This ahistorical subject of history (no doubt a mythological construct) is immediately related to the idea about the “re-birth” (re-naissance, etc.) of Slavic communities of nation type. These communities are presented not as being constructed *here and now*, but as primordially available (and only temporarily “sleeping,” the death/sleep and revival/awakening metaphors being the basic ideologemes of all Slavic National Revival movements).

1. 5. The construction of an unchangeable Slavic subject of history determines also the idea of the Slavic states' continuity contrary to historical facts (cf. the 1981 celebration of "1300 years Bulgarian *state*" of which at least 700 were spent under foreign domination). Cyril and Methodius are greatly exploited as identity symbols of this continuity as well. Most often they are expropriated by the different Slavic states (and other political institutions) to claim historical legitimacy based on "ancient glory." See, e.g., the use of Cyril and Methodius in Slavic state insignia (banknotes and coins, state orders, etc.), in the national ritual system (the religious feast-day of the saints is proclaimed a *national* holiday in Bulgaria, Macedonia, the Czech and the Slovak republics, and in Russia), in the nomenclature of state institutions (as national libraries, cultural foundations, universities, schools, committees, etc.), in the symbolic topography of capitals (central streets and squares named after them, the strategic position of their monuments, etc.). In this respect it is important to emphasize also that the autonomous Slavic Churches resort to the same strategy in their claims for continuity (the Macedonian Orthodox Church claims to have inherited the Bishop's Chair in Ohrid of St. Clement; the Bulgarian Orthodox Church still preserves symbolic titles, like Branitski Bishop, Lefkiiski Bishop, Stobiiski Bishop, Dragovitski Bishop, etc.; see Raikin 1989: 373).

Paradox Two: *National versus Pan-Slavic Saints*

2. 1. In Slavic political rhetoric the figures of Cyril and Methodius are paradoxically used as both a common denominator of the Slavdom and a cornerstone of the separate Slavic "nationalisms." The Cyrillo-Methodian aspect of the unitarianism/separatism dialectics in contemporary Slavic history is articulated in contradictory terms as "Cyrillo-Methodian Pan-Slavism" determined by the all-Slavic significance of the mission of Cyril and Methodius, and nationalistic claims for leadership in the implementation of the Cyrillo-Methodian idea that should legitimize the *primus inter pares* status of the corresponding Slavic nationality. The more disputable the delimitation between two Slavic nationalities, the greater the "Cyrillo-Methodian rivalry" between them (see, e.g., the following pairs of competitors: Czechs/Slovaks, Bulgarians/ Macedonians, Russians/Ukrainians, Serbs/Croats).

2. 2. The competition between the Slavic nationalities to monopolize the Cyrillo-Methodian heritage for nationalistic ends has four focal points:

2. 2. 1. *The nationality of Cyril and Methodius.* The major controversy is over whether they were Greek or Slavic, the main Slavic contenders for immediate kinship with the two brothers being the Macedonians and the Bulgarians.

2. 2. 2. *The alphabet.* Were Cyril and Methodius *inventors* of an original alphabet, or just *disseminators* of an already existing Slavic graphic system; see the Russian claims that Cyril simply found ‘roushki letters’ (i. e., a “Russian” alphabet) in Crimea, or the similar Croatian claims that the Glagolitic alphabet was used in Croatia long before 863.

2. 2. 3. *The dialectal basis of the Cyrillo-Methodian language* and, hence, the proper term for this language; see the competition between terms like ‘Old Church Slavonic,’ ‘Old Macedonian,’ ‘Old Bulgarian,’ ‘Old Slovenian,’ ‘Old Moravian,’ or simply “Russian”; cf. also the witty Czech interpretation of the standard abbreviation CS (‘Church Slavic’) as ‘Česko-Slovensky.’

2. 2. 4. *The successor of the Cyrillo-Methodian heritage.* The main contenders are:

— the Moravians based on the facts that the Great Moravia was the immediate addressee of the Moravian mission; see in this respect the disputes between the Slovaks, the Czechs and the Serbs about the authentic geographical location of Moravia (see Boba 1971; Schaeken 1993; Kronsteiner 1993 and Lunt 1995);

— the Balkan Slavs based on the fact that they provided refuge for the disciples of Cyril and Methodius after they were banished from Moravia, and thus provided optimal conditions for the preservation and the future development of the Cyrillo-Methodian traditions; here the main rivalry is between Bulgaria and Macedonia;

— Russia based on the fact that the Muscovite state granted the survival of the Cyrillo-Methodian traditions after the disintegration of the other medieval Slavic states; see also the Moscow / Kiev rivalry.

2. 3. Pan-Slavism as the ideology of Slavic unitarianism has two major versions, Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Pan-Slavism. They both work toward integration of all the Slavs using Cyril and Methodius as centrifugal symbols, yet they expectedly envision the center of this unification differently (Slavia Orthodoxa, predominantly Russica *versus* Slavia Romana, predominantly Bohemica).

2. 3. 1. The Russocentric pan-Slavic model is based on the trinity of Slavdom, Orthodoxy and Cyrillic alphabet (about the Christian tradition of linking Orthodoxy with orthography see Goldblatt 1987). Since the late Middle Ages Moscow has consistently interpreted the Cyrillo-Methodian type of apostleship as an ideological justification of Russia's imperial politics (apostleship being interpreted as pushing further the frontier of the Cyrillic-based Slavic Orthodoxy). The installment of the Cyrillic graphic system is conceived of as the main channel of this "linguistic" imperialism (cf. the fact that the newly emancipated former Soviet republics immediately tried to neutralize this powerful weapon of Russian imperialism by replacing the Cyrillic with Latin alphabet, e.g. in Kazakhstan and in Moldova).

2. 3. 2. While the Russian model emphasizes the uniqueness of the Cyrillo-Methodian work and hence the uniqueness of the Slavdom as a *sui generis* cultural-cum-political formation, the Catholic model highlights the ecumenical aspect of the Cyrillo-Methodian idea. It interprets the Slavic cultural achievements made possible by the apostolic mission of the two brothers as a condition for the unified Slavdom to be a worthy member of the civilized world.

Paradox Three: *The Emancipating Communion*

3. 1. The figures of Cyril and Methodius are a significant constituent of the European identity of the Slavs (or its lack thereof). The ultimate test for the stability of the generic Slavic and Slavic specific identities in the modern times is their reevaluation from the vantage point of Europe. Stepping outside the Slavic world, the Slavs find themselves caught in a number of superimposed dichotomies, of which the East/West juxtaposition is perhaps the most indispensable one. In the jargon of Cyrillo-Methodiana this 'Euro'-trial of Slavic identities is best articulated in the paradoxical evaluation of the "Slavonic

mission” as both a *barrier* between the Slavs and Europe (self-proclaimed as “the civilized world”) and as the Slavic *bridge* to Europe and its implied cultural values.

3. 2. The inferiority/superiority complex of the Slavs vis-à-vis Europe is highly visible in Cyrillo-Methodian Slavic rhetoric. The classical formula of this rhetoric is “We have also given something to the world” combining both pride and insecurity (implied in the concessive “also” that reads as ‘even we, although not expected to’). This rhetoric aggressively reiterates claims that Cyril and Methodius anticipated all the forthcoming achievements of Europe (see formulae, like “Cyril and Methodius – ABC of the Renaissance”; Topentcharov 1969) and reverses the traditional opposition Orient (Barbarism) vs. Occident (Civilization) by arguing that the Slavs are “more civilized” than the civilized Europeans (cf. the famous phrase of Georgi Dimitrov at the Leipzig Trial [1933] “When Carl the Fifth spoke German only with his horses and was ashamed by his native tongue, the apostles Cyril and Methodius had already created and were disseminating in barbarian Bulgaria the Slavic alphabet”).

3. 3. Geopolitically speaking, the heritage of Cyril and Methodius is interpreted as either Slavocentric or Eurocentric:

3. 3. 1. The Eastern Slavs headed by Russia propagate a Slavocentric Cyrillo-Methodian idea that implies the political emancipation of Slavdom from Europe and its juxtaposition to Europe as an equal political partner. In Soviet times communist propaganda manipulatively presented Cyril and Methodius only as “educators,” keeping silent about the religious aspect of their work and almost picturing them as anti-clerical figures.

3. 3. 2. The Western Slavs, headed in the last decades by the “Slavic” Vatican of Pope John Paul II, propagate the Eurocentric aspect of the Cyrillo-Methodian heritage as the Slavic solution of the Orthodox/Catholic schism (see the Papal proclamation of Cyril and Methodius joint patrons of Europe together with St. Benedict). Before the fall of Communism, the Vatican used the cult of Cyril and Methodius as a weapon against the ideological self-isolation of the Communist block.

3. 3. 3. The most unstable middle in the East/West (Slavic/European) continuum constitute the Balkans. The Balkan Slavs suffer most acutely from insufficient European identity because of their paradoxical presencé/absence in Europe (see Roth 1988). That is why it is precisely in the Balkans that the ambiguity of the positive and the negative aspects of the Cyrillo-Methodian heritage (bridging the Slavs with Europe or isolating them from the world) is most visible (see Bakalov 1995 for the recent re-evaluation of Cyril and Methodius as one of the sources of the Balkan Slavic predicament).

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