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National myths and rebounding violence

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Abstract

The article takes up the sacrificial theory of national myths presented by Steven J. Mock and discloses its further potential for understanding the symbolic structures of nationalism. While Mock builds mainly on a Girardian reinterpretation of Freud, I try to show that even more interesting results may be obtained by using Maurice Bloch's theory of ritual symbolism. The advantage of Bloch's model is threefold. (1) It discloses further interesting aspects of the sacrificial symbolism in national myths not noted by Mock. I illustrate some of these by a detailed analysis of the Czech national myth. (2) Bloch's model allows us to trace the sacrificial pattern not just in myths of the modern awakening of the nation but in myths concerning present-day political events as well. As an example, I analyse symbols of defeat in several myths of Czech 20th-century political leaders. (3) Bloch's model is more complex and thus allows us to understand different types of national myths than those featuring symbolism of defeat. As an example, I discuss imperial nationalism, which Mock considers as one of the exceptions to his theory, and I also use Bloch to throw interesting light on the distinction between "civic" and "ethnic" nationalism.

KEYWORDS
Czech Republic, national myth, sacrifice, symbols of defeat

1 | INTRODUCTION

In his ground-breaking 2012 book *Symbols of Defeat in the Construction of National Identity* Steven J. Mock asks an important question: If nationalism is the assertion of legitimacy for a nation and its effectiveness as a political entity, why do "so many nations elevate symbols signifying their own defeat to the center of their national mythology" (Mock, 2012: 7)? A partial answer can be found in the ethnosymbolic model of Anthony Smith, who has taught scholars of nationalism to appreciate the role of myths and symbols in national identity formation. One of the patterns Smith has identified in modern nationalist mythologies is the sequence of golden age–decline–regeneration, which does include defeat as part of the decline stage. Still, in Mock's eyes this does not explain the *centrality* of images of defeat in so many national mythologies. To account for this, Mock suggests that the symbols of defeat are seen as a powerful symbolic pattern in their own right, namely that of *sacrifice*. Going back to Durkheim and Freud, Mock tries to show that sacrificial symbolism is fundamental not just to the construction of the nation, but to human socialisation in general. It is thanks to symbols of defeat that members of society are willing to sacrifice a part of their autonomy in the name of the nation.

Mock's theory is impressive, and it does throw interesting light on a large number of national myths. I am convinced, however, that the sacrificial model of national myths can be developed even further and used to explain a number of other features of nationalism that Mock's account does not address. To achieve this, I will make use of a completely different theory of sacrifice (and of the symbolic structures of social order in general) developed by the anthropologist Maurice Bloch (1992). Bloch's theory has been far less influential that that of Freud or Girard, but I will try to show that it may serve as a useful complement to the theories discussed by Mock, and one that allows us to greatly expand their potential. It is not my aim to dispute the symbolic logic analysed by Mock but rather to offer an alternative way of describing it, and one that may help us understand some its aspects better.

In what follows I will start by summarising the theories of both Mock and Bloch. I will then turn to a detailed analysis of the Czech national myth, which is one of the sample myths Mock has chosen to illustrate his approach. I will try to show that while Mock's theory does suit the Czech myth, on closer inspection there is a slightly more complex dynamic that Bloch's model allows to describe with precision and make good sense of. I subsequently go on to demonstrate that Bloch's model might be particularly useful for understanding the myths of imperial nations. These are briefly discussed by Mock in chapter six of his book as an example of myths that do not fit the defeat pattern. Mock insists that the sacrificial model applies to them as well but is expressed through different types of symbols. However, he does not systematically deal with this problem. It is one of the aims of my paper, therefore, to offer a theory that would be more universal from the outset and would be easy to apply to various types of nationalism, including the imperial one.

2 | MOCK'S THEORY OF NATIONAL MYTHS OF DEFEAT

Let me begin by summarising the main points of Mock's sacrificial theory. Mock starts his account by Émile Durkheim's classic insight that to live as social beings, individuals must consent to sacrifice some of their desires, subordinating them to the rules of society. Mock finds this similar to Freud's theory of child development, which, too, focuses on the importance of limiting one's desire—namely, the desire for the Mother, who is forbidden and reserved for the Father. As Mock stresses, this conception is not to be taken literally. The Mother is not one's biological mother but rather "the impulse to immediate satisfaction of desire" (Mock, 2012: 58). In similar vein, the Father stands for social norms in general, "a complex network of influences, from parental figures and role models to the representational images themselves; myths, stories, symbols, and leaders imparted as exemplars of social norms" (Mock, 2012: 58). "What the child seeks is not simply, as Freud would have it, unrestrained sensual fulfillment as represented by the Mother but rather full autonomy of action he observes the Father/model enjoying" (Mock, 2012: 58). Accordingly, the child needs to learn is that the social life entails a paradox: We are encouraged to imitate the

Father, but at the same time we must understand "that the very system of law the Father provides commands that certain things are his sacred prerogative and must not be imitated. Such contradictory signals are thus endemic to the human condition because they are built into the very process of socialization" (Mock, 2012: 57).

In *Totem and Taboo* Freud uses these motifs to explain the origin of human society in general. He does so by telling a myth of the "primal horde" ruled by a despotic father who is killed by his sons for keeping all the women to himself. Once again, the story is not be taken literally but rather as a metaphor "for modeling the transition from the asocial to the social; a transition from a herd whose rules are maintained by brute force, to a society maintained by voluntary submission to the group's collective capacity for brute force, through symbols that serve to represent and sublimate this capacity" (Mock, 2012: 61). What the myth helps to explain is the mystery of the fact that members of a society willingly accept the constrains it imposes on their desires. The point of Freud's myth is not that the father is killed but that his position remains vacant and all the brothers agree to limit their desire to take his place. Instead, they transform the father into a totem, that is, into a symbolic representation of the society with its limiting norms that is both feared and revered. It is this psychological mechanism that is at play in every social formation, including the modern nation. "What Benedict Anderson would call an 'imagined community' is created when a number of otherwise autonomous individuals place the same object in the role of their symbolic ideal, thereby identifying with one another through it and adopting in common the otherwise arbitrary system of order it personifies" (Mock, 2012: 59).

What is it that gives the "totem" its mysterious power to be willingly accepted despite the limitations it imposes on us? Freud found the answer in the ritual sacrifice that the brothers instituted to allay their guilt for having killed the father: While normally the totem was worshipped and forbidden to harm, on special ritual occasions it was killed and consumed. Mock follows this idea and connects it with the sacrificial theories of Walter Burkert and René Girard. For them, the basic problem every society needs to deal with is *violence*. As members of social groups humans occasionally need to exercise violence in order to hunt or defend themselves, but "have no braking mechanism for intraspecific aggression" (Mock, 2012: 54), and are therefore always in danger of killing one another. Any successful social organisation thus needs to be able to deal with this danger. According to Girard, violence can never be eliminated completely. It can only be transformed, "turning disordered 'reciprocal' violence that threatens the group … into good, 'generative' violence that is unanimous and therefore unifying" (Mock, 2012: 63–4). The easiest way to achieve this is to restrict violence to the realm of the sacred. "Rites of sacrifice function to channel aggression in such a way as to keep it from destroying the group" (Mock, 2012: 63). The sacrificial victim amounts to Freud's totem: It represents the entire group, it is one of us, but at the same time it needs to be killed and expelled from the group as a scapegoat. Once this is done, however, the victim is accepted back, being ritually consumed by all the members of the group. By treating it in this ambivalent way, members of society act out their ambivalent feelings towards the social order, which they love for the stability it provides and hate for the limitations on individual autonomy it entails.

The sacrificial mechanism might seem as remote from modern society, but Mock is convinced that it applies to us as well, though it has changed its guise. Instead of performing ritual sacrifices we have transposed the ritual pattern "onto the mythic–symbolic register" (Mock, 2012: 66). The sacrificial victim thus becomes the mythical founder of the community, who is frequently depicted as an ambivalent character, violating social norms, paying for his transgression, and thereby becoming the guardian hero of the group that subsequently worships him (Oedipus being the classic example). "Although the violations of the hero and his ultimate demise are depicted as tragic, in fact, the community needs the surrogate victim to transgress and to die in order for the crisis of reciprocal violence to be resolved, for the community with its distinct social order to maintain its integrity or even to come into being" (Mock, 2012: 66).

It is precisely this pattern that we encounter in modern national myths, which so often strive to found the nation by telling of the defeat of its ancient heroes. These heroes become the sacred totem of the nation, and as such they are revered, but at the same time they need to be turned into surrogate victims and sacrificed. In case of modern nations the necessity of sacrificing its ancient heroes is all the more pressing on account of the fact that these heroes

actually represent a very different type of social order from the one they are meant to legitimise. In most cases they lived in an agrarian hierarchical society. They must thus "be seen to die if the nation, as a horizontally structured brotherhood of equals, is to come into being" (Mock, 2012: 85). They are celebrated and admired, to be sure, and their defeat is deeply mourned, but at an unconscious level they are despised and their fall is welcome. "Serbs do not wish to restore a Prince Lazar to the throne. They, as a community, want to collectively take his place—to be what he is—and they must destroy him first in order to do so" (Mock, 2012: 89).[1] The pattern is the same as that of the brothers in Freud's myth, who regret their father's death but yet do not want him back alive; instead, they wish to collectively embody the same kind of sovereignty that had previously pertained only to the father. It is for this reason that they replace the father with the totem, which functions both as a symbol of the new society and as its scapegoat, but at the same time allows the brothers to be their own masters.[2]

3 | MAURICE BLOCH AND THE PATTERN OF REBOUNDING VIOLENCE

Let us now proceed to the theory of Maurice Bloch. His basic question is similar to that asked by Mock: How can human beings be "the constituent elements of permanent institutional structures" (Bloch, 1992: 19). Whereas Mock approaches the problem from the perspective of human *autonomy*, Bloch is more interested in human *mortality*. As Durkheim saw already, institutional structures are perceived by their members as something transcending the births and deaths of individuals. By becoming a part of such enduring institutions, humans in a way become immortal themselves. Yet they still remain mortal and bound to the here and now. For Bloch, the aim of myths and rituals is to mediate this contradiction, to make it possible for humans to be both mortal and immortal.

Like Freud and Durkheim, Bloch starts by analysing various primitive social institutions, which exhibit the elementary symbolic structures much more clearly than the complex institutions of modern societies. His first example of a cultural mechanism for mediating between mortality and immortality are *rites of initiation*. In their analysis Bloch basically follows the classic tripartite scheme of Arnold van Gennep (separation–liminality–reintegration) but tries to show that it implies a much more complex dynamic.

As his example he takes the Orokaiva of Papua New Guinea. Their initiation rites start by an invasion of men in masks, representing the ancestral spirits of the village. They burst into the village from the bush and chase the children that are to be initiated, like hunters stalking wild pigs. Finally they herd them onto a platform similar to those used for deceased humans and butchered pigs, and take them to an isolated hut in the bush. There "the children are told that by now they too have become spirits of the dead," and they "undergo various ordeals and are taught a number of secrets" (Bloch, 1992: 9). After a period of seclusion they return to the village quite transformed. While prior to their initiation they had been hunted like pigs, now, thanks to the newly acquired spirit-element, they have themselves turned from prey into hunters: They triumphantly hunt pigs, sacrifice them and distribute their meat.

The key to understanding the ritual is the relation between spirits, humans and pigs. The Orokaiva see pigs as similar to humans, but in one aspect only: They are a representation of all that is biological and mortal in humans. Unlike humans, however, pigs have no relation to the spirits, standing for mortality pure and simple. The spirits, on the other hand, stand for pure immortality. When human children are born, they are very much like pigs. It is only during their initiation that they discover their new spirit home in the bush. This is why the initiation had to start by the children's symbolic death. "If they are to be born as spirits the initiates must first die as pigs so that their post-mortal existence as spirits, that is as members of the clan, can begin" (Bloch, 1992: 14). After the initiation, of course, the children return to their everyday mortal village life, but in a completely new manner. Before the rite they were purely mortal in their nature, just like pigs. To be transformed into spiritual beings, the children had to get rid of this native internal pig by submitting to its symbolic death. When they return from the bush, it is not this internal pig but an external one that they regain: By hunting external pigs they demonstrate that their own pig element has also become external to them, that their true nature is now spiritual. By having allowed to be consumed and conquered by the spirits, the children are now themselves allowed to conquer and consume their environment (see Figure 1).
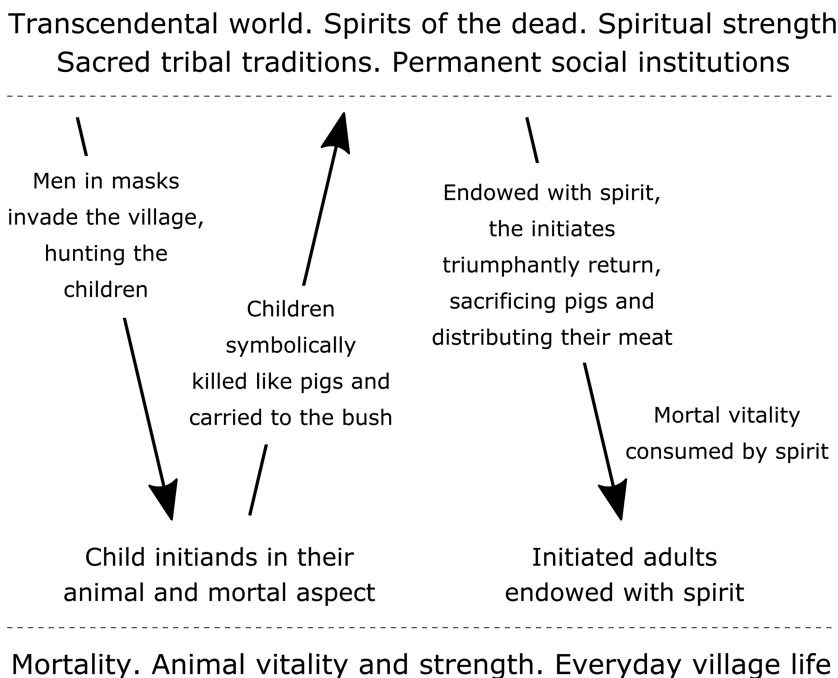
Transcendental world. Spirits of the dead. Spiritual strength
Sacred tribal traditions. Permanent social institutions

\ Men in masks invade the village, hunting the children

Children symbolically killed like pigs and carried to the bush

\ Endowed with spirit, the initiates triumphantly return, sacrificing pigs and distributing their meat

Mortal vitality consumed by spirit

Child initiands in their animal and mortal aspect

Initiated adults endowed with spirit

Mortality. Animal vitality and strength. Everyday village life

FIGURE 1 Bloch's model of initiation

It is not difficult to see the initiation pattern as an alternative way of describing what Freud tried to express through his myth of the primordial brothers killing their father and replacing him by the totem which stands for the enduring social order transcending individuals. What the initiation pattern helps to highlight is the internalisation of the social element, which is henceforth represented as the immortal spirit in which initiated humans participate. Through rites of initiation, the permanent order of society is imprinted into its individual members and conceptualised as the spiritual part of the human person.

At the same time we may see that the entire initiation process has a lot to do with *violence* and with *power*. At first sight, the pigs stand for strength and vitality. Not only are they vital themselves, and are highly nutritious when eaten, but they are used as the chief object of exchange in building up political alliances and in obtaining wives. "Pig meat thus comes to stand for strength in this world" (Bloch, 1992: 16). Precious as this strength is, it needs to be sacrificed and offered to the spirits. By freely submitting to their violent attack, the children are raised to their level and are subsequently themselves allowed to conquer the worldly vitality of the pigs. The strength of this world thus becomes mastered by spiritual strength. The entire pattern involves twofold "rebounding violence" (Bloch, 1992: 4): A person first submits to the violent attack of the transcendental world, but in this way is partly raised to its level and is thus entitled to violently reconquer the worldly vitality. This reminds us of the central part of violence in Mock's theory. Nevertheless, there is a crucial difference: Whereas Mock (following Burkert and Girard) takes it for granted that violence is innate to humans, seeing sacrifice as a protection against it, Bloch does not build his theory "on some innate propensity to violence" but argues "that violence is itself a result of the attempt to create the transcendental in religion and politics" (Bloch, 1992: 7).

Initiation is but one form the pattern of rebounding violence may take. Another one is *sacrifice*. We have seen a number of sacrificial features in the initiation sequence already. The rite starts with what clearly amounts to a sacrifice of the children. In many other traditions this actually involves some kind of physical self-sacrifice in which a part of one's body symbolising worldly vitality is cut off and left behind (the foreskin, a tooth, one's hair). In the second stage the initiates perform a standard animal sacrifice, killing pigs and distributing their meat. Ordinary non-initiatory

sacrifices follow the same pattern but the two stages are condensed in one and the same killing. The sacrifice of a domestic animal always implies a self-sacrifice: Instead of sacrificing himself, the sacrificer kills an animal that is his own and is dear to him. In myths this dearness is sometimes expressed by the fact that originally the sacrifice demanded by god is that of one's child, such as Iphigenia or Isaac, though in the last minute an animal is allowed to be substituted instead. By sacrificing his animal the sacrificer weakens his own vitality, but in doing so he submits to the transcendental world, and in this way is again partly raised to its level. Accordingly, he is in the second stage entitled to reconquer the lost vitality, that is, to consume the animal and ingest its strength. The story of Agamemnon illustrates the entire pattern nicely. By sacrificing his daughter, the Greek leader "was co-operating with an attack from a god directed against him. ... But then the violence rebounds and, from having been the victim, Agamemnon becomes a violent actor towards others" (Bloch, 1992: 26). The wind returns and the Greeks may finally set out to conquer Troy (see Figure 2).

The case of Agamemnon lets us see the close relation between the rebounding violence pattern and politics: By submitting to sacrificial violence the king is in the second stage of the sequence granted the right to conquer his enemies. That this is an integral part of the pattern may be seen by comparison with the Orokaiva initiation, which, too, "concludes with an open-ended menace to outsiders which can in certain circumstances be the beginning of serious hostility" (Bloch, 1992: 17). Waging war is thus just another way of expressing the second, empowering stage of the rebounding violence pattern. Whereas in ordinary situations pigs work fine as representations of mortal vitality to be consumed, human enemies are a much more powerful symbol of the same thing: "It is conquered human outsiders, people whose spirits have either been beaten or who have been abandoned by them, who can be killed and consumed" (Bloch, 1992: 18). It is not surprising that even Abraham is rewarded by God for his willingness to sacrifice Isaac by being promised that his "descendants shall gain possession of the gates of their enemies" (*Genesis* 22: 18).

But the political implications do not need to concern just a war against the enemies. The pattern may also apply to the relation between the king and his subordinates. As an illustration Bloch takes ancient India, where the king is frequently represented as the legitimate vanquisher and "eater" of his subjects (Bloch, 1992: 49). However, the king
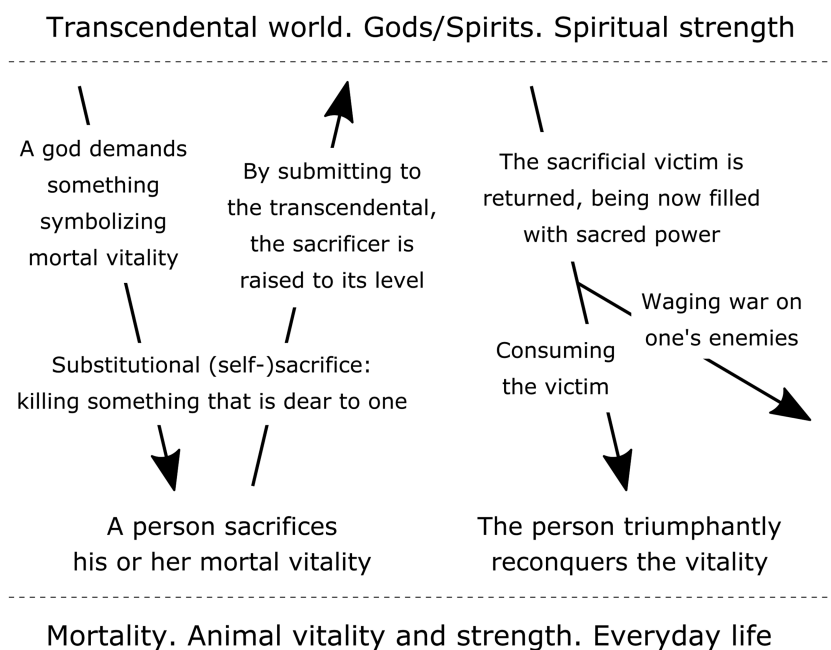

FIGURE 2 Bloch's model of sacrifice

himself has this kind of authority only because he in turn submits to the transcendental realm and finances costly sacrifices on behalf of the state. These are performed by the Brahman, who represents precisely the relation to the transcendental: "The Brahman is given the ascetic task of the attack on native vitality, the first part of rebounding violence, and the king aggressively recovers vitality from external beings whom he consumes, the second part of rebounding violence" (Bloch, 1992: 50).

It is this willingness to submit to the transcendental that gives the king his authority and makes him seem as a source of power in which his subordinates may participate, too, to some extent. Should the king be suspected of refusing to submit, his authority would be cast in doubt. An example of this is the situation in 19th-century Madagascar. Here, the most important state ritual was royal circumcision, in which royal children by sacrificing their foreskins submitted to conquest by the ancestors, so that in the second stage they might reconquer the vitality by "the symbolic conquest of subjects by the monarch" (Bloch, 1992: 88). In 1863, however, the state was in a political crisis, and the king, Radama II, was widely believed to have sold out the country to the French and the British. A confirmation of this was found in the fact that Radama abolished the state circumcision ritual. He was thus "seen as having refused submission to the conquest of the ancestors and as having submitted instead to conquest by predatory outsiders" (Bloch, 1992: 89). As a result, his authority collapsed and the country was thrown into chaos which led to the killing of Radama.

To summarise the entire pattern in a manner that would relate it to Mock's theory, Bloch claims that the willingness of human individuals to submit to the constraints of social life is achieved by means of a symbolic mechanism that involves two stages. In the first stage humans sacrifice their autonomy by submitting to some kind of violence, whether physical or metaphorical.[3] In the purest version of the pattern the violence is seen as coming directly from the transcendental realm (e.g., in the form of spirits attacking the village or a god requiring a sacrifice), but it may equally well be disguised and attributed to an outsider playing the part of the "sacred executioner" (a term Mock borrows from Maccoby, 1982). In national myths, the latter version predominates: The "sacred executioner" is commonly symbolised by a hostile conquering nation (e.g., the Turks overpowering the Serbs).

As a result of the attack, members of a community are themselves partially elevated to a transcendent level—in Mock's terms, they are identified with their totem. The result of this elevation is empowerment. In national myths, the conquered heroes of old are turned into martyrs, allowing the modern nationalists to wave the flag of their legacy. Thanks to this, the members of society in the second stage of the sequence return to the mortal world filled with new transcendent vitality. This is symbolised by an attack and an act of devouring. In the strongest form the attack is aimed at our human enemies—for example, at a hostile oppressive nation which prevents us from fully developing our own ethnic identity. In a weaker form the attack may be aimed at our subordinates or our animals.[4] In case of nationalism, these weaker targets are frequently various ethnic minorities, who are depicted either as the Fifth Column of our nation (e.g., the Jews) or as a backward ethnic group to be civilised by the superior ruling nation (e.g., the Irish by the British).

On other occasions, of course, the enemies may in turn attack us, reducing us to the position of subjects to be consumed. When this happens, the resulting situation still follows the sacrificial pattern but it is the enemies who are thereby elevated and empowered. In the long run, though, even such a defeat may be reinterpreted and turned into the first stage of *our* sequence of rebounding violence that gives us strength to reconquer what is ours. The defeat is then envisaged as an initiatory attack to which the ancient ethnic community (just like the Orokaiva children) had to submit in order to be elevated to a spiritual level from which it might triumphantly return in modern times, ready to reconquer its environment.

The overall pattern is quite compatible with that presented by Mock. The biggest difference lies in that fact that Mock underestimates the second stage of the sequence (which we will see to be particularly important in case of the imperial nations). Bloch also helps to point out the importance of a vertical polarity expressed in terms of the mortal versus the immortal, animal versus spiritual, worldly versus transcendental. As we will see, such a polarity is more important in national myths than it would seem from Mock's account. Last but not least, Bloch's model is more general and allows to trace the sacrificial pattern in a number of institutions that at first sight might appear as

unrelated, such as initiation, warfare, or social hierarchy, each of which allows us to see its different aspects. We will soon see what this means in case of national myths.

4 | THE CZECH NATIONAL MYTH OF FRANTIŠEK PALACKÝ

4.1 | Basic outline of the myth

To illustrate in what way Bloch's model can help us understand the symbolic structures of national mythologies, I will have closer look at the Czech national myth, which is one of the examples Mock too has used in his book. Its creator was František Palacký (1798–1876), "the Father of the Nation" and official historian of the Bohemian Estates, whose five-volume *History of the Czech Nation in Bohemia and Moravia* (1848–67) was a monumental attempt at reconstituting the Czech nation as a historical subject. In the subsequent decades, Palacký's myth was taken up, developed and reinterpreted by dozens of other historians and artists, becoming a cornerstone of Czech national identity.

The basic myth is simple. In mediaeval times, the Bohemian kingdom was an independent successful state ruled for more than four centuries by the local Přemyslid dynasty, reaching the height of its glory under Charles IV (1316–1378), who also became the Holy Roman Emperor. In the 15th century, the Czechs became the pioneers of church reforms thanks to the figure of Jan Hus (1370–1415), who criticised the vices of the church a hundred years before Luther. He was charged with heresy and summoned to the Council of Konstanz, where he was burned at the stake on July 6, 1415. The result was the Hussite revolution, which took Bohemia by storm and for more than a decade managed to resist the papal crusades. For Palacký, the Hussites were crucial in that they included not the upper classes but the lower ones as well, that is, they could be seen as a movement of the Czech people in general, and one whose nature appears as deeply democratic. Moreover, though the ground of the Hussite movement was religious, to some extent it was also a fight between the Czech artisan strata against the richer German families, and it resulted in a Czechisation of Bohemian towns and the development of Czech language. This allowed Palacký to present perpetual "mixing and struggling" with the Germans as one of the chief principles of the Czech national narrative.

The radical Hussites were defeated in 1434, but the moderate ones (Utraquists) remained influential till the beginning of the 17th century. One of them, George of Poděbrady (1420–1471), was even elected the king of Bohemia in 1458 and tried to unite Europe by the *Treaty on the Establishment of Peace throughout Christendom*, regarded by Anthony Smith (1999: 225) as a precursor of the EU; his ambitious attempt failed, though, and he was excommunicated in 1466. The true fall of Bohemia, however, started in 1526, when the Czech nobility elected a Habsburg, Ferdinand I, to the Bohemian throne. Thus began the rule of the Habsburgs over the Czech lands, who gradually curbed the autonomy of Czech cities and nobility, incorporating Bohemia into what would eventually become the Austrian Empire. The Protestant nobles rebelled in 1618 but were defeated 2 years later in the Battle of White Mountain, which resulted in the bloody execution of 27 Czech lords in 1621. There followed a violent recatholisation and the suppression of Czech national consciousness. A number of leading Czech intellectuals emigrated, many Czech books were burned. By the late 18th century most Czechs were Catholics and the upper classes spoke German. It was only in the 19th century that the Czech nation was brought back to life by patriotic intellectuals, dubbed the Awakeners, who recreated literary Czech language, retold Czech history, and used it to legitimise Czech political claims.

4.2 | Czechs and Germans: Spirit versus matter

Clearly, the myth fits Mock's model perfectly. It tells of the golden mediaeval age, presents the Czech nation as a heroic precursor of the Reformation, but then depicts its tragic defeat followed by the "300 years of darkness" under the Austrian rule. The defeat is fittingly symbolised by the blood sacrifice of the Czech lords in 1621. Yet, while this

is true, the Czech myth can actually be shown to contain much more than the basic plotline sequence of golden age–decline–regeneration. To demonstrate this, I will make use of the brilliant analysis of Palacký's *History* by the Czech historian Kamil Činátl (2011). As he shows, the strength of Palacký's myth lies not just in its overall diachronic plot but especially in the synchronic *figurative structures* which repeat themselves over and over again, helping the readers to see the flow of historical events as ruled by deeper timeless laws that are just as relevant in modern times as they were in the Middle Ages.

The chief one of these structures is Palacký's vision of Czech history as permanent "mixing and struggling" of the Czechs with the Germans.[5] Historically, this refers to the fact that when in the 13th century Přemysl Otakar II tried to establish towns in Bohemia, he did so by inviting German craftsmen and merchants. This resulted in ever recurring tensions between the two ethnic groups, which allowed Palacký to elevate the conflict to the main principle of Czech history, and one that was no less relevant in modern times when the Czech nation tried to emancipate itself from the domination of the Austrian Germans.

To understand how this fits in with Bloch's model, we need to elaborate its first stage beyond what Bloch himself has to say about it. We have seen that in principle it consists in submitting to an attack from the transcendental world. But while in its purest form the attack is depicted as coming directly from the gods or spirits, who are seen as both protecting and dangerous, such an ambivalent image is not easy to maintain, and in most cases it is split into two distinct symbolic figures, that of the *enemy* who conducts the attack, and that of the *divine protector* who allows us to interpret the attack as an empowering quest.[6] In fact, the situation in the first stage of the rebounding violence pattern appears to be symmetrical to that in the second. Just as the mortal vitality to be consumed in the second stage may by symbolised not only by our animals or our subordinates but also—and in a stronger manner—by our human enemies, the same apparently holds for the violent attack in the first stage: This too may be enacted either by other members of our own society (such as the Orokaiva men in masks), or by our enemies, and it is the latter who are symbolically more powerful. It is thus not surprising to find that in political myths the part played by enemies is crucial: It is them who are frequently depicted as the primary source of the attack that sets the sacrificial pattern in motion (see Figure 3).

From Mock's perspective, the Germans stand for the "Sacred Executioner," who embodies "all of the traits, particularly those traits related to the capacity for violence, that the group wishes to purge from itself via projection
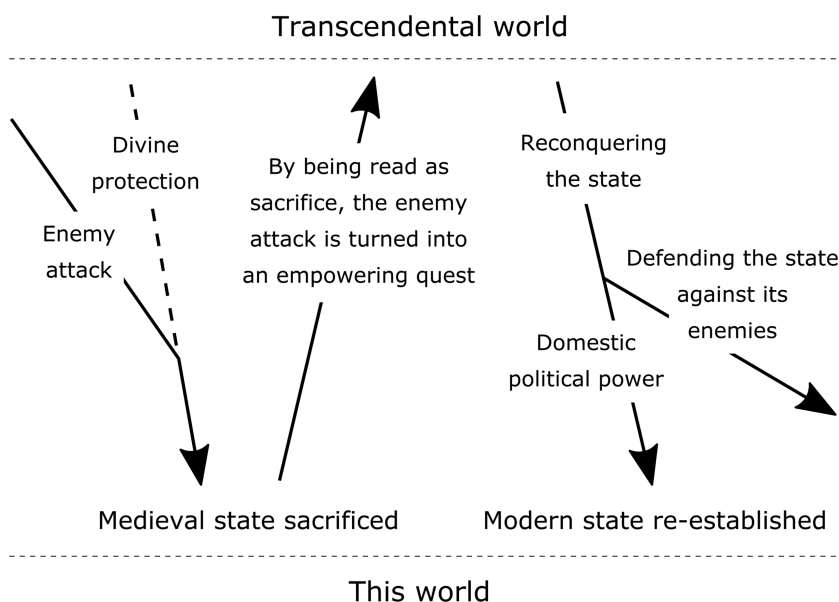

FIGURE 3 The symbolic splitting of the attack and of the reconquest

onto the Other" (Mock, 2012: 194). In Bloch's terms, he embodies the "animal" type of vitality that needs to be shown as self-defeating and sacrificed. According to Mock, the Sacred Executioner fulfils three symbolic functions. First, he allows to disguise the sacrificial mechanism. Ideally, the nation's heroes should die in willing self-sacrifice performed in the name of the totem. "But although it is the totem that sends them to die, it cannot be depicted as their visible executioner. That role is reserved for an enemy, an outsider to the community" (Mock, 2012: 193–4). Second, while the nation's heroes should ideally be both revered and expulsed, in practice it is difficult to maintain both of these aspects at once, and it is easier to split them into two distinct figures, the saviour and "his mirror image, a 'monstrous double' who may appear in the narrative to serve a distinct and opposing function but in fact serves the same one: that of surrogate victim" (Mock, 2012: 194). Third, the Sacred Executioner helps to establish "distinctions and boundaries between insiders and outsiders" (Mock, 2012: 196), uniting the group against outsiders. In this regard, he "stands as an abstract principle, applicable to any time period, of all traits that the community wishes to disavow, all that threatens the cohesion of the community" (Mock, 2012: 200).

All of these points are significant but the last one is of particular importance. As Činátl points out, for Palacký the opposition between the Czechs and the Germans was not just about the historical struggle of two ethnic groups but rather about the Germans and the Slavs representing two basic impulses of human nature: animality and divinity, "the dark urge towards matter and domination" versus the tendency "toward spirit and light" (Činátl, 2011: 88). The result is a philosophical anthropology that affects psychological struggles within each individual no less than the drama of history. "The conflict between the Slavic and the German principle takes place within each person, who must overcome the urge to own and dominate" (Činátl, 2011: 89). This makes perfect sense from Bloch's perspective with its emphasis on the tension between the animal and the spiritual side of humans. Palacký's Germans thus corresponds to the "pigs" of the Orokaiva; it is only the Czechs who are truly "spiritual." At the same time, the Germans represented the feudal hierarchy based on forceful domination, while the Czech were idealised by Palacký as lovers of freedom and democracy, that is, as unrecognised precursors of modernity (see Figure 4).

The actual historical situation was of course more complex. The Germans were in fact invited by the Přemyslids in order to civilise Czech lands, and throughout large stretches of Czech history it was rather them who controlled the rebounding violence, seeing the Czech population as less civilised. Palacký's task was to reinterpret this situation so as to show German cultural superiority as illusory and hand the reins of rebounding violence over to the Czech nation.

4.3 | Appropriating the rebounding violence

How did Palacký make the Czech the masters of a rebounding violence sequence of their own? He did so by associating the basic spirit–matter dichotomy with several recurrent narrative patterns that he used throughout his
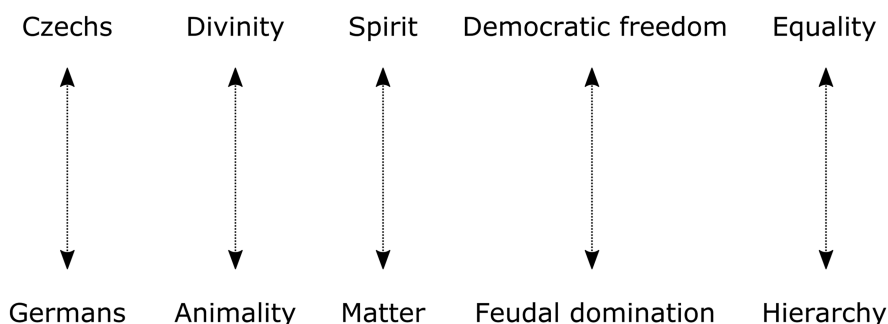

Czechs	Divinity	Spirit	Democratic freedom	Equality
↕	↕	↕	↕	↕
Germans	Animality	Matter	Feudal domination	Hierarchy

FIGURE 4 Czechs and Germans as two basic impulses of human nature

work. Činátl (2011: 94–101) in his analysis detects seven such patterns: discord, betrayal, alienation, defeat, not being done justice, satisfaction, and defence. In principle they all construct an opposition between the Czechs and the Germans, but simultaneously shift attention from the oppressors (the Germans) to the oppressed (the Czechs), attempting to present the latter as a national subject with a rebounding violence sequence of its own.

The first three patterns internalise the German attack, shifting responsibility to the Czechs themselves, that is, to the aggressive and power-thirsty element within the body of the Czech nation. As a result, the Czechs are discordant and unable to defend themselves. In many cases the fall is made possible by the betrayal of some of the Czechs (the nobility in particular), who have become "germanised," and thus alienated from their true Slavic nature. It is thanks to this shift of responsibility that the Czechs are able to appropriate the rebounding violence. If the attack on the Czech nation were solely carried out by the Germans, the Czechs would thereby be reduced to its subordinate passive victims. By attributing it to the discordant and alienated Czechs themselves, Palacký transplants the attack into the body of the Czech nation (while retaining its alien character), and thus allows to appropriate the rebounding violence that it entails. At the same time, he reinterprets it in terms of the spirit–matter dichotomy: "Both discord and betrayal arise from the urge towards matter, and the lust for power and possessions" (Činátl, 2011: 96). The attack is seen as stemming from the animal side of the Czech nation, and it thus represents precisely the mortal vitality that is to be left behind in the first stage of the sacrificial sequence. The resulting fall allows the Czech nation to be purified and spiritually elevated. In addition, the struggle becomes something that takes place within every single member of the nation, that is, it encourages each Czech to sacrifice his or her selfish animality in the name of the nation.

This is just what we see in the fourth narrative pattern, that of defeat, which conforms closely to Mock's model. What is noteworthy, however, is once again Palacký's (1898: 205) attempt to relate defeat to the spirit–matter opposition: "We need to be reminded that whenever we were winning, it was always by the superiority of spirit rather than by physical power, and whenever we were being defeated, it was on account of our insufficient spiritual activity, moral valour, and courage." As a result, he presents worldly power as self-defeating, and thus manages to reinterpret defeat as a sacrifice, that is, as an event that achieves spiritual elevation by submitting to a physical attack. "In this way, the tragic fate of the lost battle and thwarted hopes turns the nation into a suffering martyr who has taken upon himself all the sins of the world. … Defeat here on earth is thus compensated by the awareness of moral superiority" (Činátl, 2011: 98–9).

The fifth and sixth patterns strike a similar note. The Czech nation is repeatedly not being done justice, inasmuch as its greatness and democratic progressiveness fails to be recognised by the more powerful nations. Hus is not understood, the vision of united Europe proposed by George of Poděbrady is rejected. Paradoxically, however, this helps to bring the Czech nation together: "Thanks to the common awareness of not being done justice the nation is united and there arises a kind of grievance community" (Činátl, 2011: 99). Luckily, this feeling goes hand in hand with the satisfaction that the Czechs repeatedly feel when at last the world takes note of them. It was only thanks to Luther that Hus was finally appreciated as well. In modern times, the Czechs are pleased to observe how finally "the entire modern Europe repudiates the feudal Germanic hierarchy and rediscovers ancient Slavic democracy" (Činátl, 2011: 100).

The satisfaction pattern already belongs to the second stage of the rebounding violence sequence: It transforms worldly defeat into a moral victory that gives the Czechs the rightful claim to a state of their own. Weak as this may seem, it was precisely by telling these kinds of mythic stories that Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk during WWI managed to persuade the Western powers that the Czechs (together with the Slovaks) need to form an independent state. The reconquest is thus primarily political, though it does entail a military aspect as well in the form of defence, the last of Palacký's recurrent narrative pattern. "It is only when defending their country that the peaceful Slavs reach for their weapons" (Činátl, 2011: 101). Rightful defence is morally justified, and thus represents a type of military violence that is employed in the name of the transcendental realm (see Figure 5).

Palacký's treatment of military power is particularly interesting. He associates it with the German principle of worldly domination, and thus regards it as something from which the Czechs should dissociate themselves. The military

Divinity. Spirit. Godly humanity. Freedom. Democracy

German attacks

Attacks by the
animal side of
the Czech Nation

The nation's moral
elevation, belatedly
appreciated by
the world

Moral victory,
giving the Czechs the
right of reconquest

The state's
rightful defence

Founding
the Czech State

Sacrifice and martyrdom of the nation

Medieval Czech State

Modern Czech State

Animality. Matter. Forceful domination. Feudal hierarchy

FIGURE 5 Bloch's model applied to the Czech national myth

victories of the Hussites, on the other hand, are presented as something purely spiritual. The Hussite leader Žižka "was fighting in the name of the Law of God" (Palacký, 1931: 355) but he "never succumbed to the temptation to use the sword to create something" (Činátl, 2011: 71). In Bloch's terms, Žižka used Hus' sacrifice both as a powerful elevator into the transcendental realm and as a generator of strength, but he refused to complete the second stage of the rebounding violence sequence. It is fitting in this regard that the most radical Hussite groups were millenarists, their aim being to destroy the corrupt society and enter the kingdom of God. As Bloch (1992: 90–1) argues, the point of millenarianism lies in the "refusal of the second phase of rebounding violence, that is, a refusal of the conquest of external vitality which is therefore ultimately a refusal to continue with earthly life." At first sight such attitudes might seem of little use to the constructive builders of modern nations, but in fact it suits them very well. A millenarian movement of the Hussite type is perfect as a representation of the first stage of the rebounding violence pattern whose second stage can be completed by the modern nationalists themselves. By transforming Hus' sacrifice into a power that is spiritual in essence but physical in manifestation, the Hussites have created a reservoir of legitimate force that their modern descendants may tap into and use it for constructive purposes. The same effect can of course be achieved through any military heroism, which also manages to combine sacrifice with military valour, inviting modern nationalists to continue the heroic task that the fallen heroes could not accomplish and making constructive use of the destructive military power that the heroes were able to generate.[7] The Hussite movement had the advantage, though, of being radically spiritual at the same time, thus giving the national project greater legitimacy.

5 | IMPERIAL NATIONALISM

While Mock's model may miss some of the nuances of classic national myths of defeat, it still fits them very well and helps us understand their structural dynamics. Where it reaches its limits is with other types of nationalist myths than those featuring the symbolism of defeat. Here again, Bloch's more general model may be of help.

Mock himself draws attention to several such types in the final chapter of his book, which he devotes to "exceptions." One of them is the nationalism of nations that have been formed "through an effort to construct or

reconstruct a multicultural imperial polity in a manner consistent with the forms of the modern bureaucratic state—that is, nations defined by any imperial–universal aspirations" (Mock, 2012: 261). As Kumar (2003: 34) explains, though multiethnic empires also may sometimes be dominated by one ethnic group (Germans, Russians, Turks etc.), such groups "will be careful not to stress their ethnic identity; rather they will stress the political, cultural or religious mission to which they have been called. Hence another name for this kind of national belonging is 'missionary nationalism'."

Mock admits that for such imperial nations myths of defeat are unsuitable. "The efficacy of an imperial or 'missionary' national principle is better demonstrated through a narrative of its unbroken success and spread" (Mock, 2012: 262). He insists, though, that sacrifice is no less important to these nations, only it is not expressed through symbols of defeat. The sole illustration he gives is the analysis of American nationalism by Marvin and Ingle (1999), who try to show that the cohesion of the United States society is achieved by means of periodical blood sacrifices of soldiers in the country's international wars. No doubt this is a pertinent example, but one which simplifies the sacrificial dynamic all too much, focusing on one of its aspects only. Once we apply Bloch's theory, we get a more complex picture.

From Bloch's perspective, the difference between the small nations striving for political emancipation and the imperial nations lies in the fact that the former identify themselves dominantly with the first stage of the rebounding violence sequence, while the latter with the second one. A small nation of the Czech type saw itself in the 19th century as unfairly exploited by the ethnic group dominating the multiethnic empire (such as the Austrian Germans), that is, as being one-sidedly attacked and "consumed" by predatory outsiders. These outsiders would consider the small nation in question "as a different species and hence could never lead them to become the rebounding conquerors of external vitality" (Bloch, 1992: 89). At the same time, however, the elites of the small nation attempted to reinterpret this condition so as to turn it from a humiliating submission into a full-blooded sacrifice that would allow them to appropriate the rebounding violence and reap its fruit by gaining political autonomy.

The imperial nation in turn experiences the same situation from the opposite side. Its dominant group is already in the position of owning the fruits of the rebounding violence, and its task is to justify this state of affairs and keep it going. Since the rebounding violence can only be "owned" from the position of spiritual superiority, it is not surprising that the imperial nations see themselves precisely as elected for a higher political, cultural or religious mission. In some cases this mission is to be carried within the boundaries of the present empire, that is, the subjects to be consumed by the rebounding violence are the less civilised subordinate ethnic groups that are depicted as culturally profiting from being governed by the more advanced ruling group (e.g., the Irish ruled by the English). In other cases the empire expands beyond its original boundaries, conquering overseas colonies. The advantage of this is clear: It is far easier for a European nation to portray itself as the bringer of civilisation in Africa or Asia, and the "consummation" of the colonial subjects can be much more straightforward than that of small ethnic groups in a European state. The first stage of rebounding violence is represented by the hard work and suffering that the civilising mission entails, sometimes even requiring the sacrifices of our soldiers in far-away countries. At the same time the colonial project helps to consolidate the original multiethnic state: Whereas within Britain the Welsh and the Scots might occasionally feel "consumed" by the English, vis-à-vis the colonies they were all in the position of the British conquerors.

In the 20th century colonial empires have collapsed, but missionary imperialism has not vanished. The United States still follows the same pattern in perceiving itself as the leader of the democratic world, ready to sacrifice its own soldiers abroad in defence of liberal values. The result is what Lieven (2004: 3) calls "an indirect empire, resembling more closely the Dutch in the East Indies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than the British in India." Bloch's model helps us see that the chief point of such an empire lies perhaps not so much in the economic exploitation of the vassal countries as in the empowering rebounding violence effect at home. While massive military commitments in the Middle East and elsewhere may be criticised by many Americans, it can hardly be denied that they are closely tied to the fundamental myth of American exceptionalism and are capable of repeatedly generating feelings of national pride (Tyrrell, 2013: 57–60). The importance of military sacrifices lies not just in that they channel

violence away from the community and at the same time demonstrate "the willingness of its members to sacrifice themselves for life of the group," as Marvin and Ingle (1996: 771) claim, but even more importantly in that they are the most powerful way of realising the rebounding violence pattern, and thus a way of elevating and empowering the nation.

5.1 | Civic and ethnic nationalism

Bloch's model also allows us to see that the defeat type of national symbolism may easily be combined with missionary nationalism. We may once again demonstrate this by the Czechs. While Czech identity is primarily founded on symbols of defeat, in the 20th century it also acquired an interesting missionary dimension. When during WWI Masaryk managed to persuade the Western powers that the Czechs should be granted independence, he also negotiated the inclusion of the Slovaks in the newly formed state, who up till that point had been a part of the Hungarian half of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Officially, the Czechs and the Slovaks were now declared two branches of one Czechoslovak nation. In fact, however, its national mythology and ideology was predominantly Czech. "One of the important functions of the ideology of Czechoslovakism was to hide the fact that the Czechs considered Czechoslovakia their state and to mask their dominant role in it by creating the illusion that it was both Czech and Slovak" (Holy, 1996: 98). The Czechs were in control not just of most of the national mythology but also of most administrative positions in Slovakia: They "undertook the tasks of building the new state, which were seen to be beyond the ability of the Slovaks, and Czech educators, doctors, judges, policemen, railway and postal workers, and so on, moved to Slovakia as state employees" (Holy, 1996: 99). To some extent, all of this was justifiable by the fact that the Slovaks simply did not have enough educated personnel of their own, but it also had strong symbolic implications. In Bloch's terms, the Czechs tended to see the Slovaks as a weaker ethnic group to "consume." They regarded them as their more backward younger brothers, depicting them as villagers in folk costumes. "In this imagery, the Slovak is an exotic Other living in a traditional and picturesque mountain village, and Slovakia is an exotic and unspoiled wild country epitomised by the rocky mountains of the High Tatra, slivovitz, and ethnic dishes made of sheep cheese" (Holy, 1996: 103).

Czech attempts at "civilising" the Slovaks were well meant, but it is not surprising that the Slovaks soon started to resent them, and that after the Munich Agreement they soon took the opportunity and declared independence in 1939. When after WWII Czechoslovakia reunited, Czechs and Slovaks were distrustful of one another and the idea of one Czechoslovak nation was officially abandoned. Despite this, in a 1946 Gallup survey two thirds of Czechs still regarded the Slovaks as no more than a different branch of the Czechoslovak nation (Holy, 1996: 102). Clearly, having an unruly younger brother to cultivate became an important part of Czech national identity, which by now included a strong missionary ethos. Significantly, while the Slovaks were granted their own legislative and executive bodies, the Czechs only had the central parliament and government, which implied that they were the true holders of power in the unified state.

When after 1989 the Slovaks finally started to aim towards an independent state, the Czech reaction revealed well the symbolic implications of missionary nationalism. While socioeconomically the two nations were now more or less similar, the Czechs still viewed the Slovaks as essentially backward and immature, and as belonging to the East rather than the civilised West (Holy, 1996: 107). The Czechs, on the other hand, saw themselves as a generous rational nation sacrificing its own interests in the name of its ungrateful brothers. As the novelist Ludvík Vaculík (1990: 1) put it: "By repudiating the name of Czechoslovakia, the Slovaks have offended us precisely in our supranational aspect, in that more magnanimous and ambitious side of our identity which has allowed us to sacrifice something in the name of the Slovaks. To be a Czechoslovak is a formidable task. To be just a Czech in front of a Slovak will be piece of cake for us." The missionary sacrifice was something that elevated the Czechs to the level of the more advanced Western nations, whose liberal "civic" nationalism was seen as superior to the irrational "ethnic" nationalism of the Slovaks (Nedelsky, 2009: 183–9).

The Czechoslovak example throws interesting light on the classic distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism. While these are popularly seen as very much different phenomena, and the former as superior to the latter, many scholars of nationalism have suggested that they can be seen rather as two sides of the same coin. As Ben-Israel (1992: 371) argues, there is just one nationalism which always to some extent "combines both universalist and particularist assumptions," and it is only a matter of historical circumstances which of these aspects becomes dominant in each case. While political nationalism with its stress on universal humanistic values seemingly transcends national parochialism, it simultaneously reinforces it by insisting that one's own nation is superior to others. For this reason it is frequently tied to missionary imperialism, as we can see in the Czechoslovak case. From Bloch's perspective, the difference between civic and ethnic nationalism consists in whether the stress is put on the first or on the second stage of the rebounding violence sequence. Ethnic nationalism depicts the nation as attacked by its enemies, encouraging its members to read the attack as an empowering sacrifice. Political nationalism presents the nation as a bringer of civilisation, urging individuals to sacrifice their base impulses in the name of higher moral values. The sacrificial pattern is essentially the same in both cases, which is why one nation may easily combine the two types of symbolism.

6 | CONCLUSION

The aim of my article has been to take up the sacrificial theory of national myths presented by Steven J. Mock and to disclose its further potential for understanding the symbolic structures of nationalism. While Mock builds mainly on a Girardian reinterpretation of Freud, I have tried to show that even more interesting results may be obtained by using Maurice Bloch's theory of ritual symbolism. The advantage of Bloch's model is twofold.

1. It highlights the connection between symbols of defeat and the vertical polarity expressed in terms of the mortal versus the immortal, animal versus spiritual, worldly versus transcendental. Such a polarity is quite compatible with the Freudian tension between the id ("desire for the Mother") and the superego ("the Father") that Mock builds upon, but Bloch analyses it in a far more systematic manner. National myths work with such polarities extensively, as I have illustrated in the Czech case.
2. Mock focuses mainly on the first part of the sacrificial pattern, that of defeat and of curbing one's desire. As Bloch shows, however, this is just a first stage to be followed by glorious re-empowering. By taking this second stage systematically into account, we may account with greater precision for the mobilising effect of national myths. Moreover, it allows us to explain how the sacrificial pattern works in case of the imperial nations.

None of these Blochian insights contradict Mock's theory. I offer them rather as its complement, one that focuses on slightly different aspects of the sacrificial symbolism, expressing them through different concepts and images. Whereas some features of the defeat symbolism are probably easier to understand in light of Mock's model, others only become discernible when viewed from Bloch's perspective.

The only substantial incompatibility between Mock and Bloch lies in their treatment of violence. Mock follows Girard in regarding violence as a biological starting point, an innate aggression drive against which human groups protect themselves by means of sacrificial symbolism. For Bloch, on the other hand, violence is itself a cultural creation, "a result of the attempt to create the transcendental in religion and politics" (Bloch, 1992: 7). Bloch's view has the advantage of avoiding biological reductionism[8] and elucidating the presence of symbolic violence even in cases in which a relation to biological aggression would be difficult to trace—such as in the collective remembrance of the defeat of our national heroes. Moreover, if we understand violence as referring not just to physical violence but to all kinds of actions that *limit one's autonomy*, we may trace various meaningful links between symbolic phenomena which are explicitly violent (e.g., sacrifice or the myths of defeat) and those that are only violent metaphorically (such as social subordination or ascetic practices). This in turn allows us to understand why even such

seemingly harmless activities as humanitarian aid might occasionally be perceived as "violent" and why the refusal of such aid might actually be more empowering than its acceptance.

Needless to say, Bloch's model should not be taken as some kind of "law" to which all cultures must conform. While Bloch tends to promote his model as quasi-universal, most reviewers of the book have remained unconvinced, pointing out a number of phenomena that do not fit (e.g., Beidelman, 1994; Ohnuki-Tierney, 1992). However, far from discrediting the conception, this is rather an inevitable feature of all social scientific theories. These should always be regarded solely as ideal analytical models which express a general human tendency but allow for numerous exceptions. In other words, while I see Bloch's model as a potentially useful tool, it is one that should only be applied when it helps to make sense of patterns that already transpire in the data themselves. I hope I have managed to present some examples in which this is just the case.

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ENDNOTES

[1] Mock (2012: 202–4) believes this is something that makes modern national myths different from ancient myths: While the latter see the Golden Age as perfect, the former depict it is as both imbued with power and as rife with strife, that is, as an ambivalent society that had to collapse to make space for the modern social order. In fact, however, this is equally true of ancient myths, which are generally far less nostalgic than Eliade and others thought, portraying the Golden Age as a precultural state which is both idyllic and barbaric (cf. Chlup, 2008).

[2] Mock actually seems to imply that Freud's myth suits modern nations more than any hierarchical types of societies: The modern nation differs from a premodern agrarian society precisely in that it is "a horizontally structured brotherhood of equals" (Mock, 2012: 85). Yet this is a misleading analogy. If we are to take Freud's myth seriously, it must apply equally well to hierarchical societies. The only difference lies in the choice of totems: In an egalitarian modern society the totem is represented by its ancient national heroes, in a hierarchical society by the ruling aristocracy (who usually also derive their symbolic power from mythic heroes of the past). Moreover, even the modern egalitarian society is hierarchically structured, though the hierarchy is legitimised in a different way: The ruling elite is presented as superior not by being fundamentally different from the masses but by authentically embodying their national spirit.

[3] Though Bloch never really defines his concept of violence, it clearly refers to all kinds of actions that *limit one's autonomy* (e.g., social subordination or ascetic practices).

[4] More subtle symbolizations of this second stage may include, for example, ostentatious feasting (particularly meat-eating), sports games, dancing or celebrations of fertility.

[5] Palacký (1930: 104): Czech history "is in general based mainly on the strife, or mixing and struggling [*stýkání a potýkání*] of the *Slavic* and the *German* element; in other words, on the permanent adopting and rejecting of German manners and orders by the Czechs."

[6] It is interesting in this regard that Palacký himself originally saw the "mixing and struggling" of the Czech and the Germans as ambivalent, involving both conflicts and fruitful cultural exchange, and it was only in the 1860s that he came to focus solely on the conflicting aspect (Rak, 1994: 99–106).

[7] While in principle this is in harmony with Mock, his account tends to underestimate the power aspect of heroism, focusing mainly on its sacrificial side. Compare his treatment of Masada, which he presents as a classic symbol of defeat, though in fact until the 1970s Masada was primarily seen as a symbol of heroic resistance: It was the fight, not the defeat, that was primarily remembered (see Zerubavel, 2013). It was only in recent decades that "instead of the heroic narrative, a new tragic version has become more popular, enhancing Masada's symbolic representation of a state in which Jews are forced to choose death as the best alternative possible" (Zerubavel, 2013: 180).

[8] Compare Yak's (2015: 150) complaint in his review of Mock that "[n]othing that we now know about hunter–gatherer bands—nor of the primate societies that preceded them—suggests that we would end up with Freud's 'primordial horde'

or Durkheim's unrestrained self-seekers 'if our basic animal natures were left to their own devices' (Mock, 2012: 60–2). On the contrary, we seem to be social animals all the way down."

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