

Prince Rastislav built a strong country in the central Danubian area; he strengthened its independence by forging alliances with other Slavs (mainly the Czechs and Wends) and further ensured it through diplomatic relations with the Holy See. Given the power and independence of his country, he was able to provide full support to the great missionary, teaching and diplomatic activities of Constantine and Methodius, who in turn made the country even more stable. Great Moravia served as an example for other Slavs, and would in many ways become a template for future central European countries such as Bohemia, Poland and Hungary.



▲ Great Moravia in the 8th–9th century



▲ Icon of Saints Constantine and Methodius being welcomed to Great Moravia by Prince Rastislav

Coin details

Denomination: €100

Composition: Au 900, Ag 75, Cu 25

Weight: 9.5 g

Diameter: 26 mm

Edge: milled

Issuing volume: up to a maximum of 5,000 proof coins

Designer: Mgr. art. Roman Lugár

Engraver: Dalibor Schmidt

Producer: Mincovňa Kremnica / Kremnica Mint

The obverse side depicts the ground plan of a Great Moravian church in Devín, and within this plan are various letters of the Glagolitic alphabet, the first Slavonic alphabet. Along the edge of the design are decorative elements composed of beads. To the lower left is the coat of arms of the Slovak Republic, and above that is denomination and currency, "100 EURO", split into two lines. Inscribed along the lower edge is the name of the issuing country, "SLOVENSKO", and the year "2014". To the right of the ground plan are the stylised initials "RL", standing for the name of the designer, Roman Lugár, and the mint mark of the Kremnica Mint.

On the reverse side is an imagined portrait of Rastislav juxtaposed with a cross from the Great Moravian period (found at an archaeological excavation in Mikulčice). Around most of the edge are two lines of beading, and between them the inscription "VELKOMORAVSKÉ KNIEŽA RASTISLAV". The years of Rastislav's reign, "846–870", appear along the lower edge.



Prince Rastislav of Great Moravia

Gold collector coin

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Photo: NBS, Progress Promotion, Wikipedia (by Tyssil, LURE, Peter Zelizňák, Kirk)



<http://www.nbs.sk/en/banknotes-and-coins/euro-coins/collector-coins>



Prince Rastislav, who ruled Great Moravia in the period 846–870, is a remarkable of Slovak history. Among the rulers of Great Moravia (which covered much of present-day Slovakia), he stood out as a soldier, diplomat, politician and Christian. His rule was recorded by several Frankish chroniclers as well as in biographies of Saints Constantine and Methodius written in the Slavonic language. According to these sources, Great Moravia under Rastislav grew from being a tribal principality to a country independent from Francia, and, later on, from East Francia. As its importance increased, Great Moravia established relations with the Holy See and became well-known as far as Constantinople.



▲ Icon of Prince Rastislav



▲ The Slav stronghold at Mikulčice



■ Prince Mojmir I of Great Moravia (833 to 846) was vassal to the rulers of Francia. Under the custom of that period, Mojmir was required to send hostages to the royal court in Regensburg. It is highly likely that Rastislav, a nephew of Mojmir, served as a hostage at the court and, while there, gained the confidence of Louis the German. With Great Moravia in a state of internal unrest, Louis the German invaded it in 846 and installed Rastislav as ruler.

■ At first Rastislav was a peaceful neighbour of East Francia. In 854, however, Rastislav supported a rebellion against King Louis the German led by Ratpot, the prefect of Eastland and Carinthia. The king deposed Ratpot and in 855 invaded Moravia,



besieging Rastislav in his fortified stronghold (probably in present-day Mikulčice) and pillaging the province. Rastislav managed to repulse the attack, and in doing so took an important step towards establishing the independence of Great Moravia. In order to stabilise the country, he entered into alliance with the Czechs and Wends. In 857 he hosted a rebellious Czech prince, Slavitach, at his court, and in the same year defied another Frankish attack. Carloman, the eldest son of King Louis the German, struck an alliance with Rastislav and revolted against his father. From 858 Rastislav appears to have made his headquarters at Devín (close to present-day Bratislava), since from there he could swiftly foray into the extensive border region on the other bank of the river Danube. In 861 Moravia invaded neighbouring Pannonia, whose ruler, Pribina, was killed in the fighting. In 863 Louis the German suppressed Carloman's revolt, and in August 864 he crossed the Danube, trapping Rastislav at Devín and agreeing a truce with him.

■ Amidst these events, Rastislav sought to establish independent religious arrangements in Great Moravia; he did not want the church in Great Moravia to be part of the Passau diocese, which served as an instrument of Frankish political influence. Thus in 862 he turned to the Pope in Rome with a request for missionaries. When his request was unsuccessful, he addressed the emperor in Constantinople. In 863 a Byzantine mission led by brothers Constantine and Methodius arrived in Great Moravia. Supported by Rastislav, the two brothers performed a wide range of missionary, organisational and cultural activities; they established a Slavonic 'school' and started to educate local priests and develop Slavonic literature. Pope Hadrian II acknowledged the results of their activities and made Methodius an archbishop at the end of 869.

■ In August 869 Rastislav and his nephew Svätopluk, the Nitrian appanage prince, faced a new Frankish attack. The following year, Svätopluk made a separate peace with Carloman, with the result that an enraged Rastislav plotted to kill his nephew. The plot failed, and Svätopluk captured Rastislav and extradited him to Carloman. In September 870 a court in Regensburg, presided by King Louis the German, sentenced Rastislav to blinding and imprisonment. Great Moravia seemed to be in ruins, but in 871 the Moravians rose up and won their freedom. It is not known for how long the imprisoned Rastislav lived or whether he learnt of the Moravian victory.



▲ The Slav stronghold at Devín



▲ A scale model of a Great Moravian church from the second half of the 9th century



▲ Bronze statue of Saints Constantine and Methodius by Stanislav Mikus

