

## THE “LITERARY DIALECT” IN SLOVAK NATIONALIST THOUGHT

During the nineteenth century, Slavs in the north of Hungary developed an unusual idea about linguistic diversity: a wide variety of language planners and linguistic nationalists made clear that they imagined a single “language” with multiple written standards. This concept, which might be called the “literary dialect,” played a surprisingly important role in the development of Slovak national thought. This paper will trace the history of this concept and its impact on the course of Slovak history.

The Slovak tradition of “literary dialects” dates back to Ján Herkel, a sadly neglected figure in Anglophone scholarship. Herkel’s 1826 *Elementa Universalis Linguae Slavicae* proposed a single alphabet, a “universal style,” for all dialects of the “Slavic language.” Herkel’s alphabet is based on the Latin alphabet, though he rejected digraphs and diacritical marks. For example, where modern Slovak uses {č}, {š}, and the digraph {ch}, Herkel used the Cyrillic letters {ч}, {ш} and {х}. Herkel also devised the letter {z} for {ž/ж}. Most strikingly, Herkel provided several distinct Slavic peoples unique letters for regional use. For example, Herkel suggests {ð} for Polish {dz}, though this letter is not necessary for other Slavs. Similarly, the letter {ć}, necessary in “Illyrian,” is not needed in other scripts. Herkel transliterated sample texts from several Slavic written standards into this orthography.<sup>1</sup>

Herkel’s “universal” alphabet, however, retains considerable internal diversity. Herkel wanted all Slavs to use the same letters for the same sounds, and was even prepared to sacrifice diversity of pronunciation to achieve the aim. He suggested, for example, that Polish {ą} and {ę} be replaced with {o}, and {rz} with {ř}. At the same time, however, his script acknowledges the diversity of spelling and pronunciation within the Slavic world. Herkel, furthermore, presented his proposals as suggestions, and respected the autonomy of Slavs in

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<sup>1</sup>Herkel gave sample texts for Russian, Ukrainian (“Little Russian”), Polish, Serbian, Bohemian, Pannonian, Wendish and Serbo-Croat (“Illyrian”). He describes these different groups as *nations*: he does not anticipate Kollár’s single Slavic nation in the national sphere. Joanne Herkel (Ján Herkel). *Elementa Universalis Linguae Slavicae*. Buda: Regiae universitatis Hungaricae, 1826.

other parts of the Slavic world. The Poles, he wrote, should make the final decision about {a}, {e} and {ř} themselves.<sup>2</sup>

Herkel's idea that a single "language" should contain multiple standard spellings and even geographically-restricted letters strikes most modern readers as strange. Most people are willing to accept that differences in vocabulary (soda vs. pop vs. cola; lorry vs. truck, etc.) or pronunciation (to-may-to vs. to-mah-to, etc) are "dialectal." People are also willing to accept that "dialects" may contain grammatical peculiarities: the phrases "I can't get no satisfaction," "I'm seeing you," "she be nice," or "I be done killed"<sup>3</sup> are recognizably English, even if none obey standardized proscriptive grammar. In certain contexts, however, linguistic nationalists have pointed to precisely these sorts of differences to justify linguistic separation. The distinctness of Serbian and Croatian as separate languages has been justified on the grounds of lexical difference (*chlebkruh* "bread", *avgust-kolovoz* "August") or grammar distinctiveness (*otvorit ćemo* "we will open"; *možemo da prodamo*-*možemo prodati* "we can sell").<sup>4</sup> Whether individual Croats (or Serbs) accept that these differences are "dialectal" depends on non-linguistic attitudes.

Many non-linguists mistakenly believe that linguists possess some objective criteria to separate "languages" from "dialects." Linguists themselves, however, reject outright the very possibility of devising such criteria. Sociolinguist, R. A. Hudson, for example, wrote "there is nothing absolute about the distinction [...] between 'languages' and 'dialects'."<sup>5</sup> Peter Trudgill, after discussing a series of problematic cases, noted that "it is only linguists who fully understand the extent to which these questions are not linguistic questions."<sup>6</sup>

The point is that the concept of "dialect," when juxtaposed against "language," acknowledges linguistic diversity while simultaneously asserting that such diversity is fundamentally unimportant. This assertion of unimportance is a value judgment, not an empirical observation. The history of the "language-dialect" dichotomy may belong to the history of linguistic thought, but linguistic

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<sup>2</sup> Herkel, *Elementa Universalis Linguae Slavicae*, 12.

<sup>3</sup> The double negative in "I can't get no satisfaction" was immortalized by the Rolling Stones, "I'm seeing you" is West Highlands Scottish English; the copula omission ("she be nice") is frequent in many varieties of African American English; John Baugh recorded "I be done killed that motherfucker if he tries to lay a hand on my kid again" in Los Angeles. See Trudgill, *Sociolinguistics*, 47, 54, 61.

<sup>4</sup> In all three cases, the second option is Croatian. See David Norris, *Teach Yourself Serbo-Croat*. London: NTC, 1993.

<sup>5</sup> R. A. Hudson. *Sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, 1996, 31.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Trudgill. *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society*. Revised edition. London: Penguin, 1995, 145.

thought developed in a social and political context. Whether we agree or disagree with Herkel's description of Russian and Polish as "dialects" is irrelevant: we should ask instead what Herkel's usage meant in the early nineteenth century.

Herkel's willingness to subsume orthographic diversity within a single "language," the Slavic language, reflects conditions in early nineteenth-century Hungary. Slovaks in that period wrote in several different alphabets: Catholic priests often used Bernolák's 1787 script; Lutherans tended to use a script based on a Reformation-era translation of the Bible; while Calvinists near Miskolc had yet another script strongly influenced by Hungarian orthography. Ending this orthographic diversity by establishing a single script was the central task of both nineteenth-century Slovak and Croatian language planning. In this context, the idea that a single "language" can contain multiple scripts seems less outlandish. Herkel, nevertheless, sought to bring together not merely Slovaks, but all the Slavs. Herkel, indeed, was the original Pan-Slav: *Elementa Universalis Linguae Slavicae* is the first book to use the word "Pan-Slavism" in print. Herkel defined the word in a purely linguistic sense as "the unity in literature among all Slavs (emphasis in original)."<sup>7</sup>

Herkel's disinterest in political issues deserves special emphasis. Germans and Hungarians quickly reinterpreted "Panslavism" as the bogey of Russian expansionism,<sup>8</sup> but nineteenth century Slovak insisted that Panslavism was an apolitical and purely literary movement. Samuel Hojč, for example, wrote:

Under the term Panslavism one understands the striving of the Slavs toward a nearer unification among each other, the binding of the various tribes into one large whole [...] But a political panslavistic striving, where have we ever brought one to the light of day? [...] unquestionably there are friends of the literary Panslavism in Hungary, but this is a world apart from the political sort [...] the political Panslavism has no friends among us, but the literary has many, and wins ever more.<sup>9</sup>

This binary opposition between the "literary" and "political" proved an important theme in Slovak thought. Slovak political loyalties will be discussed below; for now note merely that Slovak Panslavism followed Herkel's lead: it was a literary movement. Several Slovak authors invoked the example of German "unity,"<sup>10</sup> but the reference was to Goethe, not Bismarck.

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<sup>7</sup> Herkel, *Elementa Universalis Linguae Slavicae*, 4.

<sup>8</sup> See Harrison Thomson, "A Century of a Phantom: Panslavism and the Western Slavs." *Journal of Central European Affairs*, 11, 1951.

<sup>9</sup> Samuel Hojč. *Apologie des ungrischen Slawismus*. Leipzig: Friedrich Vlockmar, 1843, 95, 97, 99.

<sup>10</sup> See for example Johann Thomásek, *Der Sprachkampf in Ungarn*, Zagreb: Illyrian National Typographie von Dr. Ljudevit Gaj, 1841, 5–9; and several entries in Jan Kollár, ed. *Hlasové o potřebě jednoty spisovného jazyka pro Čechy, Morawany a Slowáky*, Prague: Sobor Musejní

Literary questions also dominate the thought of Ján Kollár, easily Slovakia's most influential Pan-Slav thinker. Kollár, in addition to composing a popular epic poem extolling the goddess Slavia, wrote a series of pamphlets promoting what he called Slavic "Reciprocity."<sup>11</sup> His 1830 pamphlet defined Reciprocity as "not a political, but a literary joining of all four chief Slav tribes; each Slav tribe would retain its dialect, but it would know of, buy and read the books and literature of other Slav tribes."<sup>12</sup> Kollár's longer German-language work emphasized that Reciprocity had no political ramifications:

Literary Reciprocity can still exist there where a nation stands under many scepters, divided among many states, kingdoms, principalities, governments or republics. Reciprocity is also possible where many religions churches and confessions exist, where diversity of script and letters, climate and geography, and diversity of customs exist.<sup>13</sup>

Kollár's claim that Reciprocity was apolitical, however, coexisted with the rhetoric of a Slavic "nation": Kollár saw the Russians, Poles, etc. as "tribes." Kollár sought to overcome tribal particularism:

The Pole should not just be a Pole but a Slavo-Pole, and should study not just his own books, but also the Russian, Bohemian and Serbian dialects; the Russian should not just be a Russian, but a Slavo-Russian, he does not just know and read his own script, but also the Polish, Bohemian, Serbian dialect; the Bohemian is not just a Bohemian but a Slavo-Čech, he does not just learn Bohemian, but also Polish, Russian, Serbian; the Serbian or Illyrian should not just be a Serb, but a Slavo-Serb, buys and reads not just Serbian,

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pro řeč a literatury českau, 1846; notably Palacký, pp. 37; Jungmann, 55–56; Kollár, 110–11; and Durgula and Šulek, 208.

<sup>11</sup> Kollár spoke of *vzájemnost* in Czech, *Wechselseitigkeit* in German, and *Взаимность* in Russian. The Scottish *North British Review*, perhaps the first Anglophone source to discuss Kollár, translated this "The Reciprocity of the Slavonians." The majority of Anglophone scholars have followed this lead, though Owen Johnson and Jozef Kalvoda speak of Kollár's "mutuality" and Peter Black of "solidarity." I take my habit of capitalizing the word "Reciprocity" from Robert Pynsent. See Anonymous. "The Slavonians and Eastern Europe." *North British Review*, vol. 11. Edinburgh. August 1849, 555; Owen Johnson. 'Losing Faith: The Slovak-Hungarian Constitutional Struggle, 1906–1914.' *Harvard Ukrainian Studies: Cultures and Nations of Central and Eastern Europe*, vol. 22. Zvi Gitelman, ed. Cambridge, MA: Ukrainian Research Institute, 1998, 301; Josef Kalvoda. *The Genesis of Czechoslovakia*. Boulder: East European Monographs, 1986, 16; Peter Black. *Kollár and Štúr, Romantic and Post-Romantic Visions of a Slavic Future*. Working Paper Series 1, Institute on East Central Europe, 1974. Republished Boulder: East Central European Studies, 1975, 6; Robert Pynsent, *Questions of Identity: Czech and Slovak Ideas of Nationality and Personality*. Budapest: CEU Press, 1994, 56–57.

<sup>12</sup> Pynsent, *Questions of Identity*, 56. Pynsent cites Jan Kollár. *Rozprawy o jménoch, počátkách i starožitnostech národu slávskeho a jeho kmenů*, 1830. Quoted from

<sup>13</sup> Kollár, *Über die Wechselseitigkeit*, 6.

but also Polish, Russian and Bohemian works. Only he who knows these main dialects should take pen in hand and be a Slavic author.<sup>14</sup>

Kollár also provided several concrete suggestions for promoting Slavic Reciprocity. An abridged translation of his nine-point plan follows below:

1. Slavic bookstores in all capitals of our tribes, namely Petersburg, Warsaw, Krakow, Lviv, Prague, Vienna, Pest, Brno, Belgrade, Zagreb, etc.
2. Exchange of books between authors of various tribes...
3. Chairs and departments of Slavic dialects.
4. A general and pan-dialect Slavic literary newspaper
5. Public and private libraries. ... [a long list of suggested titles follows]
6. Comparative textbooks and dictionaries of all dialects ...
8. [...] the adoption of a genuine and pure Slavic, and therefore the approaching of the ideal of a Panslavonic language, i.e. a language that every Slav of every tribe easily understands.
9. A uniform, philosophic orthography, based on the spirit of the Slavic language, which all Slavs can use.<sup>15</sup>

Herkel's influence is clearly visible in points six and nine: Kollár, like Herkel, wanted a uniform orthography, but accepted that mutual understanding between the various "dialects" of the "Slavic language" required comparative dictionaries and grammars.

Kollár's plan for a multi-orthographic newspaper is perhaps the best place to study these ideas in practice. In 1839, a Russian teacher in Warsaw inspired by Kollár's vision founded a multi-dialectical Slavic newspaper. He sought subscriptions, assistance and submissions from Poles, Russians and Czechs, and with Polish assistance began publishing in 1841. This paper, *Dennitsa* ['Morning Star'], proved unable to find an audience: it ceased publishing in 1843. The editor, P. Dubrovskii (not to be confused with Czech intellectual Jozef Dubrovský), gave the following post-mortem in an 1844 letter:

Poland subscribed to 17 copies and Russia to 12. [...] The *Dennitsa* has existed thanks to the support of a few persons, but now that source has dried up too. In vain did the editor make [e]very effort to try in some way to prolong the ended life of the first all-Slav journal. It was impossible to do anything, there's our Slavdom for you.<sup>16</sup>

Fadner, from whose book this account of *Dennitsa* is drawn, suggested that the paper's "pretentious" format caused its failure. Perhaps the format of a multi-

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<sup>14</sup> Kollár, *Über die Wechselseitigkeit*, 99–100.

<sup>15</sup> Kollár, *Wechselseitigkeit*, 92–97

<sup>16</sup> Frank Fadner. *Seventy Years of Pan-Slavism in Russia: Karazin to Danielevskii, 1800–1870*. Haarlem: Joh. enschede, 1962, 57–59.

lingual newspaper is inherently pretentious: given the low levels of Slavic literacy, only the most literate Slavs would have been able to understand its articles. Theodore Locher's critique of Kollár bites: "The 'nation' remains in this way a living-room plant; only philologists can be real Slavs."<sup>17</sup>

The idea of a single "language" with multiple "literary dialects," then, is impractical: I have elsewhere argued that it is doomed to failure.<sup>18</sup> Scholars of Slovak history, however, must understand the concept, since it informed the most important event of nineteenth-century Slovak history: Ľudovít Štúr's 1843 codification of a distinct Slovak orthography. Štúr is usually described as a Slovak nationalist and language planner. However, Štúr's national orientation differed so much from modern Slovak nationalism that describing Štúr as a "Slovak nationalist" is highly problematic.

Though Štúr's political life was spent opposing the policy of Magyarization, Štúr remained a loyal Hungarian: Štúr was *Uhorský* if not *Maďarský*.<sup>19</sup> Even after being dismissed from his teaching post for alleged (political) "Pan-Slavism," Štúr wrote that

We Slavs [...] are devoted to our country, and have made service to our fatherland from the earliest times up until today. [...] We always fulfilled our obligations to the fatherland as Slavs, even because of this, we must possess full and equal rights with others, for obligations without rights is bondage.<sup>20</sup>

Štúr sought to convince ethnic Hungarians that Slovaks were loyal to Hungary as Slavs, and thus should be allowed to develop their language and culture. Hungarian-Slavic reconciliation would end the policy of Magyarization.

We still live in the hope that the Magyars will recognize our national right and understand the rule of the spirit or humanity of the nineteenth century, and recompense us for everything that has been done to our disadvantage. The Magyars have demanded

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<sup>17</sup> Theodore Locher, *Die Nationale Differenzierung und Integrierung der Slowaken und Tschechen in ihrem Geschichtlichen Verlauf bis 1848*. Haarlem: H.D. Tjeenk & Zoon, 1931, 115.

<sup>18</sup> Alexander Maxwell, "Literary dialects in China and Slovakia: Imagining Unitary Nationality with Multiple Orthographies," *International Journal of Sociolinguistics*, no. 164 (2003), 129–149.

<sup>19</sup> These words respectively mean "of or relating to the Kingdom of Hungary," and "of or relating to ethnic Hungarians." The politics of *Uhor* and *Maďar* are very interesting, see Alexander Maxwell, "Magyarization, Language Planning, and Whorf – The Word 'Uhor' as a Case Study in Linguistic Relativism," *Multilingua* vol. 23 no. 3 (2004); Moritz Csáky, "Hungarus' oder 'Magyar,' Zwei Varianten des ungarischen Nationalbewußtseins zu Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts. *Annales: Sectio Historica*, 22 (1982), 71–84.

<sup>20</sup> Ľudovít Štúr. *Beschwerden und Klagen der Slaven in Ungarn über die gesetzwidrigen Uebergriffe der Magyaren*. Leipzig: Robert Binder, 1843, 35.

so much for their own nationality, we should be left to ours, it should be inviolable. We have never been found wanting in our duties to Hungary, consequently we should receive all rights.<sup>21</sup>

Štúr promoted a Slovak orthography, in part, to appease the Magyars: an orthography indigenous to Hungary would demonstrate Slovak loyalties to the Kingdom.

The codification of a standardized Slovak orthography means that “From the point of view of our written language we are domesticated in our homeland. [...] We are already, and wish to remain, at home; but we will see that our neighbors, and particularly our Magyars, will welcome us home.”<sup>22</sup>

Štúr struggled against the Magyars not for a Slovak state, but for a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual Hungarian homeland, for what Will Kymlicka has called “poly-ethnic rights,” which aim at “integration into the larger society, not self-government.”<sup>23</sup> Even at the 1848 Prague Pan-Slav Congress, Štúr pointedly refused to demand territorial separation from Hungary: one Hungarian historian has even described Slovak demands in the Revolution of 1848 as “conciliatory.”<sup>24</sup> In short, from the political perspective, Štúr did not imagine “Slovakia,” but to the Kingdom of Hungary.<sup>25</sup>

Even more surprisingly, Štúr cannot even be seen as a “Slovak nationalist” from a literary or linguistic perspective. Štúr was, instead, a *Slavic* nationalist in the Kollárian and Herkelian mould.<sup>26</sup> Only the Herkel-Kollárian concept of

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<sup>21</sup> “Ludwig Šlur” [sic, Ludovít Štúr], *Das neunzehnte Jahrhundert und der Magyarismus*. Vienna: Wenedik’schen Buchhandlung, 1845, 36.

<sup>22</sup> Ludovít Štúr. ‘Panslavism a naša krajina.’ *Slovenskije Národnje novini*. 3 – 14 Sept, 1847. Reprinted in *Slovo na čase*, vol. 2. Introduction and translated by Jozef Ambruš. Martin: Kompas, 1941, 239.

<sup>23</sup> See Will Kymlicka. *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, 30–31.

<sup>24</sup> Alice Freifeld adds, “Slovak demands were modest, but as the weakest they were also the ones the Magyars were least inclined to appease.” István Deák. *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848–49*. New York: Colombia University Press, 1979, 123; Alice Freifeld. *Nationalism and the Crowd in Liberal Hungary, 1848–1914*. Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center press, 2000, 67.

<sup>25</sup> On Slovak loyalties to Hungary, see Alexander Maxwell, “Hungaro-Slavism: Territorial and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Slovakia.” *East Central Europe/l’Europe du Centre-Est (ECE/ECE)*, vol. 29/pt.1 (2002), 45–58.

<sup>26</sup> In the early nineteenth century, the Slovak lexical system had not yet developed its present clear distinction between Slovak [*slovenský*] and Slavic [*slovanský*]. For a full discussion of the Slovak-Slavic ambiguity in the secondary literature, see Jozef Ambruš, “Die Slawische Idee bei Ján Hollý,” in *Ludovít Štúr und die Slawische Wechelseitigkeit, Gesamte Referate und die integrale Diskussion der Wissenschaftlichen Tagung in Smolenice 27–29 Juni*,

a single language with “literary dialects” explains why Štúr titled his essay in defence of orthographic particularism “The Slovak *Dialect*, or the Necessity of Writing in this *Dialect* [emphasis added].”<sup>27</sup> The main argument of this essay was that “we Slovaks are a tribe and as a tribe, we have our own dialect, which is different and distinct from Czech.”<sup>28</sup> If the Slovak “dialect” is distinct from Czech, of what can it be a dialect other than the “Slavic language”?

Kollár hoped to reduce orthographic diversity within the Slavic world and saw Slovak as part of Czecho-Slovak,<sup>29</sup> so Štúr’s codification horrified him. The resulting polemic between Štúr and Kollár<sup>30</sup> was so bitter that their common ground has been obscured. Nevertheless, both Štúr and Kollár believed in a single Slavic language, both believed that this language had literary dialects. Furthermore, Martin Hattala, whose 1850 revision of Štúr’s orthography eventually won acceptance and remains in use today, was happy to write a comparative grammar of the (singular) “Czech and Slovak language” in 1857,<sup>31</sup> in which he was happy to speak of Kollárian “Czechoslavs” when discussing linguistic fea-

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1966, ed. Ludovít Holotík. SAV, 1969, 46–49; Pynsent, *Questions of Identity*, 60. Two noteworthy primary sources are Bohuslav Nosák’s poem “Slowenka,” in which the “Slovak language” can be heard on the slopes of the Caucasus mountains (*i skály kavkasa / slawii se kořj / šjře slowenská řeč / gak dennice zořj*), and Michal Godra’s attempt to distinguish “Slovak,” “Slovene” and “Slavic.” Bohuslav Nosák. “Slowenka,” in Josef Hurban (Jozef Hurban), ed. *Nitra – dar dcerám a synům slowenska, morawy, čech a slezka obětowaný*, vol. I. Bratislava: Šmid, 1842, 164; Michal Godra. “Voňavje Ďordínki” *Orol tatranský*, vol. 1, no. 12, 1845, 95.

<sup>27</sup> Ludovít Štúr. *Nárečja slovenskuo alebo potreba pisaňje v tomto nárečje*. Bratislava: K.F. Wigrand, 1846. Peter Brock, in his study of Slovak nationalism, translated this phrase as “we Slovaks are a tribe and as a tribe we have our own *language*.” This translation is doubly unfortunate since the word “dialect,” as Brock himself admits, is a “more exact” translation of *nárečja*. Peter Brock. *The Slovak National Awakening: An Essay in the Intellectual History of East Central Europe*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976, 48, 80.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Brock’s study of the Slovak national awakening translated this phrase as “we Slovaks are a tribe and as a tribe we have our own *language*.” This translation is all the more odd since he admits that the word “dialect” is a “more exact” translation of Štúr’s original *nárečja*. Brock understood the All-Slav context of Slovak “tribal” identity, but apparently failed to recognize that the Slovak “tribe” inside the Slavic “nation” had an exact linguistic counterpart. See Peter Brock. *The Slovak National Awakening: An Essay in the Intellectual History of East Central Europe*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976, 48, 80. Štúr, *Nárečja slovenskuo*, 51.

<sup>29</sup> “The Slovak on his own does not have anything in literature, or rather what he has, it is more Czechoslovak than Slovak proper [*wíce českosowenské než vlastně slowácké*].” Kollár, *Hlasowé*, 108.

<sup>30</sup> Kollár’s *Hlasowé* includes an open letter to Štúr and small essays against Štúr’s orthography from a wide variety of minor clergy. Hurban responded with the ill-tempered Jozef Miroslav Hurban. *Českje hlasi proti Slovenčine*. Skalice: Skarniel, 1846.

<sup>31</sup> Martin Hattala. *Srovnávací mluvnice jazyka českého a slovenského*, Prague: Nákladem Calveova Kněhkupectví, 1857.

tures common to both orthographies, (e.g. “Czechoslovak [českoslovenčina] tolerates double vowels in the middle of words only in compound words.”<sup>32</sup>)

This picture of Štúr as a Panslav loyal to Hungary radically differs from traditional Slovak national narratives. Stanislav Kirschbaum, for example, wrote that the Štúr movement “gave the nation the gift of its own written language,”<sup>33</sup> but Štúr himself claimed for the Slovaks neither the status of “nation” nor of “language.” He thought of the Slovaks as Slavs living in Hungary; it is no coincidence that Štúr wrote one of his pamphlets under the pseudonym *ein ungarischer Slawe*. Furthermore, Štúr’s followers in the 1840s mostly accepted this analysis. Consider how Johana Vyšná Lehocká justified Štúr’s script to a Czech correspondent on both Hungarian and Slavic grounds:

One reason for our action is that the other Slavic nations don’t yet recognize us as independent with our own political rights in Hungary. Another reason is that this act, instead of splitting us off, actually integrates Slavic relations, since our language is most easily understood by all the Slavs.<sup>34</sup>

Jozef Hurban, one of the key figures in the Slovak National Council during the Revolution of 1848, found an even more concise expression of Hungarian-Slavic dual loyalties: “We are a tribe in Slavdom, but we are also a tribe of the Hungarian state.”<sup>35</sup>

The concept of a “literary dialect” proved extraordinarily long-lived in Slovak thought. Leading figures in interwar Czechoslovakia frequently imagined the Czechoslovak nation on an explicitly Kollárian model. Milan Hodža, for example, proposed a “program of Czechoslovak reciprocity [československej vzájomnosti],”<sup>36</sup> which sought to accommodate Slovak particularist feeling as “regionalism.” Even Juraj Slávik, who in 1933 called for “Czechoslovak unity – Czechoslovak unity and not reciprocity,” insisted that “Czechoslovak unity does not mean unity of language or any kind of uniformity. On the contrary, it means multiplicity.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Hattala, *Srovnávací mluvnice*, 131.

<sup>33</sup> Stanislav Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia, The Struggle for Survival*. London: MacMillan, 1995, 123.

<sup>34</sup> Letter of November 1843 to Antonia Reiseová. Quoted from Rudinsky, *Incipient Feminists*, 32.

<sup>35</sup> *Kmen v Slovanstve and kmen státu uhorského*. Jozef Hurban. *Českje hlasi proti Slovenčine*. Skalica, 1846, 26.

<sup>36</sup> Milan Hodža, “Nie centralizmus, nie autonomizmus, ale regionalizmus v jednom politickom národe,” in Rudolf Chmel, ed., *Slovenská otázka v 20. storočí* (Bratislava: Kalligram, 1997) 185.

<sup>37</sup> Cited in Alexander Kunoši, *The Basis of Czechoslovak Unity* (London: Andrew Dakers, 1944), 41.

The legal status of the “Czechoslovak language” clearly shows the influence of Herkel and Kollár: this was a language with literary dialects. As Ivan Dérer, himself a Slovak with Czechoslovak ideas, wrote in his pamphlet *The Unity of the Czechs and Slovaks*,

It is a matter of a single language which, however, has two equal forms of expression. [...] That the Czechs employ a different orthography and a different literary language than the Slovaks does not by any means signify that Czech and Slovak are not the same tongue. [...] The truth is that the Czechs and Slovaks, precisely on the basis of the unity of their tongues, have for nearly one thousand years employed a joint literary language – Czechoslovak.<sup>38</sup>

Dérer’s “joint literary language,” like Herkel’s “universal style,” had geographically-restricted symbols: literary Czech includes four letters which are not found in Slovak, {ě ř ó ů}. Slovak had five letters absent from Czech {ä ĺ ť ô ř}.<sup>39</sup>

Dérer’s work to introduce the Slovak orthography, which he imagined as a written dialect of the Czechoslovak language, nevertheless proved decisive in the creation of a Slovak national movement. As Owen Johnson says, “In the case of Slovakia in 1918, it could reasonably be argued that any one of three national feelings – Hungarian, Czechoslovak, or Slovak – might come to predominate.”<sup>40</sup> At the end of the 1930s, however, this uncertainty had been replaced by Slovak nationalism. The spread of literacy in a distinctive Slovak orthography played a large role in this. The Czechoslovak government placed a high priority on education and the spread of literacy was phenomenal. The intention was to build the Czechoslovak state: as Tomáš Masaryk put it on 14 November 1921, “we are founding schools in Slovakia. We must await their results, in one generation there will be no differences between the two branches of our national family.”<sup>41</sup> Why did this Czechoslovakism fail?

An effective state-sponsored education system generates nationalism by creating a class educated in “fully developed standard varieties,”<sup>42</sup> what Benedict Anderson called “national print languages.”<sup>43</sup> Anderson suggests that peo-

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<sup>38</sup> Ivan Dérer. *The Unity of the Czechs and Slovaks*. Prague: Orbis, 1938, 37–38.

<sup>39</sup> Czech also has a digraph absent in Slovak, {ou}, and Slovak considers as separate letters two digraphs {dz, dž} which Czech treats as letter combinations.

<sup>40</sup> Owen Johnson. *Slovakia 1918–1938: Education and the Making of the Nation*. Boulder: East European Monographs, 1985, 3.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted from Johnson, *Slovakia 1918–1938*, 95.

<sup>42</sup> Ulrich Ammon, “Language – Variety/Standard Variety – Dialect” *Sociolinguistics / Soziolinguistik*, vol. 1, Ammon, Dittmar, Mattheier, eds. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1987, 328–29.

<sup>43</sup> Anderson elsewhere refers to “vernacular languages-of-state.” Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 45, 78.

ple who learned a certain print language “gradually became aware of the hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people in their particular language-field, and at the same time that *only those* hundreds of thousands, or millions, so belonged.”<sup>44</sup> But this “particular language-field,” however, can only be generated by a standard orthography that enables “documentary interchangeability, which fostered human interchangeability.”<sup>45</sup> In interwar Czechoslovakia, however, the newspapers and novels that generated this sense of belonging were either written in standard Slovak, using the letters {ä Ľ ô ř}, or they were written in Czech, with the letters {ě ř ó ů}: the two scripts were different. These separate script communities generated a separate sense of belonging, even if the Czechoslovak government described them as mere “dialect” zones.

A similar line of reasoning applies to the increasingly bitter conflict over appointments in interwar Slovakia. Eric Hobsbawm described linguistic groups “as, among other things, a vested interest of the lesser examination-passing classes.”<sup>46</sup> When job appointments and other material resources depend on a mastery of a script, the people who know that script wish to expand the sphere of public life in which that script is used. By splitting Czechoslovaks into two separate job markets, “written dialects of the Czechoslovak language” generated the same sort of linguistic nationalism as did wholly separate languages. Johnson argued that “Slovak unrest stemmed not from unemployment but perceptions of underemployment,”<sup>47</sup> but such perceptions are probably inevitable given the difference in material interest.

By establishing a class of educated Slovaks, which Johnson estimated was 30,000 strong by the end of the interwar period, the “program of Czechoslovak state building had turned into one of Slovak nation building.”<sup>48</sup> The appearance of Slovak nationalism followed inevitably. Slovaks seeking to claim collective rights for their script eventually found the rhetoric of a “national language” more appealing than that of a “tribal dialect.” Modern Slovak nationalists and linguists imagine Slovakia as a “nation,” and the Slovak orthography as “our national language,” to Ján Kačala’s 1994 study of the political history of the Slovak language.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, 1987 (1983), 44.

<sup>45</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 56.

<sup>46</sup> Eric Hobsbawm. *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780, Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge: Canto, 1992, 118.

<sup>47</sup> Johnson, *Slovakia, 1918–1938*, 317.

<sup>48</sup> Johnson, *Slovakia, 1918–1938*, 316, 332. A similar chronology appears in the work of Czech émigré historian Jozef Korbelt, who concluded that in 1939 “a distinct Slovak national identity *has become* the accepted premise of the Slovak nation and its representatives [italics added].” Josef Korbelt. *Twentieth Century Czechoslovakia*. New York: Colombia, 1977, 97.

<sup>49</sup> Ján Kačala. *Slovenčina – vec politická?* Martin: Matica slovenská, 1994, 12.

The striking feature of this narrative is the lack of Slovak national consciousness on the part of several historical actors who played important roles in the spread of Slovak national feeling. Štúr, a loyal subject of the Hungarian kingdom, promoted a certain script to defend the Slavic language. The Czechoslovak government introduced Hattala's orthography into Slovak schools in order as part of a program of Czechoslovak nation building. Slovak nationalism emerged almost as an unintended consequence of other national projects.

This brief narrative cannot claim to have been exhaustive. In the interests of clarity, the history of Slovak particularist loyalties has been neglected. Ludovít Štúr, for example, in addition to his Hungarian and Panslav loyalties, displayed a certain particularism vis-à-vis other Slavs. "We are Slovaks and as Slovaks we stand before the world and before Slavdom."<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, Štúr's Slovak loyalties were inseparable from his Slavism: "If Slovak did not exist, then my capacity for Slavdom would also not stand, and that would be to despair. One supports the other."<sup>51</sup> The main point, however, is that Štúr's Slovak particularist loyalties receive more than enough attention in a national historiography eager to claim him as a hero of the Slovak nation. Štúr's Hungarian loyalties, by contrast, have mostly been ignored.

This paper does suggest, however, that the emergence of Slovak nationalism can be explained in terms of Hungarian Slavism and Czechoslovakism. The peculiar ability to see a unique script as a "dialect" of a broader language meant that the social impact of nationalist language planning often diverges wildly from the intentions of nationalist language planners: the Slovak "national print language" was devised from Hungaro-Slavic motives and propagated by Czechoslovak institutions. The history of Slovak nationalism can only be understood by examining the national concepts that preceded it and caused it. The best moral to draw from this story is that national concepts can arise unexpectedly, and even accidentally.

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<sup>50</sup> Štúr, *Nárečja slovenskuo*, 79.

<sup>51</sup> Samuel Czambel, ed. *Dejiny Slovenska*, vol. 2. Bratislava: Veda vydavateľstvo SAV, 1987, 719. *Dejiny Slovenska* lists no date for Štúr's original letter, but it predated 1848.

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