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Attitudes toward the Standard Language in Slovakia

I will first review instances when the official attitudes to Standard Slovak took the form of legal decisions in Slovakia after World War II. These official attitudes, i.e., the motivation and execution of certain linguistic-administrative decisions, have remained fairly constant. With this in mind, I will then look at some aspects of the most recent draft of the Law on the State Language presented to Parliament and its possible implications.

This paper will only discuss the official attitudes to Standard Slovak against the background of colloquial and regional varieties of Slovak, it will not deal with the political aspects of the status of Slovak vis-à-vis the minority languages in Slovakia. In other words, the discussion will be about what is and what is not officially considered Standard Slovak and its impact, within the context of native Slovak speakers.

The phrases *Standard Language* and *Standard Slovak* will stand for the Slovak *spisovný jazyk* and *spisovná slovenčina*. In Slovak, these phrases are synonymous with "standard" or "correct" language and not with the language of literature, as an alternative rendition of *spisovný* may imply. And although the adjective *spisovný* is based on the verb *písať*, "write," the Slovak phrase refers to both the written and spoken language.

The decisions about what is and what is not Standard Slovak have been made by the Ludovít Štúr Linguistic Institute,¹ which is a branch of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. But the manner in which its decisions have become obligatory, or whether this has happened at all, have not been straightforward. Moreover, after the collapse of communism, journalists and other people whose work is focused on language realized that the Linguistic Institute's decisions are not formally binding after all and started disregarding them on a scale unknown under communism.

¹ Jazykovedný ústav Ľudovíta Štúra Slovenskej akadémie vied.

The communist decades

Under communism, the actual existence and wording of many statutes had only an oblique relevance to legal practice. Decisions were passed on through unofficial and hard-to-trace channels based on the participants' position in the communist hierarchy and on personal contacts. The attitudes of the authorities to Standard Slovak were part of this situation. While it was very rare that their attitudes took the form of legal decisions, Standard Slovak was the object of official regulation with a wavering support from the authorities.

The source of this regulation was the Linguistic Institute in Bratislava. It exercised its influence through a steady stream of letters to Slovak Radio, Slovak Television, and the major newspapers and magazines, informing them of their "transgressions" (*pries tupky*) against Standard Slovak that the Institute's employees detected in the media. With the support of the Communist Party, such directives were always accepted by the language editors in the media, whose job was both to catch the simple spelling errors and to apply the growing body of rules produced by the Linguistic Institute.

Part of these rules were collected in the *Pravidlá slovenského pravopisu*, a manual of style, but except for the use of commas and capitalization, it contained few lexical and grammatical guidelines that were not used by the majority of college-educated Slovaks anyway. While the *Pravidlá* might appear to have been the alpha and omega of Standard Slovak, and it was, indeed, the only reference book formally published for this purpose, the real conflict was between what journalists sometimes said or wrote and between what the Linguistic Institute deemed incorrect, even though it was not contained in the *Pravidlá*. The judgments about Standard and non-Standard Slovak were published on an on-going basis in the journals *Slovenská reč*, and especially in *Kultúra slova*, but also elsewhere. The media language editors' main task was to keep track of the multitude of fragmentary guidelines as they appeared in these journals.

A substantial number of partial "corrections" accumulated in a variety of sources over the forty years of communism, but only little of that was included in the *Pravidlá* due to its limited size, but also to a degree of reluctance to compile a straightforward and extensive right-and-wrong list. This would have been too obvious a reminder of what was called *purism*, a pre-communist effort to rid Slovak of some foreign, often Czech, influences. That was contrary to Prague's centralist policy to curtail non-folkloric differences between Slovakia and the Czech lands. *Purism* was called all kinds of names in communist terminology – bourgeois, nationalist, pseudoscience. While on the one hand the Communists gave the Linguistic Institute's recurrent discoveries of new correctness the "unofficially-official" status of the law – the journalists who did not adhere to the Institute's guidelines were fined by their Communist-dominated editorial boards – the Communists, on the other hand, also made it the Institute's mission not to allow

Standard Slovak to drift away from Standard Czech, especially in new terminology, but also in other areas, as Louise told us here last year.²

To sum up, it is important for our discussion that:

- a) There was no obvious legislation regulating what constituted Standard Slovak.
- b) Compliance with the Institute's standards, while binding for the media and publishers, was not enforced through the type of legal channels usual in the non-communist world.
- c) The Linguistic Institute continually discovered new language features that needed correction and included them in its subsequent efforts to administrate correctness.
- d) It was difficult for any individual, editor, to assemble the information on all that had been deemed incorrect over the decades, no manual of style came anywhere close to a comprehensive source.

Place-names (de-Hungarianization, de-Christianization, stray language engineering)

One area where linguistic decisions had an extensive impact were place-names. They came in two waves. The first one took place shortly after World War II. It was not initiated by the linguists, but they helped to give it a particular shape.

After 1867, all the villages in the former Kingdom of Hungary were assigned Hungarian names by Budapest. Many of these Hungarian names remained even after Slovakia was separated from the Kingdom in 1918, and others were reintroduced when parts of southern Slovakia were under Budapest's control again between 1938 and 1945. After World War II, Slovak linguists helped to reconstruct the original Slovak names for some villages, and in other instances they looked for Slovak versions of non-Slovak names (usually Hungarian or German). In several instances, places were given new names after Slovak activists from the Austro-Hungarian period or after communist insurgents from World War II.

[Optional: This kind of commemoration was not always successful. The town of Sládkovičovo was named after a Romantic poet³ whose last name was based on *slad-* meaning "sweet." A discussion with local schoolchildren revealed that they thought the town was named so after its huge sugar refinery.]

In at least one instance, the linguists failed to reconstruct a contemporary version of an old Slavic place-name preserved in a Hungarianized version: the name of Galanta was retained even though there was the potential to reconstruct it as Old Slavic *golęta*, which should have given *Hoľata* in contemporary Slovak.

² Louise Hammer, "Politics and Linguistics." AAASS National Convention, 1994.

³ Andrej Braxatoris-Sládkovič (1820-1872).

[Optional: With all this renaming, there was a local joke not far from Bratislava about the Slovak spelling being at odds with pronunciation even more so than in English: “Well it’s true that in English you write S-h-a-k-e-s-p-e-a-r-e and say [šejkspír], but in Slovak we write *Hlohovec*, and say *Frašťák*”; which used to be the town’s older name based on the German *Freistadt* and still used informally by the locals.]

The linguists were not involved in the other, specifically Communist, wave of post-World War II changes of place-names that removed almost all the occurrences of *svätý* meaning “saint” or “holy,” e.g., *Liptovský Svätý Mikuláš* (Liptov Saint Nicholas) became *Liptovský Mikuláš* (Liptov Nicholas), *Svätý Kríž* (Holy Cross) became *Žiar* (Brentwood).

But the Linguistic Institute did initiate another series of place-name changes that took place in the 1970s. One part of the drive was to “consolidate” place-names, so that a larger area carried the same name. As a result, e.g., the name *Tatry* (Tatras) was extended to the mountain range previously known as *Liptovské Hole* (Liptov Bald Mountains), which was abolished and replaced with *Západné Tatry* (Western Tatras); or the commuters in Bratislava were disoriented for a time when bus routes going to *Záluhy*, *Podvornice*, or *Dúbravka*, were all suddenly marked as going to *Dúbravka* while their actual destinations remained the same. The residents of the renamed neighborhoods had no say in these changes.

The other part of the drive in the 1970s cleansed original Slovak place-names of Slovak regional features. The most curious instance occurred in eastern Slovakia when the name of a village was standardized in a way that not all the local inhabitants were able to pronounce in their dialect, which lacks a syllabic [l]: *Kolčov* was changed to *Klčov*. In central Slovakia, neuter singular adjectival place-names ending in the regional *-ô* were changed to *-é*, e.g., *Podbanskô* to *Podbanské*. This standardization affected other toponyms too.

As in other instances, the changes were not carried out systematically. The irregular plural name of the village of *Hybe* was retained and the Linguistic Institute even deemed its irregular locative and dative *v Hybiach* and *k Hybiam* as correct, nor was the irregular name *Gôtoväny* changed to *Gôtovany*. Opportunities were also missed with the names of several mountains. On the one hand *Veľká Vysoká* ([the] Large High [one]) and *Malá Vysoká* ([the] Small High [one]) were changed to *Vysoká* ([the] High [one]) and *Východná Vysoká* ([the] Eastern High [one]), because it was thought illogical that a mountain called “high” should be pre-modified with the broadly synonymous “large” or with the antonymous “small.” At the same time, the name *Osterva* was standardized to *Ostrva* although the original meaning of the name is obscure to most speakers today, and so even if they cared, they would not be able to recognize that the original name is regional.

On the other hand, the names of two other mountains were retained, although they were assigned to them by mistake in the 19th century, because the mountaineers

who recorded them in climbing guides and on maps misunderstood the local dialect. The mountain of Zlobivá, which, they thought, derived from the Czech *zlobit*, “annoy,” is blatantly non-Slovak (the corresponding Slovak verb is *hnevať*). The name actually derives from the word for “troughs” pronounced [zhlobee] locally and should be *Žľabová* if the rules of Standard Slovak were to be applied to it. A similar confusion lurks in the name of *Český štít* (Czech Peak), which was a misunderstanding of the name of the valley below, after which mountaineers named it. The valley had the hardest-to-reach pastures in the area and was called “Difficult Valley,” pronounced [tseshka doleena] in the local dialect. If standardization were applied, the name would have been changed to *Ťažký štít* (Difficult Peak).⁴

The drive aimed at Slovak place-names came to its end when the Linguistic Institute attempted to change the adjectives referring to two frequently used place-names – Dukla, the pass through which the Red Army fought its way in World War II, and to the Moravian city of Brno. Certain types of Slovak nouns ending in the sequence vowel-consonant-consonant-vowel derive the corresponding adjective with *-iansky*: *Čadca – čadčiansky*, *Brezno – brezniansky*. But the adjectives used to refer to Dukla and Brno were *dukelský* and *brnenský*, the second one certainly under Czech influence and the first one possibly too – the pass was frequently mentioned in Communist rhetoric (it could also have been based on Polish or on a local dialect). Many streets were named after Dukla, and so the proposed standardization of the name of a Communist icon was noticed. The changes from *dukelský* to *dukliansky* and from *brnenský* to *brniansky* were rejected by the Communist Party and, incidentally or not, it was the last proposed change of a place-name initiated by the Linguistic Institute under communism; the form *dukliansky* was eventually accepted shortly before its collapse.

Women’s last names (the -ová controversy)

Another area where the official attitude to Standard Slovak had an impact on legislation was the suffix *-ová* attached to women’s family names. The requirement that women’s family names end in *-ová* was first codified in the *Pravidlá* published in 1953 after the Communist takeover. It was based on the model widely practiced in the Czech lands and introduced all over Czecho-Slovakia⁵ after 1918. No such all-inclusive rule on women’s last names was introduced in other Slavic countries.

The suffix *-ová* was only one of several possible feminine family-name derivations previously used by the Slovaks in their magazines, newspapers, fiction, and private correspondence. The most frequent derivation to obtain women’s family names was *-ka*,

⁴ This “standardization,” from “Czech Peak” to “Difficult Peak,” was carried out 11 years after this paper was delivered, while the mistaken, distinctly Czech name of Zlobivá was left unchanged.

⁵ The country’s name started as the hyphenated *Czecho-Slovakia* and was subsequently dehyphenated and rehyphenated several times. <http://www.pitt.edu/~votruba/qsonhist/spellczechoslovakia.html>

but several others were also used: *-ovie*, *-ovská*, *-ová*, and more. For instance, a woman from the Hurban family would be referred to as Hurbanka, Hurbanovie, Hurbanovská, Hurbanová. All this was colloquial. The suffix *-ka* is still the most frequent contemporary colloquial Slovak derivation of women's family names. Before Czecho-Slovakia was created, the Slovaks generally used the same form for men's and women's family names in formal contexts, e.g., in Slovak death announcements or business records. Štúr's and Hattala's Slovak grammars from the 1840s and 1850s did not see a need to prescribe a feminine suffix with women's last names, nor did any subsequent grammars until 1953.

For example, the retail-store records kept by the Slovak activist and entrepreneurial Houdek family in Ružomberok from 1884 through 1887 identified about 400 of their customers as female and Slovak by recording their names with *pani* or *slečna*, as opposed to *Frau*, etc., which they used for their non-Slovak customers. Only 4 of these 400 were recorded with the *-ová* derivation. It is certain that had the nationalist Houdeks felt that *-ová* constituted an important Slovak feature, they would have used it. Another example is the death announcement of Amália Burjan, wife of the pro-Slovak activist Jozef M. Burjan, MD, from 1892. It was printed by the prominent Slovak nationalist publisher Karol Salva, and the names of the bereaved on the announcement included some of the most active Slovak nationalist families: Makovický, Kunaj, Švehla, Škultéty. All the women's names from these families, including the adjectival name Makovický, were printed with no feminine derivation. Clearly, that was Standard Slovak for these people who actively promoted Slovak language, literature, and culture against the pressure from Budapest.

Unlike among the Slovaks, the ending *-ová* had few alternatives in Czech and was promoted by Czech nationalists in the 19th century as a marker to distinguish their ethnic group from the dominant Germans around them. Prague then spread the practice over the whole country once the Slovaks and Czechs were joined by the Allies.

The optional introduction of *-ová* after the establishment of Czecho-Slovakia did not produce any traceable resistance among the Slovaks. While this Czech and Slovak practice differed from the practice even in Poland with the most closely related language, it was in line with the tendency to always use nouns ending in *-a* in reference to female persons. By the time the suffix *-ová* was codified in 1953, there were only few Slovak women who did not use it, the well-known writer Margita Figuli among the few. The Linguistic Institute pushed the matter farther in the 1960s, when *-ová* was added to both parts of a hyphenated name. For example, the author Elena Marothy-Šoltésová (1855-1937) used *-ová* only with the second half of her name until her death, but the media had to start calling her *Marothyová-Šoltésová* in the 1960s. The suffix *-ová* became obligatory with foreign names too, from Elisabeth Taylorová to Hillary Clintonová.

When it came to women's first names, parents could not give their daughters names which did not end in *-a*, *Ingrid* became *Ingrida*, etc.

Under pressure from Hungarian minority activists, the obligatory *-ová* became an issue after the collapse of communism. The authorities, in agreement with the Linguistic Institute, now maintain that the suffix *-ová* is an inalienable feature of Slovak and therefore needs to be legislated. A representative of the ruling party recently said that "to omit the meaning-creating element *-ová* means to interfere in the ecology of the language." While many Members of Parliament were for a change in the legislation to accommodate the Hungarian demands, only few Slovaks were concerned that Slovak women, too, should be free not to use it.

[Optional: Those Slovaks who voiced their disapproval of the obligatory *-ová* usually argued that it shows the wife as dependent on her husband, but they were not concerned with the wife accepting her husband's name, which can easily be seen as a more substantial marker of dependence or subordination.]

The suffix *-ová* is not possessive as its opponents sometimes maintained.⁶ It is adjectival, as are some of the other derivations used with women's last names in the past and in colloquial Slovak through the present. It indicates that the woman "pertains" to that family, not that she belongs to anyone. Women who are not married use it too, and in the past and regionally, a similar derivation has sometimes been used with men's names: *-ovie*, *-ovský*.

On 1 January 1994, a law took effect allowing the official registration of personal given ("baptismal") names in any language. In July 1994 a law was passed (154/1994) regulating the official registration of women's family names. Its vaguely worded article 16 said that at the request of a woman of "other than Slovak ethnicity," her last name may be officially registered without the *-ová* suffix. It is worth noting that the law is based on the woman's ethnicity and that it does not mandate that the name itself be non-Slovak. Ethnicity is a matter of free choice for all the citizens of Slovakia, that anyone can change their registered ethnicity without any restrictions. In other words, the law is based on the citizen's free choice as long as she is willing to change her declared ethnicity.

So, for instance, a woman who registered her ethnicity as Slovak and is married to John Smith would have to have a passport issued in the name of Smithová, while a woman who registered her ethnicity as Hungarian and is married to Jozef Malý could carry a Slovak passport issued in the name of Malý. If any of them chose to change their registered ethnicity, their options as to the form of their name would change. None

⁶ The length of a vowel is relevant in Slovak, e.g., *tvar* with a short [a] is a masculine noun meaning "shape," while *tvár* with a long [á] is a feminine noun meaning "face." Slovak does have a possessive suffix, which works with men's as well and women's names and always ends in a short vowel: *-ov*, *-ova*, *-ovo* for the three genders.

of this is likely. People do not commonly change their registered ethnicity these days, and the overwhelming majority of Slovak women does not seem to be bothered by the use of *-ová*, nor by the fact that it is mandatory.

The draft of the Law on the State Language would restrict the occasions when a woman's name may be registered without the *-ová* suffix and impose a 100,000 Sk (\$3,300) administrative fee for doing so.

To sum up the *-ová* development: we have seen a grammatical feature that was elevated from the relative obscurity of being one of a range of colloquial features with the same function and shunned by those who championed Slovak causes in the 19th century, to the status of a symbol worth official legislation. Judging from usage before Slovakia and the Czech lands were joined together and from usage in the next most closely related language, Polish, the suffix *-ová* would probably not have acquired its present status without the influence from Prague. At the same time, it needs to be noted that as a result of decades of official promotion, *-ová* has indeed become a regular feature of Standard Slovak, even though not quite so of colloquial Slovak. None of that, of course, answers the question whether or why it needs to be legislated.

Drafting the 1995 Law on the State Language

In June this year, a new Law on the State Language was prepared by the Ministry of Culture. It has been reworked several times. Here I'll only discuss its most recent draft (2274/95). It comes with the Ministry's comments explaining the need for such a law. Among other things, it says that private radio programs, some print media, and some public speakers intentionally or carelessly breach the rules of the Slovak language. The comments make it clear that the authors of the Law take the "rules of the Slovak language" to mean the same as the "codified version of Slovak." While Slovak certainly has many more varieties than just Standard Slovak, an attitude that disregards the other varieties of Slovak is not new. We have seen that many place-names were changed not because they were not Slovak, they were – some so quintessentially that they could not have been Polish or Czech, e.g., *Podbanskô*. They were changed to make them comply with Standard Slovak. That is to say that the main goal here was uniformity and not, as is sometimes claimed, a desire to differentiate Slovak from other languages. It actually made some of the place-names more similar to the neighboring languages. The insistence on the suffix *-ová*, too, makes Slovak similar to, not different from Czech.

The Ministry's comments on the Law blame the communist period for allowing a decline of the prestige of the Standard Language. Because we have seen an accumulation of new guidelines about what is and what is not Standard Slovak over the same period, which the comment deems insufficient to have achieved their goal, the Minis-

try's attitude must mean that the authors of the Law see a need to accelerate the issuance of such guidelines.

If the draft of the Law equates the State Language with the "codified version of Slovak," which it seems to do, its application would have an important impact on the language of the broadcast media. Article 3, paragraph 1 says that all radio and TV broadcasting must be in the State Language. This would mean that regional varieties, so successful in attracting listeners to private stations in Britain in the 1970s, would not be allowed. The situation created by the Law would be even more idiosyncratic in view of the fact that the same paragraph says that foreign films and TV programs can be broadcast not only if they are subtitled in Slovak, but also if they "meet the requirements of basic understandability in another way."

The meaning of this clause was explained to me by a person involved in drafting the Law as a provision allowing untranslated Czech films and programs on Slovak TV and radio, or even of other foreign films subtitled in Czech. The application of this provision would then make it legal to broadcast a Czech program on Slovak TV and radio stations, but illegal to broadcast a Slovak program in a Slovak dialect. While the comments to Article 5 speak of a need to stem the impact of American English and Czech on Standard Slovak, the only influence the draft of the Law plans to prohibit is that of the regional and colloquial varieties of Slovak.

Article 8, paragraph 4 mandates that all signs, advertisements, and other written messages intended for public information and displayed in public must be in Standard Slovak. Article 9 then says that a private individual not in compliance with the Law on the State Language may be fined up to 100,000 Sk (\$3,300) and a company up to 1 million Sk (\$33,300). The statute of limitations for these fines is to be three years.

Envisaged language inspectors

If the law is passed, the Ministry of Culture will establish the Central Language Inspectorate with offices in all the districts. Any disagreements between the inspectors and those fined for failing to use Standard Slovak will be handled by the District Governments. These are appointed by the central government in Bratislava, not elected. Any appeals will be handled by the courts.

My interviews at the Ministry of Culture did not clarify the actual procedure by which a particular decision about a certain linguistic feature should become legally binding. It seems that those persons and companies who want to display Slovak texts in public will be expected to base them on the whole body of information in the *Pravidlá slovenského pravopisu*, in journals published by the Linguistic Institute, in the two Slovak dictionaries, and in provisional compilations of non-standard linguistic features and their standard versions prepared by the Ministry. Because the Ministry, too, sees

that this is a lot, it says it will be lenient. There are to be no fines, only warnings, during the first year after the Law is passed. After that, any offender is to be warned three times. If the text is not changed, the person or company will be fined. The money thus collected will be used by the State Endowment for Culture Pro Slovakia.

No one was able to explain what might happen in instances when the Law would have to be applied, in effect, retroactively. A theoretical example is a company that invests in a promotional campaign. Its advertising slogans are painted on sides of buildings, TV spots are shot, etc. The campaign starts and is scheduled to run for an extended period of time. The slogan may contain a grammatical feature that has not been described as non-standard before, but is labeled non-standard by the Linguistic Institute after the campaign is launched. To change the whole campaign might prove prohibitive for the company, and so might the fines. Numerous similar scenarios on a smaller scale, but equally costly for a company with a promotion at odds with the Standard Language, would probably take place.

[Optional: We may look at several examples taken from the Ministry's latest internal mimeographed lists of linguistic features that may be subject to fines if the Law is passed. So far, these lists have not been freely accessible – although I have eventually obtained them, one person at the Ministry was reluctant to let me copy them. Some of the linguistic features on them are labeled as unacceptable in Standard Slovak for the first time. This poses the question whether those who will be obligated by the Law to use Standard Slovak will be able to assume that they can safely write or say anything that has not been labeled as non-standard anywhere, or whether they should adhere only to what has been explicitly allowed.]

The authoritative linguistic goals that transpire through these lists are the same as those we have seen in operation in the past. Some do away with regional Slovak features, some with words from other languages, some with what was probably seen as illogical expressions, and there are some inconsistencies. The lists also show that the scope of their authors' attention is limited to western Slovakia, probably to Bratislava. They do not contain a correction of any regional feature other than West Slovak.

[Optional: An example of a standardization of a regional feature is the word *burčák*. It denotes young wine that has not been completely fermented, which is produced only in western Slovakia. Its standardized version, which has appeared on these lists for the first time in the history of Slovak, is *burčiak*.]

[Optional: Among the expressions that were probably considered non-standard for other than grammatical reasons are *nižšie uvedený* and *nižšie podpísaný*, spelled together or separately, as well as *doluvedený*, *vyššie uvedený*, *dolupodpísaný* and *vyššie podpísaný* – “mentioned,” “named,” or “signed” “below” or “above.” To avoid a fine, it will be necessary to use only *uvedený* and *podpísaný*, i.e. just “the mentioned, named” or “the signed.” The compound, *cezhraničný* in *cezhraničná kriminalita*, “cross-border crime,” is labeled as non-standard; the compound *nadštátny*, “supranational,” is to be used instead. But Slovak does have a similar, well-established compound *cezpoľný* “from another

village (structurally, cross-field).” The adjective *nadštátny* has so far been used only to refer to organizations of the kind of the European Union.]

[Optional: An example of some inconsistencies is the spelling of two recent loan-words. The French spelling *boutique* has been rejected and the spelling *butik*, based on pronunciation, is mandated. The opposite choice has been made with “bluff” borrowed from English. The spelling *blaf* based on pronunciation has been rejected, and *bluf* based on the English spelling is listed as Standard Slovak. The requirement that the Czech adjective *doporučený*, “recommended,” should be replaced with the Slovak *odporučený* is not new, but it is inconsistent that at the same time, the list accepts this Czech adjective in the phrase *doporučený list*, “a registered letter,” as Standard Slovak.]

Diplomatic spat over an apparent language rule

Official attention to otherwise elusive aspects of grammar is not peculiar to Slovakia. I’ll finish with the example of a choice between an adjective and a noun that has caused a recent diplomatic spat between Slovakia and Germany. It has a long history rooted in Cold-War politics. Germany’s attitude is still interpreted by the Linguistic Institute and by Bratislava as foreign interference in the rules of Standard Slovak.

When two German states were created after World War II, the Soviet occupation zone was called the *German Democratic Republic*, with the toponym or ethnonym German in the form of an adjective, and the three western zones were joined together and called the *Federal Republic of Germany*, where Germany is a noun. When the latter one was translated in Czechoslovakia as *Nemecká spolková republika* (German Federal Republic), the noun was switched to an adjective for political reasons. It was felt that the noun in West Germany’s name implied a claim on the territory of East Germany. At the same time, the Slovak (and Czech, Polish, Russian) translation was not an unusual decision from a purely linguistic point of view: the noun America in the United States of America and the noun France in the formal name of the Republic of France are also translated with adjectives in Slovak without any complaints from Washington or Paris. But West Germany did mind, because Bonn’s choice of the country’s name was, indeed, in line with its policy of one Germany.

Contrary to the Communists’ and Linguistic Institute’s claims, though, the form with Germany as a noun was not unusual in Slovak either. The official names of districts and of the Slovak capital are phrased in the same way, *okres Poprad*, *Hlavné mesto Slovenska Bratislava*; the English phrases (e.g.) Washington State, and the City of Pittsburgh are translated in this manner, *štát Washington*, *mesto Pittsburgh*; and there are names of Slovak companies which employ this pattern, *Grafobal Skalica* (this actually refers to “Grafobal in Skalica”). Moreover, the name of the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia used to be translated *Federatívna socialistická republika Južoslávia*, i.e., exactly as West Germany wanted to have its own formal name translated, and yet,

neither the Linguistic Institute, nor Bratislava have ever derided the Slovak translation of Yugoslavia's formal name as a breach of the rules of Standard Slovak.

The adjective was finally changed to a noun in Slovak (and Czech) as part of an agreement that led to the establishment of full diplomatic relations between Germany and communist Czechoslovakia. After that, the name *Spolková republika Nemecko* was used in Slovak. When the present government came to power in Slovakia, it started using the form with the adjective again (*Nemecká spolková republika*), under the influence of the Language Institute. And Germany, even after unification, was bothered by this to the point that it suspended the signing of several otherwise non-controversial treaties with Slovakia.

To sum up, under communism, when there was little legislation concerning Standard Slovak, formal attitudes to the standard language used to have an impact through informal channels. After the collapse of communism, formal attitudes had a noticeable political impact in the two instances when particular linguistic usage was legislated and when it was used in government documents. We can expect more such consequences if the draft of the Law on the State Language is passed and interpreted as mandating the use of the accumulated body of rules describing Standard Slovak, and of the rules that will only be described in the future. In contrast to the past experience when mainly some minorities felt adversely affected by ethnicity-related legislation, the new Law will also affect the Slovaks.