

CONSPIRATORIAL ACTIVITIES OF ŠTEFAN LAUNER AND ANDREJ LANŠTJÁK AGAINST THE NATION-FORMING ACTIVITIES OF ĽUDOVÍT ŠTÚR IN THE LATE 1840S

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Abstract

This paper focused on the disinformation activities of Štefan Launer and Andrej Lanšťák against the nation-forming activities of Ľudovít Štúr and his associates in the late 1840s. The first part of the paper focuses on Štúr's programme of the relationship between "individuality" and "commonwealth" of language nation-forming modernisation in Slovakia and Launer's and Lanšťák's idea of Czech as the most practical and natural language tool of the Slovaks. The second part of the study focuses on Štúr's and Launer's conception of the future ethno-modernisation path of the Slavic peoples. The third part is the dominant part of the study, in which the authors analyse the polemics, criticisms, renegadeism, and some ways of conscious disinformation and subversive activities of Š. Launer and A. Lanšťák in relation to the nation-forming activities of Ľ. Štúr and his collaborators. Despite the activities of Š. Launer and A. Lanšťák, it turned out that the path, which was started by Štúr and his collaborators, was successful, because it maintained the collective ethnic awareness and cultural homogenisation of the Slovak population in a politically unfavourable time.

Keywords: Ľudovít Štúr, Štefan Launer, Andrej Lanšťák, Disinformation, Language Reform, Civilisational modernisation of Slavic nations

INTRODUCTION

Institutionally, the term disinformation first came into use in the 1920s. Nevertheless, instances of disinformation can be observed as early as the preceding period. Examining previous instances of its use is essential from a methodological standpoint, particularly in the context of gaining

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historical perspective and analyzing the evolution of unreliable information. (Bruno, Moriggi 2025). Disinformation and conspiracy activities and influence operations have now become a common part of political and geopolitical battles for ideological, political, economic, or media power. The goals of these activities are highly malicious (Bale 2007): To damage the democratic space in which citizens create a free, high-quality, and inclusive society; to threaten national security; to undermine people's trust in the democratic system; to promote various ideological propaganda; to mislead an opponent or hostile group of people; to create a false image of an influential politician, a competitor's product, and the like; to create false narratives about the harmfulness of vaccines; to convince a certain group of people that events in the world are controlled or influenced by a group of people who control or influence world events. It should be emphasized that all the disinformation activities are particularly successful in politically, economically, ideologically, and socially divided societies, where the same event can be interpreted in several ways (Moore Sanders 2002). The danger of disinformation, hoaxes, and conspiracy theories lies mainly in the fact that they offer frustrated citizens clear-cut answers to complex socio-economic or political-ideological phenomena and processes (Stempel et al. 2007). The same applies to explanations of global issues, ecological disasters, and other serious events that aim to disrupt social cohesion, threaten public health (Havey 2020), the functioning of democratic institutions (Papaioannou et al. 2023), and polarise society in terms of opinion.

One way to influence a belief in various types of disinformation is to identify the social factors that contribute significantly to its spread (Mrva - Szabó 2025). In 2018, the European Union presented a key document for the online environment, the Code of Practice on Disinformation (Code of Practice... 2018). This was because disinformation spreads much faster on online platforms than through traditional media. This was also confirmed by the results of Flash Eurobarometer 464. The survey was conducted in 28 Member States from 7 February to 9 February 2018. A total of 26,576 respondents took part³. The following European Union documents (Action Plan against Disinformation, 2018; Tackling online disinformation: a European approach, 2018; Commission Guidelines on Strengthening the Code of Practice against Disinformation 2021; Commission Guidelines on Strengthening the Code of Practice against Disinformation, 2022) emphasised the strengthening of tools for detecting manipulative information in European Union countries.

³ for more details, see: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2183>

According to the findings of Katarína Matušková (Matušková 2024), the Slovak Republic is part of the multidisciplinary centre Central European Digital Media Observatory, which examines the main sources and causes of disinformation issues in the online space in the Central European countries. It is also important to note its anchoring in the Slovak legislative environment since 1 August 2022, when Law Act No. 264/2022 Coll. on Media Services and on Amendments and Supplements to Certain Law Acts (Media Services Act), which gives it the power to communicate with platforms and require them to comply with established rules, as well as the competence to deal with illegal and misleading content. Thanks to this Law Act, the Broadcasting and Retransmission Council was changed to the Media Services Council, which in October 2022 established the Media Literacy platform with the aim of bringing together entities with the same mission in the field of education.

There is a long history of conspiratorial activity. These activities can also be observed during the historically pivotal 1840s, when many intellectuals and patriots of the Slovak nation (Gbúrová, 2016) sought to find solutions for the future of the Slovak nation within the Austrian monarchy, Slavic and European borders (Gbúrová, 2016). These solutions focused on the cultural and political institutionalisation of the Slovak nation, following the history-making vision of humanity of Johann Gottfried von Herder and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Herder's conception was based on the connection between nature and society. He described it in detail in *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Humanity, 1784-1791). It should be emphasised that this conception was politically neutral, peaceful, and non-aggressive. Nevertheless, it acquired political implications in the multiethnic environment of the Austrian monarchy because it constituted the issue of ethnic minorities and the development of national movements in the form of language nationalisms. Hegel impressed Slovak intellectuals with the idea that history is made up of historical, state-owning peoples who gradually pass on the baton of progress and development to each other. With this idea he encouraged not only the intellectual elites of large nations that had not yet made their mark in the history of civilisational modernisation, but also the elites of small nations that sought to contribute to the debate on the progress of humanity.

It should be emphasised that Slovak intellectuals and patriots were highly differentiated. They differed not only in their political and social orientation and type of socialisation, but also in their views on the epoch of culminating Romanticism, on the Central European geopolitical environment, on national nationalisms based on the language-cultural-ethnic principle, on

civic modernisation, and on the results of the revolution of 1848-1849 in the Austrian Empire. What strongly divided them was the idea of Slavic commonwealth in the depressing atmosphere of disappointed revolutionary hopes. A part of them inclined towards an innovation of the Slavic idea on Austro-Slavic principles, others rejected it as an unfashionable cultural and political vision, and still another part pushed for an East Slavic concept led by Russia. Their platforms of opinion were being defined through personal contacts and informal discussions with intellectuals of other national communities within the Austrian Empire or the wider, mainly Slavic, world. Some of them transformed themselves into committed politicians, which brought them into disputes not only with domestic opponents but also with representatives of government policy. There were also those who, for personal or political-ideological reasons, became agents, confederates, or collaborators who cooperated with the ruling Hungarian political circles.

The above-mentioned issue of Slovak political thought in the 1840s can also be observed in the modernising ideas on Slovak and Slavic environment of three representatives of this thinking - Ľudovít Štúr (1815 - 1856), Štefan Launer (1821 - 1851), and Andrej Lanštlák (1829 - 1908). The objectives of this paper include (a) outlining a picture of the conspiratorial activities of Š. Launer and A. Lanštlák in relation to the nation-forming activities of Ľ. Štúr and his associates in the late 1840s; (b) verifying the thesis that the clash of values of two opposing political ideologies creates a hotbed for the rise of various controversial activities, some of which move from the critical exchange of opinions and attitudes to activities conceptualised by conspiracy.

We implemented the research issue using three basic methods. Considering the historical nature of the topic, we used the historical method, which was used to analyse the source materials obtained from contemporaneous Slovak and Hungarian press from the 1840s. The comparative method was used to find out the value differences between the ethnic-emancipation projects of the Štúr group and the projects of their critics. Using political-science research methods, we evaluated the ideological and political contexts of those projects and the ways in which they were presented in the contemporaneous press.

1 ŠTÚR'S PROGRAMME OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN "INDIVIDUALITY" AND "COMMONWEALTH" IN THE FIELD OF LANGUAGE NATION-FORMING MODERNISATION

Ľudovít Štúr was one of the founding figures of Slovak national-political history. Through his work and political activity, all the basic issue areas of the entire Slovak Romantic generation can be traced. One of these basic areas, which he programmatically named as the relationship between "individuality" and "commonwealth", was given special attention in his theoretically conceived contribution *Pospolitnosť a individuálnosť* (Commonwealth and Individuality) (Štúr, 1986).

The background of the relationship between "commonwealth" and "individuality" was in the value system of Romanticism, which opened the issue of the "awakening" of national subjectivity in complex socio-political conditions. The raising of this issue in Slovak society was specific in that it was carried out from the basis of the principle of humanity as the original, distinctive form of national existence. It could not be expected that the desire of the popular strata for transformation from a subject into an object of history would be implemented by way of revolutionary radicalism. Rather, a "painful" transformation, full of compromises and partial concessions, or permanent clashes with the political reality of the Austrian monarchy, could have been anticipated.

The Slovak national commonwealth in the 1840s suffered from significant deficits of nation-state existence. It was not a ruling ethnic group, it did not have a full social composition, it lacked a larger group of educated elites and a wealthy bourgeois and land-owning class, it did not have an effective political potential for action, and there was no mass national movement as a basis for the formulation of state political demands. Ľudovít Štúr was fully aware of this fact. He knew that in the politically and ideologically broadly profiled Slovak nation-forming generation of the time, in which there was no shortage of multiple clashes of a political and conceptual nature between supporters of republicanism and monarchism, federalism and centralism, absolutism and liberalism, Hungarianism, and pan-Slavism, he could only assert himself with his nation-forming programme by active deeds in the sphere of life practice. In the first place, he had to take a stand in the relation between the individual and the nation. This was important because there were many ambiguities, many shifting solutions, in the complicated and eminently romantic dialectic between the "part" and the "whole" which were exploited for their propagandistic aims, especially by the power political elites and their confidants.

In that period, Ľ. Štúr focused fully on the struggle to promote the Slovak programme, both in the linguistic-literary and cultural spheres and in the political sphere. His basic aim was to “awaken” the nation as an ethno-cultural “commonwealth” and thus to prepare it spiritually for service in the development of the civic whole - the Hungarian homeland. Štúr knew that language had many functions, but in terms of the formation of national subjectivity, collective cohesion, and national identity, its integrative function was decisive. In this vein, he sought to convince his opponents (Ján Kollár, Pavel Jozef Šafárik, Samo Bohdan Hroboň, Ján Horárik, Andrej Lanštyák, Štefan Launer, Ondrej Seberini, and Ľudovít Seberini) that without the separation of Slovak from Czech, a national “self-feeling”, i.e. a way of being an “integral” nation would not be created. Štúr rejected the “variant-wise” linguistic model as unpromising in terms of the language identification of the Slovak nation. Instead, he advocated the “delimitation” language model, but not in its purist, rather in a strictly tolerant variant, which emphasised the enriching or functional role of Czech in relation to Slovak. Ľ. Štúr believed that the perception of Czech in Slovak society as a pragmatic support in the development of written Slovak would in no way endanger its cultivation, appropriate to the circumstances of its existence.

Štúr’s purposefulness, professional qualifications, committed pragmatic politics, and skilful negotiation tactics should be highlighted as important in this act of ethnic emancipation. It was also important that he had no confessional barriers, which enabled him to unite all relevant confessional currents in the issue of the Slovaks’ literary language. The revolutionary events of 1848 and further developments after the revolution confirmed that the path of national identity development through a fundamental language reform, which he and his collaborators had started, was the right one, as it maintained the collective ethnic awareness and cultural homogenisation of the Slovak population in a politically unfavourable time (Gbúrová, 2009).

2 SLAVISM IN ŠTÚR’S PROGRAMME OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN “INDIVIDUALITY” AND “COMMONWEALTH”

Ľ. Štúr had a tough time coping with the relationship between “individuality” and “commonwealth” also in the topic of Slavism which was an important area of his national revivalist programme. Two periods may be distinguished in the genesis of his attitudes towards this relationship: (1) the pre-revolutionary period and (2) the post-revolutionary period.

The first period is characterised by his critical development of the Kollárian concept of Pan-Slavism. He revised Kollár's concept of Slavic cultural-literary commonwealth, especially because of the latter's conscious promotion and creation of Slovak national identity, which became one of the pillars of his Slavic programme. While J. Kollár spoke about the Slavic nation and distinguished four tribes in it, Ľ. Štúr incorporated 13 tribes into the Slavic spiritual synthesis, which he developed against the background of the Hegelian dialectic of "part" and "whole" (Štúr, 1886). Štúr's concept encountered criticism from the Czech side, which was understandable, since he divided the original Kollárian Czechoslovak tribe into two separate tribes - Czech and Slovak. This division did not suit the Czech poet, journalist, and politician Karel Havlíček-Borovský (1821 - 1856), who, after his personal experience with the Russian environmental, political, and social reality of 1844 (Bakoš, 1995), developed a "Czech" version of Kollárian concept of Pan-Slavism (Havlíček-Borovský 1956). According to that version, the Slavs do not form a single nation, but four separate nations. He favoured one "homeland", which should consist of Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia, and Silesia, and one common language (Havlíček-Borovský, 1956, pp. 39-42). This was an obvious inclination towards Austro-Slavism, which Ľ. Štúr considered a manifestation of egoism and lack of Slavic unity (Štúr, 1957).

The failure to implement the cultural and especially the political vision of the Slovak nation within the Austrian monarchy in the revolutionary period of 1848/49 caused disappointment and even fatalistic thinking among Slovak patriots. The revolution disturbed the evolutionary logic of their nation-forming thinking. Štúr replaced the issue of Slovakness with the theme of Slavism and its future and replaced the primacy of the nation by the primacy of the state. Since the Habsburg monarchy did not provide him with a model of an ideal state formation, he turned his attention to Russia as the only Slavic power. He moved from a dynamic conception of Slavic commonwealth to a Russophile-oriented Slaviness, which he associated with the idea of a supreme unity headed by Russia. He imagined it without feudal features - slavery, serfdom, gentry privileges, secret police, etc. He presented a coherent view of the post-revolutionary understanding of the Slavic issue in his work *Slovanstvo a svet budúcnosti* (Slavism and the World of the Future) (Štúr, 1993). At that time, he preferred the power of Slavic synthesis - Slavic "commonwealth" in his Russophile variant. He suppressed the dimension of a pragmatic politician based on the ideological concept of the relationship between Slovakness and Slavism and, just the contrary, another feature of his romantic nature came to the fore - the belief in a higher historical-metaphysical or messianic sense of history.

3 LAUNER'S AND LANŠTIÁK'S IDEA OF LANGUAGE MODERNISATION IN SLOVAKIA

The starting point of the pronounced positions of Štefan Launer (1821-1851) and Andrej Lanštlák (1829-1908) on the issue of the national language of Slovaks was in the criticism of the 1843 language codification act initiated by Štúr, which is the basis of the national programme of the Slovak ethnic group and its identity (Kačala, 1994).

Š. Launer (Gbúrová, 2019) responded to Štúr's reform initiative in a very vehement manner and rejected it as unjustified and harmful for the future of Slovaks. It could be assumed that it would offer Slovak citizens an original instrument of language modernisation that would be much more promising than Štúr's language reform. However, the reality was different. Launer presented the Slovak public with only a few reasons why not to adopt "Štúr's language" and why to adopt Czech, which he saw as the most practical and natural language tool for Slovaks. He summarised his position on this issue in his best-known work, *Povaha Slovanstva* (The Nature of Slavism) (Launer, 1847a), and in another less extensive book, *Slovo k národu svému* (A Word to My Nation) (Launer, 1847b).

Despite his good relationship with Ján Kollár, he did not accept his project of a unified Czechoslovak language, nor did he identify with the compromising attitude of Pavol Jozef Šafárik, who wanted to bring Czech and Slovak closer together. Launer base his arguments on the scientifically dubious claim that Czech was a local "Lingua Adamica".

A. Lanštlák became friends with Štefan Launer while studying in Halle. Launer won over the not-so-much pervasive Lanštlák thanks to his scholarship and uncompromising attitudes. Lanštlák repaid his great ideological role model with anti-Štúrian works (Lanštlák, 1847, 1848). In them, he confirmed his pro-Launer ideological orientation. In addition to extremely expressive language, misinformation and propagandistic themes, he presented in them a low professional level, especially in his analysis of Michal Miloslav Hodža's *Dobruo slovo Slovákom súcim na slovo* (A Good Word to Slovaks Who Are Suited to Hear the Word) (Hodža, 1847) and the programme of the first national association and the ideological and organisational centre of the Slovaks' national-cultural endeavours - *Tatrín* (Tatrín, 1844).

4 LAUNER'S VISION OF THE MODERNISATION OF SLAVISM

The civilisational paradigm of the Slavic and especially the Slovak world was outlined by Štefan Launer in his book *Povaha Slovanstva* (The Nature of Slavism) (Launer, 1847a). He constructed his ethnic-modernisation project differently from Ľudovít Štúr. He was aware that he found himself in an age of competing nationalisms of the emancipatory type. As emphasised by T. Pichler, “these nationalisms wanted to prove their legitimacy by pointing, mostly ideologically, to the uniqueness of the nations they represented and to which they ascribed a ‘mission’ in history” (Pichler, 2011).

Štúr's Slavic Pan-Russianism, or conservative utopianism, was out of step with liberal political modernism based on individualism and universalism of civil rights and liberties, which, on the contrary, was close to Štefan Launer. He looked at Slavism through the eyes of a European rather than a Slav. As a result, for him “all the peoples of Europe were united by one spirit” and attracted by something like “chemical affinity” (Launer, 1847a).

He attempted to show that into each branch of the “four-branched” tree of Western European scholarship the life of the Slavic tribes was to be “grafted” in terms of their “world-historical” foundation. Launer's solution was as follows: (1) Italian scholarship is represented in Slavic studies by the Illyrians, (2) French scholarship and French spirit are represented in Slavic studies by the Poles. (3) The English “world trade” and “shipbuilding” are represented in the Slavonic world by the Russian nation, (4) German edification, the German spirit in Slavonic world is represented by the Czechs, Moravians, Slovaks, and Silesians.

According to him, Hungary is divided into two parts. One part focuses on practical Western European politics. It is represented by the Hungarians who, as the lawmakers of Hungary, are oriented towards French and English scholarship and politics. The other part of Hungary is oriented towards the German theoretical and philosophical way of life. It is represented by the Slovaks as part of the “Czechoslovak tribe”, who are connected to German politics, morals, science, and religion. Their historical mission is to translate the German spirit into their own culture (see Gbúrová, 2019). The problem with these detailed ethno-cultural-religious parallels was in their very weak scholarly justification. For this reason, they became a propagandistic support for some politicians of liberal orientation in Hungary, who worked to problematise national-identification processes in the Slovak nation-forming environment.

5 POLEMICS, CRITICISMS, RENEGADEISM, AND CONSCIOUS DISINFORMATION ACTIVITIES OF Š. LAUNER AND A. LANŠTJAK

The shift from ethnic consciousness to national consciousness, which Europe marked at the end of the 18th century in Germany, was carried out in Slovakia by educated Evangelicals led by Ľ. Štúr in the mid-1840s. They opposed four factors: (1) The line of Czechoslovak cultural and language unity represented by Kollár's concept of Slavic commonwealth and cultural and language tribalism, where Czechs and Slovaks considered themselves as one tribe with one culture and a common Czech or Slovakised Czech language. (2) The extreme wing of the Czechoslovak idea, which supported the Kossuthian liberal project of Hungarian political nationhood and the Hungarian constitutional single-language nation state (Š. Launer, O. Lanštják, O. Seberíni, etc.). (3) The language "separatism" of Bernolák's followers, who based their choice of the specific form of the national literary language on the peripheral Slovak dialects. (4) The growing Hungarian nationalism, which stemmed from the so-called reform period of Hungarian political history of the 1930s-1940s, namely from Széchenyi's Great Hungarian state idea and Kossuthian patriot thesis - the identification of the language border with the state border. Evaluating all the consequences of this definition, Ľ. Štúr and his associates decided to qualitatively shift Kollár's attitude towards Slavic "tribalism" and to call the Slovaks a separate tribe and to elevate the colloquial language to a norm.

A native of Krupina, Š. Launer also took part in this process of national identification. towards the close of the 1840s. During his lyceum (Banská Štiavnica, Bratislava) and university (Halle) studies, he revealed a lot not only about his thought models (especially G. W. F. Hegel, M. Luther), but also about his character, which predestined him for the role of an uncompromising opponent of concepts, visions, and projects with which he disagreed. Several testimonies of his colleagues (Sládkovič, 1862; Grossmann, 1874) show that he had something of a Napoleonic complex: he was short in stature, resolute, persistent, ostentatious, ambitious, stubborn, quarrelsome, domineering, internally adapted to the role of a leader of a minority radical current of opinion. In 1842, when two rival wings formed among the students of the Bratislava Slovak Lyceum - the majority of pro-Štúr and the minority anti-Štúr wings, Launer gave vent to his leadership trait and programmatically sided with the opposition to Štúr (Kleinschnitzová, 1928). In Halle, he quarrelled with almost all Slovak students; only those who were opinionated, spiritually immature, and whom he felt needed a

strong paternal protective hand over them, suited him. In this environment he won to his side a native of Palúdzka, Andrej Lanštlák, who served him well in his anti-Štúr mission at the end of the 1840s.

Launer and Lanštlák defined themselves in relation to the Štúr followers by the radical rejection of their language reform, which they regarded as a gross distortion of state (Hungarian) and national (Czechoslovak) integration. Š. Launer took advantage of the complicated situation of the search for the most appropriate solution to the language issue of the Slovaks in Hungary to make visible his scholarship, his intellectual gifts, his conflicting nature, and his denunciations and renegadeism. He came to Slovakia with a coherent theoretical idea of ethnic-emancipatory modernism, which he published in Czech in his book *Povaha Slovanstva* (The Nature of Slavism), and later (in 1847-1849) he searched for its implementation possibilities (*Slovo k národu svému* (A Word to My Nation). Banská Štiavnica, 1947; *Všelicos pro obveselení mysli - Various Things to Cheer the Mind*. Banská Štiavnica, 1848; *A Štúr féle tótság veszedelmes iránya*. Budín, 1848; *Našim milým Slovákom* (To Our Dear Slovaks). Banská Štiavnica, 1848; *Vysvětlení proč náš král svržen jest z trůnu?* (Explanation, Why Our King Is Dethroned?), Banská Bystrica, 1849).

Lanštlák served Launer with his anti-Štúr and anti-Slovak papers (Lanštlák, 1847, 1848). He spoke, wrote, and exchanged letters only in Czech and Hungarian. In his defence of Launer's theses, Lanštlák sharply attacked Michal Miloslav Hodža for his national-emancipation demands (*Dobruo slovo Slovákom sucim na slovo*) (A Good Word to Slovaks Who Are Suited to Hear the Word), including his promotion of the Tatrín national association.

The Štúr followers watched Launer's and Lanštlák's actions very closely and considered a defensive strategy against this form of renegadeism. They knew that Lanštlák lacked not only a positive attitude towards Slovakia, but also a personal attitude, which was his great disadvantage in professional and cultural-political communication. His renegadeism was first-plane, explicit, transparent. Therefore, he was not a serious competitor for them. Perhaps that is also why they chose an unconventional form of attack against him - persiflage. In the satirical and humoristic column *Počta zo Sebechleba* (*Orol tatránski - The Eagle of the Tatras - a literary and educational supplement of the Slovak National Newspaper*), Ondrej Hodža, an associate of L. Štúr, in his article, "Čo bláznovi po rozume, keď ho nemá" (Why Should a Fool Care About the Reason When He Hasn't Got Any" (Hodža, O., 1847), ridiculed him with a thoughtful and well-argued magazine defence of the concept of the literary Slovak language. He revealed Lanštlák's low moral qualities, but also

the problematic level of his working method, showing false information, professional, and stylistic defects. A concentrated collective critical attitude towards Lanštják was considered by the Štúr scholars (in addition to O. Hodža, this struggle was joined in by L. Štúr, Karol Braxatoris, and Štefan Jančovič) as sufficient to convince the reading public of the *Orol tatránski* (The Eagle of the Tatras), published in literary Slovak, of his renegadeism and low professional and moral qualities. His 1847 pamphlet *Anti-Magyar* found a response not only among the Štúr followers, but also in the Hungarian press, including the organ of the Hungarian liberal opposition, *Pesti Hírlap*, which was known for its persistent proclamation of the Magyarisation of the historic Hungary. It should be noted that this pamphlet was written in Hungarian so that the theme of Hodža's postulates from his work *Dobruo slovo Slovákom suciú na slovo* (A Good Word to Slovaks Who Are Suited to Hear the Word) could be thematised in the widest possible Hungarian context and critically evaluated, especially in Hungarian journalism.

Š. Launer was a different type of opponent for the Štúr group. Some of them knew from personal experience about his stubborn nature, his indiscriminate ways of asserting himself at any cost, of being important in the environment in which he worked. J. M. Hurban, who was known as a serious man, pointed to another of his characteristics - sycophancy (Hurban, 1851), Launer's idea was based on the incorrect ethno-genetic theory that the Slovaks "are Germans in morals, science, and form of religion. They have been included in history to this end, to translate, to reinterpret into Slavism, the purest Protestant principle expressed in Germany, together with the Silesian Moravians and Czechs" (Launer, 1847a). He tried to substantiate his position with historical considerations, analogies, and contemporaneous knowledge from the Czech and Slovak environments, especially from the Hussite period. Launer's thesis of the Slovaks' connection with Protestantism was neither historically, nor sociologically, nor politically correct. Launer was not inclined to make compromises, especially on religious issues. He did not consider religions other than Evangelical religion to be spiritually beneficial. He spoke out strongly against L. Štúr on the grounds that he made concessions to the Catholic clergy in the creation of the literary Slovak language in 1843.

The language of Slovak dialects, according to him, is indeed "natural", but spiritually "raw", there is little high education in them. He could not imagine a priest preaching a sermon with high content of Christian narratives in the language of "crude" tavern communication. Unlike Štúr, he believed that the new codified Slovak was an undeveloped, terminologically poor language

that would not reach the qualitatively high level of standard languages such as the Czech he promoted. Czech, he emphasised, was primarily perceived as the liturgical language of Slovak Lutherans, as the language of the Reformation, the language of the Church preacher and religious reformer Jan Hus (1369-1415). Launer did not intend to abandon this tradition. L. Štúr had a strong opinion in this respect, which was confirmed in real language practice, that Czech could not arouse mass enthusiasm and activism in Slovakia. Despite this, Launer decided to become an advocate of the “old” language, he was unable to generate any alternative tempting offer of a great future for Czech in Slovakia. He went so far in his activism that he wanted to promote Czech through the publication of an anti-Štúrian Slovak newspaper in Czech. It was to be called Uhersko-slovenské noviny (Ugrian-Slovak Newspaper).

He needed to gain collaborators for the promotion of his liberal political programme theses also from the ranks of the national communities of Hungary, whose task was to destroy the emancipatory activities of the nation-forming elites of these communities. It offered various benefits in return for the above-mentioned subversive activities. Launer sensed that he could develop his ideas about the future political course and the practical advantages of that course by identifying with the political and ideological goals of the Kossuthian liberals and assisting them in their implementation. In particular, he introduced himself to them with his best-known book, *Povaha Slovanstva* (The Nature of Slavism) (1847), and a year later with a reflection written in Hungarian (Launer, 1848), in which he responded to Štúrian salutatory poem, *Cíti radosti Jeho c. kr. Visosti arcikniežaťu Štefanovi* (Feeling the Joy for His Imperial Royal Highness Archduke Stephen) (*Orol tatránski III*, 1848, pp. 655-657) to the new Hungarian Palatine Archduke Stephen in November 1847 (see Marták 1938, pp. 156-157). It should be emphasised that the above-mentioned poem, in which the Štúrians expressed their hope that the new palatine would be accommodating to the demands of the Štúrians, was for Launer both a pretext and an opportunity to present himself to the Magyarising political public with the ideologically condensed text of his developmental Slavic theory, his renegadeism, and his devotion to the Kossuthian political orientation, in which the idea of a single-nation and single-language Hungary took the dominant position. At several points in his text, he emphasised that he was indeed a Hungarian Slovak by nationality, who historically, etymologically, and spiritually belonged to the Czech-Moravian-Silesian-Slovak nation. Politically, he feels himself a citizen of the Hungarian homeland. With this pro-Hungarian attitude, he

bequeathed to the Štúrians that their language was only a Hungarian dialect, so that they have no right to have it recognised as the official language of a nation that does not exist in Hungary. The fact that he supported the efforts of Hungarian political circles to have Hungarian replace Latin as the diplomatic language in Hungary should, in his opinion, be welcomed by all the Štúr followers.

Another example of his destructive anti-national activity is in the controversial procedure he used in evaluating an article by Štúr's collaborator Ctibor (Zochius) Zoch (*Ohlas proti Ohlášení...*), which, in a correct manner (there was a preponderance of factual arguments over expressive evaluative parts), polemicised with Launer's advertising text (Launer, 1847b) related to the publication of his book, *Povaha Slovanstva* (*The Nature of Slavism*). Instead of calmly evaluating and polemicising with Zoch's arguments, he gratuitously demeaned Zoch as a person and belittled his evaluative approach. He wanted to present himself to his readers as an uncompromising debunker of false information about his book with his sharp polemical approach, but already his introductory remark ("Here you will see, the Slovaks, that Cochius's head is a slop cesspool; and do not say then that I have done him an injustice") hinted to the readers what type of unfair evaluation he resorted to.

One more piece of evidence is his indiscriminate attack on Daniel Lichard (1812-1882) in the text *Slovo k národu svému* (*A Word to My Nation*). His former colleague and teacher of mathematics at the Banská Štiavnica college announced the publication of the *Noviny pre hospodárstvo, remeslo a domáci život* (*Newspaper for Economy, Craft, and Domestic Life*) (the newspaper was being published weekly in Skalica from 27 April to 16 November 1849) in Štúrian Slovak. Launer was so angered by this information that he criticised his colleague for it in an indiscriminate manner. Lichard was deeply touched by Launer's "canal" criticism and found it necessary to react quickly to it to clear his name. L. Štúr, who originally did not intend to have further disputes with Launer on the pages of *Orol Tatránski* (*Eagle of the Tatras*), made an exception in the case of Lichard. He published his *Otvorení list...* (*An Open Letter...*) (Lichard, 1848), in which the reading public could draw their own picture of the differences between the level of the replies of the two "concerned" parties. Moreover, Launer suffered another defeat in this dispute: the disrespect of his students of the Banská Štiavnica Church-Evangelical "school", his Church-Evangelical commonwealth, the advocates of literary Czech, and the broader Banská Štiavnica neighbourhood, including the Catholic commonwealth of believers, whom he regarded as

supporters of the reactionary conservative national line. If we do not take into account the short critical editorial response of the Orol Tatránski (Eagle of the Tatras) to Launer's text Slovo k národu svému (A Word to My Nation) under the title Nová babraňina oproti Slovenčiče (New messup against Slovak) (1868), which was triggered by a number of letters, especially from the mining towns of Banská Štiavnica, Banská Bystrica, Kremnica, Ľubietová, and Slovenská Ľupča, then we can argue that D. Lichard put an end to the polemics with Launer's opinions in the Slovak press. In a certain way he inspired other publicists (e.g. from the camp promoting Czech or Czechoslovak) not to respond further to Launer's articles and books, which mixed real facts with deliberate misinformation.

Launer was very critical of the Šturians and their national activities. This was because he had strong political backing not only with the Kossuth liberals, but also with Karol Zay, the general overseer of the Evangelical Churches and an ardent promoter of the union of the Calvinists with the Evangelicals A. C. in Hungary, who worked closely with the Hungarian government political circles and had influence on the administration of Hungarian Evangelical education. Štúr considered legal action against Launer for his "canal" criticism of Štúrian activities, but he knew too well that he had more to lose than to gain in a potential legal dispute. He was aware that he had a negative position with the aforementioned K. Zay, but also that if he violated the condition related to the permission to publish the Slovenské národné noviny (Slovak National Newspaper) (this permission states that "hostile" articles, "irritating" personal or national attacks must not be published - Hodža, M., 1920, p. 258), he could lose his licence, and the political-legal "uproar" around Launer was not worth it.

Launer, with his anti-Štúrian and anti-Slovak attitudes and his defence of the governmental Hungarian policy, made the representatives of the domestic national movement particularly unfriendly. For them he became a renegade, a separatist, a persona non grata.

6 PRAŽÁK'S DEFENCE OF LAUNER'S AND LANŠTJÁK'S ANTI-SLOVAK ACTIVITIES

The establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic in the autumn of 1918 marked a qualitatively new stage in development of the Slovak nation and of the development of the literary Slovak language. The preamble to Constitutional Law Act No. 121/1920 Coll. (ZÁKON ze dne 29. února 1920), which began with the words "We, the Czechoslovak nation...", proved to be

a political issue in Slovak-Czech relations after the establishment of the new republic. The mention of the “Czechoslovak nation” appeared in pre-revolutionary political documents, but its presence in the constitutional text was a serious reason for the Slovak side to fear that the unitary construction of the state structure would enter the institutional construction of the state. Among the series of law acts adopted by the National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Republic, in connection with the topic under analysis, mention should be made of the Language Law Act No. 122/1920 Coll. of 29 January 1920 (ZÁKON ze dne 29. února 1920), which determined the principles of language law in the conditions of the Czechoslovak Republic. The philosophy of the law was based on the Treaty of Saint-Germain, which stipulated that Czechoslovakia should incorporate into its legal system the protection of language, racial and religious minorities. On the issue of language rights, Czechoslovakia was contractually obligated that the state would not interfere with the language, religious, commercial and other rights of its citizens. This law laid down the rules and conditions for the use of the official “Czechoslovak” language in official dealings, while at the same time providing a framework for the use of the languages of national minorities. The above-mentioned legal norm, which was perceived in Czech society as “a great work of tolerant Czechoslovak democracy” (Soukupová, 2015), caused considerable tension on the Czech political scene between Karel Kramář’s Czechoslovak National Democracy and the parties of the then ruling coalition. The latter accepted the terms of the Treaty of Saint-Germain without major reservations. K. Kramář advocated a “state” language, which he saw as a symbol of state independence and the freedom of the “Czechoslovak nation”. The ruling parties were in favour of adopting the term “official” language mainly because of the friendliness towards national minorities, but also because of the respect for the term “official language” which was in the text of the Treaty of Saint-Germain. Another reason was the negative experience of the use of the term “state language” in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire (Šútovec, 1999). The literary Slovak language acquired new social functions after 1918 because it became, pursuant to Section 4 of the above-mentioned Law Act (ZÁKON ze dne 29. února 1920), a state language in addition to Czech. The revival of the theory of Czechoslovakism formulated by certain circles in the Czech (especially Prague) environment at the birth of Štúrian Slovak was a negative phenomenon in the development of literary Slovak. Albert Pražák, who was a representative of Czechoslovak-oriented scholarship, also joined in the defence of Czechoslovak language policy. As a sharp critic of the Štúrian concept of an independent literary Slovak

language and an advocate of Czechoslovak tribal and political unity, he rehabilitated Launer's theory of Slavism (The Nature of Slavism) in his work *Dějiny spisovné slovenštiny po dobu Štúrovu* (The History of Literary Slovak During the Time of Štúr) (Pražák, 1922). He even regarded it as an original attempt at a philosophy of Slavic history and as a contradictory ideology of the representatives of the Slovak national movement (Pražák, 1922) grouped around L. Štúr. He especially appreciated Launer's "original" proof of the thesis of a Czech-Moravian-Slavic-Slovak unified tribal, religious, and spiritual whole. To arouse a sense of objectivity of the statement among the readers of his book, he was only critical of Launer's "biting" and "unpolished" style in his anti-Štúrian polemics, of his analysis of Czech nature, which Launer drew directly from the German Reformation principle, and of Launer's inconsistencies in his criticism of the Štúr followers. He overrated Lanštják's work (Lanštják, 1847), not because of its narrative value, but mainly because he promoted the idea of Czechoslovak unity on historical, linguistic, literary, and philosophical grounds and sharply polemicised with Štúr's philological theory of tribalism (Pražák 1922). Based on Launer's critique of Štúr's language codification act, he was critical of Štúr's writings *Nárečja slovenskuo alebo potreba písanja v tomto nárečí* (Slovak Dialect or the Necessity of Writing in This Dialect (1846) and *Náuka reči slovenskej* (Theory of the Slovak Language) (1846). He did not argue with their philological and cultural-social dimension, because he would have had to admit their importance as a tool of communication of broad layers of the Slovak population and organisations of cultural-social, religious, and public life. He saw the issue in the method of Štúr's argumentation, which, according to Pražák, was constructed from politically expedient "violent premises". The main motive for his criticism, as it was for Launer, was the anti-Czech political dimension of Štúr's codification. Pražák's rehabilitation of Lanštják's and Launer's anti-Štúrian critiques became one of his important arguments in the struggle against the language-political dimension of written Slovak in the early years of the Czechoslovak Republic.

CONCLUSION

The shift from ethnic consciousness to national consciousness was made in Slovakia by educated Evangelicals led by Ľudovít Štúr in the mid-1840s. They qualitatively shifted Ján Kollár's attitude towards Slavic "tribalism" and called Slovaks a separate tribe and elevated the colloquial language to a norm. With the language-cultural reform, which put to rest the Herderian

concept of a 'natural', organic nation defined through language, they engaged in a process of language modernisation that became the basis for the creation of political communities within Hungary. Štefan Launer and Andrej Lanštlák also intervened in that complicated process of national emancipation in the 1840s. They defined themselves in relation to the Štúrians by their radical rejection of their language reform, which they regarded as a gross distortion of state (Hungarian) and national (Czechoslovak) integration. They demonstrated their position in their anti-Štúrian polemics, in which, instead of substantive argumentation, they used various methods of disinformation and conspiracy in order to undermine the Štúrians' national development projects and thus to assist the ruling liberal Hungarian policy in promoting the concept of a unified Hungarian political nation. Despite various attempts to destroy it, Štúr's linguistic reform proved its historical validity

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