

Title: The New Slovak Purism of the 1990s: “Sins against Slovak”
Author: Mark Nuckols, Independent Scholar

In attempting to define or assert the cultural and linguistic uniqueness of the Slovak nation, Slovak language authorities have attempted over the past century and a half to keep their tongue distinct from Czech. Ľudovít Štúr based his standard of the 1840s on a Central Slovak dialect, rather than the West Slovak used by Antonín Bernolák in 1787, which was deemed to be similar to Czech. The multi-volume dictionary *Slovník slovenského jazyka* of 1968 evoked criticism from some scholarly corners that it allowed for too many borrowings from Czech.

The present paper will examine in detail one such apparent attempt, the booklet *Ako nehrešiť proti slovenčine*, or ‘How not to sin against Slovak’, published in 1995 by the Spolok slovenských spisovateľov. This publication takes as its stated aim the correction of common errors in public discourse such as business correspondence and the media. A significant portion of the “incorrect” forms cited are clearly Bohemisms, such as the derivational suffix *-ište* (Cz. *-iště*) ‘place [where]’, as in Cz. *letišťe* ‘airport’, as opposed to the usual Slovak forms *-isko* and *letisko*. Occasional examples of “incorrect” Slovak, however, seem to be rather hyperbolic attempts to rid the popular idiom of Czechisms, e.g. the citation of *nádražie* (Cz. *nádraží*), as opposed to the more common Slovak word *stanica* ‘station’, or *vylosovať* (Cz. *vylosovat*) as opposed to *vyžrebovať* ‘draw lots’. Indeed, the 1989 dictionary *Krátky slovník slovenského jazyka* gives no indication that the words *nádražie* and *vylosovať* are in any way substandard. The paper will make numerous comparisons of cited “incorrect” forms with older Slovak reference works in order to determine the extent to which *Ako nehrešiť proti slovenčine* reflects a desire to rid Slovak (writing, at least) of Bohemisms.