

THE LANGUAGE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND OF INSTRUCTION IN SLOVAKIA AND THE AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT

Helmut Slapnicka

The constitution of 4 March 1849 promised the Slovaks equal rights with the other peoples of the Danube monarchy. But their fulfillment was hindered not only by the resistance of the Magyar authorities but also by the lack of unity among the Slovaks themselves on the question of their literary language. While L'udovít Štur created a Slovak literary language, the two leading Slovak philologists, Jan Kollár and P. J. Šafařík, advocated Czech as a common literary language of the Bohemian and Moravian Czechs and the Slovaks. Kollár and Šafařík managed to win the government in Vienna over to their view, and the official newspaper for the Slovaks, *Slovenský noviny*, as well as all official proclamations destined for the Slovaks in Upper Hungary henceforth appeared in Czech. The Ministry of Instruction directed that the language used in the

imperial Official Gazette — in other words, Czech — be the language of instruction at Slovak gymnasiums and that the textbooks issued for the Czech schools also be utilized in the Slovak schools. The neo-absolutist „Czecho-Slovakism“ was a postulate of Austroslavism, which owed its temporary victory over the Slovak literary language to its function as an instrument for containing the Magyar influence.