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ROZHĽADY

PURISM AND NATIONALISM IN LANGUAGE NORMS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE NORWEGIAN AND SLOVAK SPELLING REFORM ADOPTED DURING WORLD WAR II

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Abstract: The linguistic situation in interwar Norway and Czechoslovakia had several parallels. The official languages in both countries were represented by two written standards: Norwegian in the form of Bokmål and Nynorsk, and, in Czechoslovakia, Czech and Slovak – separate but closely related languages that were officially referred to as the Czechoslovak language. At the same time, both countries adopted spelling norms during this period to gradually unify the language variants. In Norway, this process took the form of a mutual approximation of Bokmål and Nynorsk, while in Czechoslovakia, it primarily involved bringing Slovak closer to Czech. Both the Norwegian spelling reform of 1938 and the Rules of Slovak Orthography of 1931 caused controversy. Moreover, during the Second World War, both Norway and the newly established Slovak Republic – at that time Nazi Germany's allies – introduced revised spelling rules: the Norwegian Spelling Reform of 1941 and the Rules of Slovak Orthography of 1940. This article focuses on these wartime reforms and explores the impact of political changes on language planning. Through comparative analysis, it seeks to identify the elements, approaches, or ideas that may connect the new rules despite the different linguistic natures of the analysed languages.

Keywords: orthography, spelling reform, purism, nationalism, language policy, Slovak, Norwegian

1. INTRODUCTION

Interwar Norway and Czechoslovakia were connected not only by diplomatic, trade, and cultural contacts[1] but also by notable parallels in their linguistic situations. An official language with two varieties was used in both countries. In Norway, it was the Norwegian language with two written standards, Bokmål 'Book language' and

[1] An important figure who linked Norway and Czechoslovakia was Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature. In 1907, Bjørnson spoke out strongly against the new Hungarian school law, which significantly restricted the teaching of Slovak pupils in their mother tongue. As a sign of gratitude, a street in Bratislava was named after Bjørnson in 1930.

Nynorsk ‘New Norwegian’ (until 1929, these standards were called Riksmål ‘National language’ and Landsmål ‘Country language’, respectively). In Czechoslovakia, the so-called Czechoslovak language, a political construct that had two versions, Czech and Slovak, was used at the official level. Both countries found themselves in this situation for different reasons.

In Norway, this situation arose as early as in the Middle Ages. As a result of the plague epidemic in the mid-14th century, Norway lost a significant part of its clergy and nobility, groups that were carriers of written culture. Thus weakened, Norway was unable to resist the influence of the Swedish and later the Danish language, not only culturally but also politically. Furthermore, Old Norse (Norwegian *norrønt*, less commonly *gammelnorsk*) gradually disappeared as a written language. During the 19th century, in the era of national revival, impulses for the development of a distinct Norwegian written language began to appear. This effort resulted in two forms of the Norwegian language: Landsmål, which was based on Norwegian dialects, and Riksmål, which implemented Norwegian elements into Danish. However, neither form could secure sufficient support; therefore, in 1885, the Storting, the Norwegian parliament, decided to adopt a compromise proposal. The decision, known as *jamstillingsvedtaket* (lit. ‘the equality decision’), equalised both forms and is still in force today.

In Czechoslovakia, the language situation had a political character. The concept of the newly established state was based on the idea of Czechoslovakism, and it stemmed from the notion of a Czechoslovak nation-state. Furthermore, the state-forming Czechoslovak nation became significantly predominant only in this conception in a country where more than three million Germans, over half a million Hungarians, and Rusyns, Jews, Poles, and Roma lived. The constitution of the new state established that the state’s official language would be the Czechoslovak language, used in two variants, namely Czech and Slovak. However, the Czechoslovak language did not exist (Švagrovský 2006, p. 333). This concept was based on the need for an internally strong state (Kováč 2011, p. 181).

The coexistence of two forms of the official language ultimately led to attempts to bring them closer together in both countries. In Norway, these efforts had a mutual character, meaning that both forms were supposed to gradually converge by incorporating elements from the opposite form or by eliminating some of their characteristic features. On the other hand, in Czechoslovakia, it was primarily Slovak that was supposed to approach Czech.[2] The reforms that sought to realise this goal – the Norwegian spelling reform of 1917 (*Den nye rettskrivning: Regler og Ordlister* 1918), but especially of 1938 (*Ny rettskrivning 1938: Bokmål. Regler og ordliste*

[2] For completeness, it should be added that Slovakisms also penetrated into Czech (Nábělková 2017); however, compared to the changes that occurred in Slovak, it was disproportionate. Therefore, this paper focuses exclusively on Slovak.

1938; *Ny rettskriving 1938: Nynorsk. Reglar og ordliste* 1938), and the Rules of Slovak Orthography of 1931 (*Pravidlá slovenského pravopisu s abecedným pravopisným slovníkom* 1931) – caused controversy.

The new, revised orthographic norms of both Slovak and Norwegian were finally adopted during the Second World War, at a time when governments sympathetic to Nazi Germany seized power in both countries, namely Norway and the newly established Slovak Republic. In Norway, Vidkun Quisling and his fascist party *Nasjonal Samling* (lit. 'National Gathering') ruled, while in Slovakia, Jozef Tiso and the far-right party *Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana* (lit. 'Hlinka's Slovak People's Party') was in power.

These parallels make it possible to compare these "wartime" reforms, namely the Norwegian spelling reform of 1941 (*Ny rettskrivning: Regler for bokmål. Regler for nynorsk. Fellesregler* 1941) and the Rules of Slovak Orthography of 1940 (*Pravidlá slovenského pravopisu s pravopisným slovníkom* 1940).[3] In this paper, I aim to consider whether common ideas, approaches, or goals may connect these reforms at a higher level despite their different natures: Norwegian as a North Germanic language and Slovak as a West Slavic language.

I will outline a comparative analysis of the reforms from two perspectives. First, I will focus on the processes involved in shaping the new rules, identify the individual responsible for their preparation, and explore the declared goal. Second, I will attend to the content of the reforms themselves. In this regard, I am interested in the intention behind the implemented changes. I will then compare the findings and identify the similarities and differences between the analysed reforms. I will also reflect upon the impact of the reforms on the subsequent development of the language.

2. THE NORWEGIAN SPELLING REFORM OF 1941

2.1 Background

In 1885, the Norwegian parliament, the Storting, adopted a resolution on the equalisation of the two written standards of Norwegian, namely Landsmål – which was based on dialects and, since 1929, has been called Nynorsk – and Riksmål – which implemented Norwegian elements into Danish and, since 1929, has been called Bokmål. Over time, however, there were debates regarding whether it would be more practical to bring both varieties closer together so that they would merge into one in the future. The spelling reform of 1938 was significant, yet controversial, in this regard. A part of society viewed the reform critically. When Quisling's government came to power in occupied Norway, therefore, the government decided not to accept the rules

[3] In line with their titles, these normative manuals are referred to here as spelling or orthographic rules. However, it should be noted that their scope extended beyond orthography, since the proposed and adopted changes also affected other levels of language, especially morphology and lexicon.

and to prepare a new spelling in an attempt to gain public sympathy (Tjelle 1994, p. 26).

Quisling's propaganda derogatorily referred to the 1938 spelling as *det kohtske knot*, loosely translated as 'Koht's mishmash', referring to Halvdan Koht, the pre-war Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs who was the driving force behind the spelling changes. Additionally, the propaganda depicted the spelling as a manifestation of the "dictatorship of the proletariat", as it included *folkemålsformer*, forms characteristic of dialects, in the rules (Torp – Dahl – Lundeby 1991, p. 131).[4] However, in general, the occupation government was not sceptical about the gradual convergence of the written standards, Bokmål and Nynorsk; rather, it objected to the way this idea was realised in 1938. Eventually, the merger of the forms was part of Quisling's party's programme. Their language paragraph stated that "the natural merging of two language forms into one written language is promoted, but without coercion" (Lunde 1942, p. 172). The merger of language forms was also in line with the party's ideological goal, namely to unite and harmonise society as a whole, including cultural life (Tjelle 1994, p. 102).

However, it is necessary to note that *Nasjonal Samling*, as a small nationalist party, did not focus significantly on the language issue.[5] Even the intense debate about the future of the Norwegian language, which took place in society in the 1930s, did not gain substantial space in the party newspaper *Fritt Folk* 'Free People' (Tjelle 1994, p. 102). However, the disinterest in language issues did not apply to all party members. An important figure in this regard was the Minister of Culture in the Quisling government, Gulbrand Lunde, a linguistic idealist responsible for drafting the new spelling reform.

When Lunde presented the new spelling rules at a press conference on 26 November 1941, he argued with a historical-national ideology (Tjelle 1994, p. 106). The spelling reform aimed to create *høynorsk høvisk mål*, loosely translated as 'a noble Norwegian language'.[6] In other words, instead of convergence through the implementation of dialectal elements, fusion was to be based on a cultivated language. In practice, this idea meant that if there were doubts about a word, the focus should be on Old Norse to the greatest extent possible. This principle affected

[4] For example, in Bokmål, the past tense forms *glidde* 'slid', *klyvde* 'climbed', and *nyste* 'sneezed' were considered vulgar and unrefined. These forms, which followed the standardised past tense endings *-dde*, *-de*, and *-te*, stood in contrast to the traditional irregular forms *gled*, *kløv* and *nøs*.

[5] The fact that the party did not take a significant interest in the language before the war may be evidenced by the ambiguity and vagueness of the paragraph. Tjelle (1994, p. 102) highlights that the sentence contradicts itself in its essence. As long as there are people who oppose the convergence of forms, it is impossible to promote natural merging without coercion.

[6] This concept is not easy to define, as it is not known what exactly Lunde meant by *høynorsk* (lit. 'High Norwegian'). Tjelle (1994, p. 113) believes that the term referred to the language used on formal occasions in Norway in the Middle Ages, later replaced by Danish.

Bokmål to a much greater extent, as Nynorsk, which was based on Norwegian dialects, already contained Old Norse elements before the reform.[7] Nynorsk, thus, functioned de facto as a *reservoir* of cultivated words that Bokmål could adopt (Tjelle 1994, p. 113; Vikør 2022).

It was not easy to appoint a commission to prepare the spelling changes. Most of the experts who were approached refused the offer; therefore, the reform was ultimately decided by people without the necessary expertise and education. In addition to Minister Gulbrand Lunde, who had the final say, the commission included Rolf R. Nygaard, a university student of the Norwegian language; Johan Fr. Voss, a teacher; Sigvat Heggstad, a civil servant; and Johannes K. Norvik. The latter was the only one to link the preparation of the rules with *the new era* and called for strengthening relations with the German language (Tjelle 1994, p. 133).[8] The commission, lacking proper linguistic authority, prepared the new rules rapidly and hurriedly. The first edition was published in the autumn of 1941, a year and a half after Quisling's government took office.

The new spelling rules began to be used in newspapers, official communication, and translation literature in mid-1942 (Ramsfjell – Vinje 1978, p. 47).[9] The reform was also supposed to be introduced in schools, but this intention remained unrealised for several reasons. Apart from the shortage of paper, there was also insufficient support and sabotage from teachers. Moreover, there remained a considerable number of recently printed textbooks with the spelling of 1938 in storage. Therefore, publishers lacked motivation and economic resources to reprint books (Vikør 2022). In summary, most people came into contact with the new rules through the press.

2.2 Content

The spelling reform of 1941 was intended to be another step towards unifying the two written standards of the Norwegian language. However, in practice, there was no significant progress in this direction, and Guttu (2017) has even argued that the merger slowed down.

The lack of progress was due to the inconsistency and incoherence of the changes, especially on the Bokmål side. This irregularity is most visible in morphology. The reform, in line with convergence efforts, increased the number of feminine nouns that end in *-a* in the singular definite form, as in Nynorsk. However, in connection with verbs, the reform went in the opposite direction. Regular verbs,

[7] For example, unlike Bokmål, Nynorsk has retained the Old Norse system of conjugating irregular verbs (Nesse 2013, p. 51). The present tense is formed with one syllable, not two as is common in Bokmål. For example, compare *eg skriv* (Nynorsk) and *jeg skriver* (Bokmål), in English *I write*.

[8] For example, Norvik advocated against the past tense ending of weak verbs *-et*, and (unsuccessfully) proposed that the ending *-te*, used in German, should be adopted (Tjelle 1994, p. 124).

[9] However, the obligation did not apply to Norwegian writers. They could write as they pleased, and many boycotted the reform (Otnes – Aamotsbakken 2006, p. 164).

which, according to the spelling rules of 1938, could end in the past tense either in *-a* (a form typical of Nynorsk) or *-et*, have exclusively had the ending *-et* since 1941.[10]

Greater regularity and more consistent efforts towards unification were found in phonology. The reform built on previous rules and, at the same time, codified new forms in Bokmål inspired by Old Norse, such as the diphthongs *au* [æʉ], *øy* [œʏ], and *ei* [æɪ], as well as forms like *gammal* [ˈgɑmːɑl] 'old' (instead of *gammel* [ˈgɑmː(e)l]) and *fram* [frɑmː] 'forward' (instead of *frem* [frɛmː]). Aligning with this principle, forms with *o* instead of *u* were also introduced, for example, in the word *no* [nuː] 'now' (instead of *nu* [nʉː], and, nowadays, *nå* [noː]). This change is often cited as the most characteristic feature of the spelling reform of 1941 (cf. Vinje 1978; Torp – Dahl – Lundeby 1991; Nesse 2013).[11]

Nynorsk, rather than merging with Bokmål, was supposed to return to its traditional forms, which were abolished in 1938. These forms included, for instance, the ending *-i* in the singular definite form of feminine nouns (e.g. *bygdi* 'the village') and in the plural definite form of neuter nouns (e.g. *ordi* 'the words'). The abolition of these forms, which had a strong tradition in literary and religious texts, was considered by Lunde to be almost a crime (Tjelle 1994, p. 110).

As mentioned above, Nynorsk was closer to the ideal of "*høynorsk*", as it contained several Old Norse elements. Therefore, it is unsurprising that Bokmål was primarily supposed to approach this concept, although the extent to which the new rules succeeded in this regard may be debated.

A comparison of the reforms of 1938 and 1941 on an ideological level reveals at least a difference in argumentation. Instead of the social and democratic argumentation that characterised the previous reform of 1938, Quisling's spelling rules apply a more national-historical conception, although inconsistently. In some places, aesthetic principles take precedence, for example, when the ending *-a* in the plural definite form of masculine nouns (e.g. *gutta* 'the boys' or *hesta* 'the horses') was not retained in Bokmål, unlike in Nynorsk, due to its "vulgar nature" (Tjelle 1994, p. 122).[12] Therefore, in connection with the rules of 1941, it is not possible to speak of a unified and coherent language ideology (Tjelle 1994, p. 134).

[10] Lunde realised that the form with *-a* had a future, but, at the same time, he believed that its implementation was too premature. The form with *-et* was, therefore, intended to be transitional until the next spelling reform was implemented (Tjelle 1994, p. 111).

[11] The form *no* was never used in Bokmål before 1941, and it is necessary to note that it was not used after 1945, when the reform became invalid. Therefore, if the form *no* appears in a text written in Bokmål, there is a high probability that the document dates from the Second World War period (Torp – Dahl – Lundeby 1991, p. 131).

[12] Rolf R. Nygaard, a member of the commission that drafted the spelling reform of 1941, described the ending *-a* in the masculine definite form as "one of the worst vulgarisms in the language" and, in a letter to the Ministry of Culture and Enlightenment, insisted that this form must be excluded from the written language at all costs, warning that its retention would compromise the purity of the language (Tjelle 1994, p. 122).

3. THE RULES OF SLOVAK ORTHOGRAPHY OF 1940

3.1 Background

After the First World War, the standard Slovak language form known as the *martinský úzus* (lit. 'Martin usage', named after the city of Turčiansky svätý Martin) persisted in official communication, in literature, and in other styles of public communication (Krajčovič – Žigo 2004, p. 182).[13] This form was shaped under the influence of the cultural centre in Turčiansky svätý Martin at the end of the 19th century. It represented a relatively stabilised form of standard Slovak (Krajčovič – Žigo 2011, p. 211). However, after the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918, this language form came under pressure. The insufficient number of Slovak-speaking intelligentsia capable of leading state administration or education led to this role being predominantly assumed by Czech people. In this context, Slovak was enriched with new necessary terms from the Czech language, but, at the same time, the norm of the language began to fluctuate due to the unregulated adoption of Czech words. The infiltration of the Slovak language by Czech elements affected all linguistic levels, including phonology, morphology, syntax, and, especially, vocabulary (Kačala – Krajčovič 2011, p. 124). Therefore, the language situation in Slovakia began to resemble linguistic chaos (Kačala – Krajčovič 2011, p. 124).[14]

Furthermore, the concept of the newly established state was based on the idea of Czechoslovakism, presenting a unified Czechoslovak nation and language, used in two varieties, namely Czech and Slovak.[15] In this spirit, Slovak was to be reformed to get closer to Czech (Kopecká 2019, p. 79) and, potentially, merge with it in the future (Hrancová 2019, p. 78). The first step towards realising the thesis of a unified Czechoslovak language was the reform named the Rules of Slovak Orthography (*Pravidlá slovenského pravopisu s abecedným pravopisným slovníkom* 1931), published in 1931 under the leadership of the Czech linguist Václav Vážný. The Rules aimed to achieve Czechoslovak linguistic unity by "suppressing unique features of standard Slovak and incorporating Bohemisms into the standard norm" (Ružička 1970, p. 62).

[13] Turčiansky svätý Martin (today's name Martin) was the centre of Slovak culture and the seat of several editorial offices. According to Jóna (1973, p. 25), the *martinský úzus* was based on the speech of the inhabitants of Martin in the 1860s and 1870s.

[14] It should be noted that interaction between Slovak and Czech predates the establishment of Czechoslovakia. Various forms of linguistic blending existed, including the so-called "slovakised Czech" (see Kesselová – Slančová 2010). In addition, Slovak scholars frequently used biblical Czech as a literary language in the 18th and 19th centuries. However, the creation of Czechoslovakia in 1918 marked a turning point, as this interaction was redefined by the ideology of Czechoslovakism and by institutional efforts to bring Slovak closer to Czech, as discussed in the main text.

[15] Some later textbooks also define the standard language in this way. For instance, Stanislav (1938, p. 177) in his *Československá mluvnica* 'Czechoslovak grammar' stated that "by the Czechoslovak language, we understand a distinct linguistic group within the Western Slavic languages, encompassing all dialects from Cheb to Uzhhorod, with two written standards – Czech and Slovak".

After the Rules were issued, the Slovak public was divided into two camps. While the Czechoslovak centralist press, authorities, and schools accepted them as the norm, the autonomist press and the *Matica slovenská* (the oldest Slovak national, cultural, and scientific organisation) did not accept most of the rules in their publications (Hrancová 2019, p. 80). A year later, at the general assembly of the *Matica slovenská*, the Rules of 1931 were rejected precisely due to their convergence tendencies towards the Czech language. Furthermore, the authorities ordered the preparation of a completely new norm, "which would primarily meet national-representative, cultural-representative, and national-integrative criteria and be a sufficient reflection of the distinctive features between Slovak and Czech" (Žigo 1997, p. 183).

In response to this situation, *Matica slovenská* launched *Slovenská reč* 'Slovak speech' in 1932 – the first Slovak linguistically oriented journal. The journal actively promoted the principles of the *martinský úzus* and aimed to stabilise the standard by advocating domestic forms and opposing excessive Czech influence (Krajčovič 2004, p. 325).[16] Its chief editor was Henrich Bartek, representative of the Language Department of *Matica slovenská* and a supporter of the movement for the distinctiveness and purity of standard Slovak. Bartek not only shaped the editorial direction of the journal but also made the main contribution to the nearly seven-year preparation and overall implementation of the new proposal of the Rules.

The proposal followed the tradition of the *martinský úzus*, and linguistic correctness was sought both in earlier historical stages of Slovak and in dialects, which were considered a legitimate internal source for enriching the language's vocabulary, particularly as an alternative to borrowing foreign words (Peciar 1950, p. 258). In addition, the proposal reflected the perspective of the Prague linguistic circle, which emphasised a synchronic approach to the written variety of the national language and the stability and functionality of its linguistic means (Kopecká 2019, p. 93).

The new Rules of Slovak Orthography proposal was submitted by the *Matica slovenská* to the Minister of Education on 22 March 1939, eight days after the establishment of the independent Slovak Republic. Despite expectations that the approval process would be spontaneous in the new political and linguistic situation, the proposal was not approved by the ministry and was sent back for revision. A university commission composed of philologists and historians working at the Slovak University (originally and currently Comenius University) classified the

[16] In the interwar period, *Slovenská reč* published both analytical studies and articles on various aspects of the Slovak language. However, a substantial portion of its content consisted of short purist contributions intended to stabilise the standard language. According to Jánsky (1940), nearly half of the 3,134 such contributions published during the journal's first seven years focused on expressions of Czech origin (46.5%), while considerably fewer addressed German loanwords (8.2%) and words of Hungarian origin (3%).

proposal as overly purist and insufficiently scientifically prepared (Krajčovič – Žigo 2011, p. 230). The subjects of dispute were lexical borrowings from Czech, as well as the spelling changes concerning the unified writing of the verb ending *-li* in the past tense[17]; the phonetic spelling of the prefix *s-/z-/zo-*; and the binding of the prepositions *z*, *zo* (of, from) with the genitive and *s*, *so* (with) with the instrumental (Kopecká 2019, p. 96). The revised Rules were published in 1940.

3.2 Content

The Rules of Slovak Orthography of 1940 respected Bartek's proposal to eliminate most of the Bohemisms. However, the 1940's spelling reform refused to make some Bartek's adjustments that would have significantly transformed Slovak spelling, potentially moving it further away from Czech. For example, the previously mentioned unified writing of the suffix *-li* in the plural form of the past tense or the writing of the prefixes *s-*, *z-*, *so-*, and *zo-* following pronunciation rather than the principle of meaning (direction from top to bottom, from one place to another, etc.) were among the adjustments that were ultimately rejected. This stance was justified, among other reasons, by Škultéty's views on the Slavic context of Slovak spelling (Jóna 1963, p. 248).

The revised Rules, thus, represented a compromise: While a radical spelling reform proposed in 1939 was rejected, as were the *extreme* demands of anti-Czech purism[18] (Blanár – Jóna – Ružička 1974, p. 209), most of the demands of the autonomists were accepted. For example, Czech doublets were removed, with a few exceptions, and the introduction to the Rules (*Pravidlá slovenského pravopisu s pravopisným slovníkom* 1940, p. 3) stated that "the main aim was to eliminate various foreign elements from Slovak spelling that had entered it due to undesirable extralinguistic influences". In connection with the Rules of 1940, this revision is, therefore, more of a return from a unifying, Czech-oriented position to a position represented by the previous Martin period (Jarošová 2012, p. 257) than an attempt at a more significant transformation of the Slovak language.

The spelling reform also eliminated the split in language practice of the 1930s, when one part of the public respected the 1931 Rules in communication and the other part adhered to the recommendations of the *Matica slovenská*.

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[17] Until then, a distinction was made between forms *-li* for the masculine animate plural and *-ly* for the masculine inanimate, feminine, and neuter plural; for example, *muži spievali*, 'the men were singing', but *ženy spievaly*, 'the women were singing'.

[18] Ondrejovič (2003, p. 11) and Krajčovič – Žigo (2011, p. 223) describe cases of extreme purism as instances where the decisive, and sometimes the only argument for rejecting a certain term, was its Czech origin or its existence in the Czech language. Kopecká (2019, p. 81) cites *mrazivo* as an example proposed by purists to be used instead of the (now widespread) word *zmrzlina* (in English *ice cream*), borrowed from Czech.

4. THE NORWEGIAN AND SLOVAK SPELLING REFORMS IN COMPARISON

4.1 What do the reforms have in common?

Several parallels can be observed between the Norwegian spelling reform of 1938 and the Rules of Slovak Orthography of 1931. As mentioned earlier, these rules aimed to merge language varieties into one. On the Norwegian side, the goal was to bring Bokmål and Nynorsk closer to each other, while on the Czechoslovak side, the goal was to bring Slovak closer to Czech. However, both reforms encountered resistance, and the question of preparing new rules gradually became more pressing. In both cases, this pressure ultimately led to the adoption of revised spelling reforms during the Second World War: in Slovakia in 1940 and in Norway in 1941.

The aims of the wartime reforms reveal that they are connected by the effort to establish or return to what is "native" and "authentic" for the language, depending on how the authors of the reforms themselves understood and defined this phenomenon. In the case of the Norwegian language, it was a return to forms typical of Old Norse. In Slovak, this effort involved the removal of "various foreign elements" (*Pravidlá slovenského pravopisu s pravopisným slovníkom* 1940, p. 3), meaning Bohemisms, and a return to usage that prevailed before intensified language contact with Czech and the implementation of the idea of Czechoslovakism.

Considering the period in which the new spelling rules were adopted, the question arises as to the extent to which these efforts can be attributed to political changes. Both the *Nasjonal Samling*, which came to power in Norway, and Lunde, who was responsible for the spelling reform, looked back at the Old Norse period as a great national epoch (Tjelle 1994, p. 99).[19] The national-historical ideology that prevailed in the creation of the new spelling represents a change from the social and democratic approach that characterised the 1938 reform. In this sense, there is room to admit that the nationalist ideology of the new regime influenced the goal of the reform. A similar development is observed on the Slovak side as well. The ideology of the newly formed Slovak Republic, which emphasised national – that is, Slovak – identity, aligned with the effort to return from the Czech-oriented position to the position represented by the previous Martin codification (Jarošová 2012, p. 257).

While the political environment may have influenced language strategies in both cases, crucially, it was not the sole determining factor. Slovakia provides an example. The commission responsible for deciding on the new spelling had an even more puristic alternative on the table, developed during the First Czechoslovak Republic (i. e., the Bartek's proposal from 1939), which they rejected. Apart from concerns about "insufficient scientific preparation" (Krajčovič – Žigo 2011, p. 230),

[19] For example, within the *Nasjonal Samling* party, the Old Norse phrase *heil og sæl* (lit. 'happy and healthy') was commonly used as a greeting (Hamre 2019, p. 45).

personal animosities between the proponent, Henrich Bartek, and the evaluator, Ján Stanislav (Švagrovský – Žigo 1994, p. 99), as well as the effort to preserve the Slavic continuum (Jóna 1963, p. 248), also played a role. Factors other than national-historical criteria also entered into the process of creating the Norwegian reform. An example is the aesthetic factor that prevailed in Nynorsk regarding the past tense forms of the auxiliary verbs *kunne* 'could', *skulle* 'should', and *ville* 'would/wanted to'. These verbs were proposed to be written with *d – kunde*, *skulde*, and *vilde*, as they appeared more dignified in this form (Tjelle 1994, p. 111). These facts indicate that, alongside political changes, a number of other factors influenced the development of new spelling rules. Notably, this is the second point where the analysed reforms intersect.

4.2 What makes the reforms different?

Aside from the parallels between the analysed spelling reforms, their differences are also noteworthy. There were differences on several levels, from the goals of the reform through their preparation and implementation to their impact on further development.

As I hinted at in the previous section, despite the common effort to reconnect with what is "native" and "authentic" in both languages, the new spelling rules differed in the question of the gradual convergence of standard forms. This goal was understandably irrelevant in Slovak due to new circumstances because the political concept of a unified Czechoslovak language lost its relevance with the establishment of the independent Slovak Republic. Nevertheless, the Norwegian reform declared an interest in continuing efforts to merge Bokmål and Nynorsk, although it can be debated as to what extent this goal was achieved. At the very least, in the declarative sense, this divergence may be seen as a notable contradiction.

It is also important to reiterate that the starting points for preparing new rules were substantially different. While work on the Slovak reform began as early as during the First Czechoslovak Republic in the 1930s, the Norwegian reform was exclusively developed in the atmosphere of the World War and haste. The first edition was published in the autumn of 1941, a year and a half after Quisling's government came to power. Perhaps it is precisely from here, in combination with an unprofessional commission, that the inconsistency and incoherence of the Norwegian reform arise. To clarify, most of the work in preparing the new rules was done by a 22-year-old Norwegian language student, Rolf R. Nygaard, who had no prior experience with this type of work (Tjelle 1994, p. 131). In contrast, in Slovakia, a commission comprising philologists and historians working at the Slovak University (formerly and currently Comenius University) was formed to assess the proposal of Bartek. In other words, unlike Norway, the Slovak commission did not have to deal with questions regarding its authority and quality.

Lastly, it is crucial to highlight how the new spelling reforms were received by the broader public. The Norwegian reform faced sabotage, not only from teachers but also from publishers. Similarly, in the Slovak Republic, some people disagreed with the spelling reform of 1940, such as Henrich Bartek, the author of the unsuccessful proposal from 1939. However, the intensity of their disagreement did not reach the same levels as in Norway.

The combination of these points may partly explain why the reforms fundamentally diverge in terms of their impact on further language development.

4.3 Impact on further language development

After the Second World War, Quisling's spelling was abolished, and Norway reverted to the rules of 1938. Otnes and Aamotsbakken (2006, p. 164) stated that the 1941 reform left no traces, and Tjelle (1994, p. 69) added that nothing would have changed even if experts had been involved in its preparation. The biggest challenge with the spelling was the lack of legitimacy as a product of the *Nasjonal Samling* (Tjelle 1994, p. 69).

In contrast, the Slovak spelling reform adopted in 1940 continued to serve as a norm even after the Second World War and the restoration of Czechoslovakia until 1953. The decision to replace the spelling of 1940 was not driven by its origin during the Slovak Republic (1939–1945), but rather by its practical inefficiency (Krajčovič – Žigo 2011, p. 227). The reason was the complex spelling principle, which relied on various semantic criteria and served as a compromise between Bartek's initial proposal and the demands of the university commission, such as direction from top to bottom, from one place to another, etc. (Švagrovský – Žigo 1994, p. 103). In line with structuralist methodology, there was a need to evaluate the existing spelling norm and prepare a new codification, which was published in 1953.

In the linguistic journal *Naše řeč* 'Our speech', Czech philologist Váhala (1954, p. 34) stated that the spelling of 1940 was marked by "reactionary bourgeois nationalism", manifesting in language policy as "chauvinistically nationalist purism". These words, however, must be understood in the context of the regime at that time. While it is undeniable that the Rules of 1940 eliminated most of the Bohemisms, as I have pointed out, not all purist demands were incorporated. Paradoxically, in this regard, the new reform of 1953 (*Pravidlá slovenského pravopisu s pravopisným a gramatickým slovníkom* 1953) was more consistent, and it almost entirely respected Bartek's proposal from 1939 (Švagrovský – Žigo 1994, p. 103).[20] However, for ideological reasons, this step could not be publicly declared (Kopecká 2019, p. 99).

[20] More precisely, the 1953 reform adopted Bartek's proposed orthographic changes regarding the past tense suffix *-li* and the use of *s-/so-/z-/zo-*. However, his purist stance concerning lexicon, especially the rejection of Bohemisms, was not fully incorporated.

In terms of long-term impact, while the Norwegian spelling reform of 1941 represents a dead end in the development of Norwegian, Kačala and Krajčovič (2011, p. 167) describe the period after 1940 as "the period of the most intensive development and the greatest boom" in the history of standard Slovak.

Ultimately, the differing trajectories of the two wartime reforms seem to hinge not only on their linguistic features or their degree of alignment with natural language usage, but also on their symbolic legitimacy within the socio-political context in which they were implemented. The Slovak reform of 1940, although adopted during an authoritarian regime, was perceived as a continuation of earlier national codification efforts initiated in the interwar period. It was based on work carried out by established linguistic institutions such as the *Matica slovenská* and represented a compromise, whereas a more radical reform of spelling had been rejected. In contrast, the Norwegian reform of 1941 was closely associated with the collaborationist Quisling regime. Its lack of pre-war legitimacy and politically character contributed to its eventual rejection, not solely on linguistic grounds, but as part of a broader act of symbolic distancing in the post-war period.[21]

5. CONCLUSION

Despite the similarities between the Norwegian spelling reform of 1941 and the Rules of Slovak Orthography of 1940, the differences appear to be more prominent. The distinctions are related not only to the preparation, implementation, content, and impact of the reforms but also to the number of publications on the reforms available. While there are dozens of sources discussing the Slovak reform (including the unapproved proposal from 1939, cf. Kačala – Krajčovič 2011; Krajčovič – Žigo 2011; Kopecká 2019), there are significantly fewer such sources on the Norwegian side. Even when attention is given to the reform, it often consists of scant information (cf. Vinje 1978; Otnes – Aamotsbakken 2006; Nesse 2013). An exception is Arne Tjelle's thesis (1994), which comprehensively captures the reform. This lack of attention creates opportunities for further exploration, particularly on the Norwegian side.

I believe two factors significantly influence this situation. First, as mentioned earlier, the Norwegian reform ceased to be effective after the end of the Second World War. Second, the reform was a product of the Quisling government. Therefore, there might have been a strategy not to pay excessive attention to the reform. The situation in Slovakia was different. The reform remained in effect until 1953, shaping the language for a longer period, and its validity, as well as its preparation, was not exclusively tied to the Slovak Republic (1939–1945). Additionally, the perception of

[21] This was not the only case where authoritative language planning met with resistance in Norway. A later example is the *Samnorsk* policy – a post-war attempt to merge Bokmål and Nynorsk into a unified written standard – which also faced considerable opposition and was officially abandoned in 2002.

the existence of this period is not uniformly negative in society. According to a 2024 survey (Tomečková 2024), slightly less than a third of the Slovak population holds a negative view of the wartime Slovak state.

Another interesting discrepancy I noticed while studying the materials is the characterisation of the analysed reforms in publications. While the Norwegian spelling reform of 1941 is also described with expressive terms such as "Quisling's" (cf. Vinje 1978) and "Nazi" (cf. Otnes – Aamotsbakken 2006; Ramsfjell – Vinje 1978) or regarded as a curiosity in the development of Norwegian (Tjelle 1994, p. 5), I have not observed this phenomenon on the Slovak side.[22] A comparative analysis of the two 'wartime' reforms has, therefore, uncovered interesting aspects to explore in future research.

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[22] It is worth noting, however, that although the 1940 Slovak reform is not explicitly framed in these ideological terms, its purist tendencies were increasingly problematised after the war (cf. Peciar 1950; Váhala 1954). As Múcsková (2017, p. 42) points out, even today, attempts to discuss linguistic purism in a neutral, descriptive manner – without evaluating it as either beneficial or harmful to the standard language – remain problematic.

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Resumé

PURIZMUS A NACIONALIZMUS V JAZYKOVEJ NORME: KOMPARATÍVNA ANALÝZA PRAVOPISNÝCH REFORIEM NÓRČINY A SLOVENČINY PRIJATÝCH POČAS 2. SVETOVEJ VOJNY

Jazyková situácia v medzivojnovom Nórsku a Československu vykazuje viacero paralel. Úradné jazyky v oboch krajinách existovali v dvoch variantoch: nórčina vo forme bokmål a nynorsk a československý jazyk v českom a slovenskom znení. Zároveň obe krajiny prijali v tomto období pravopisné normy s cieľom postupného zjednotenia variantov jazyka do jedného. V Nórsku mal tento proces podobu vzájomného sa približovania foriem bokmål a nynorsk, zatiaľ čo v Československu išlo predovšetkým o priblíženie sa slovenčiny češtine. Obe normy – nórska z roku 1938 a slovenská z roku 1931 – vyvolali kontroverzie, a v oboch prípadoch sa počas druhej svetovej vojny, v čase, keď Nórsko i novovzniknutý Slovenský štát boli spojencami nacistického Nemecka, prijali nové pravidlá: nórska pravopisná reforma z roku 1941 a *Pravidlá slovenského pravopisu* z roku 1940. Tento článok sa zameriava na uvedené reformy prijaté počas druhej svetovej vojny a skúma, aký vplyv mali politické zmeny na jazykové plánovanie. Prostredníctvom komparatívnej analýzy sa snaží identifikovať prvky, východiská či idey, ktoré spájajú nové pravidlá napriek odlišnej lingvistickej povahe analyzovaných jazykov.