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## **The Štúr's and Slovak education in the first half of the 19th century**

In the first half of the 19th century a law of 1806 was still in force in the field of education in Hungary. This law defined the organisation and content of education, it was based on the school reforms of Empress Maria Theresa (1740–1780).<sup>1</sup> The state had strengthened its influence on education and adapted it to the changing needs of economic and social life.

The level of education in the territory of present-day Slovakia, which belonged to the Kingdom of Hungary in this period, increased slowly, and the first seminaries for the education of teachers were gradually established. On the basis of this law, the Hungarian Royal Council of Governors prescribed which textbooks would be used for all schools.

The highest level of education in the territory during this period was provided by the priests' seminaries of the Royal Academy in Bratislava and Košice and by The Mining and Forestry Academy in Banská Štiavnica. This education law was only binding on Roman Catholic schools. From 1791, the Evangelicals had autonomy over the church and schools, enabling them to build schools and determine the content of teaching according to their needs and interests. High-quality education was provided by several Evangelical Lyceums and Colleges in Prešov, where Evangelical students from all over Hungary, Moravia, Czechs, as well as Orthodox Serbs, received education.

The privileged position of the Latin language in offices and schools was affected after the reign of Emperor Joseph II (1780–1790), and its international use was slowly phased out. It had been a means of connecting the various nations in Hunga-

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<sup>1</sup> *Ratio Educationis 1777 a 1806: prvá jednotná sústava výchovy a vzdelávania v dejinách našej kultúry*. Translated: J. Mikles, M. Novacká, Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, Bratislava 1988, p. 34–260.

ry.<sup>2</sup> Gradually, as the self-confidence of individual peoples, and therefore the Slovaks in Hungary increased, Slovak education became the most important political issue. Hungarian education was supposed to serve as a means of unifying the Hungarian peoples politically.

The political freedom of the Slovak nation, including its language and education system, naturally became a focus for Ľudovít Štúr, who at that time was a key representative agitator for freedom and national ideals of Slovak life and a leading personality of the Slovak national revival, as well as his collaborators, who in the Slovak history were called “Štúr’s followers”.<sup>3</sup> The importance that Štúr’s followers placed on education was evidenced by the numerous articles and reports published, and by the various political programs and requests that the Slovaks submitted to various political institutions.<sup>4</sup>

The “Slovak school” became an essential component of the national, political and cultural effort and struggle. For Maria Theresa, education was *a state politicum*, and for Štúr’s followers it was *the Slovak-national politicum*. Štúr’s followers managed to overcome confessional differences in the Slovak nation (especially relations between Roman Catholics and Evangelicals), both by codification of the literary Slovak language and by intensive cooperation with the Bernoláks.

After Ľ. Štúr managed to solve the Slovak language issue in terms of its codification, he sought to extend the national education system in which children were to be educated in their mother tongue, codified Slovak.<sup>5</sup> Štúr’s *Slovenské národné noviny* (Slovak National Newspaper) was a means of communicating this effort towards Slovak Schooling.<sup>6</sup> Ľ. Štúr had a strong passion for education, stating that: “*Education and public awareness must not stay dead in books, but empower minds, refine the will, and thus transform human life into a better, more blooming and humane one. Educa-*

<sup>2</sup> *Pramene k dejinám Slovenska a Slovákov VIII*, Literárne informačné centrum, Bratislava 2007, p. 45–48.

<sup>3</sup> *Ľudovít Štúr. Život a dielo 1815 až 1856*, HÚ SAV, Bratislava 1956; I. Sedlák, *Ľudovít Štúr v súradniciach minulosti a súčasnosti*, Matica slovenská, Martin 1997; *Zborník dokumentov k slávnosti 200 rokov narodenia Karola Štúra: Modra, 25–27 March 2011*, SNM – Múzeum Ľudovíta Štúra v Modre, Modra 2011, *Ľudovít Štúr na hranici dvoch vekov*, P. Macho, D. Kodajová (ed.), HÚ SAV, Veda, Bratislava 2015.

<sup>4</sup> P. Vajcik, *Štúrovci a boj o slovenskú školu*, [in:] “Pedagogický zborník”, 9, 1942, N. 4–5, p. 145–169.

<sup>5</sup> “*Orol Tatranský*”, 2, 1846/47, p. 318–319.

<sup>6</sup> The Slovak National Newspaper (originally: *Slovenskje národnje novini* with the literary supplement “*Orol Tatranský*”) was the first periodical published in Štúr’s literary language. Štúr fought to get permission to issue the newspaper from 1841, and on 15 January 1845 he was granted permission by the monarch Ferdinand V. (1835–1848). Their main purpose was to support the cultural and national development of the Slovaks and to inform them of political developments in the country. The first issue was published on August 1, 1845, the last on June 9, 1848. It was published twice weekly in Bratislava. M. Vybíjalová, *Slovenskje národnje novini. Boje o ich povolenie*, Osveta, Martin 1972, p. 223–225.

tion has to enter life the way the sun's warmth reaches the earth ..."<sup>7</sup> L. Štúr claimed that education was necessary for political freedom and social justice. According to him, the roots of moral decay were caused by lack of education, claiming that „almost all offence comes from ignorance, bluntness, stupidity, natural annoyance and misery, but these offenses can be corrected with education...”

It is not well known that, headed by L. Štúr, Štúr's followers wanted to develop a distinctive Slavic science. They placed great hope in this project of Slavonic science, because according to their conviction, each cultural stage was associated with a new form of knowledge and worldview. L. Štúr was under the influence of the German classical philosopher G. W. F. Hegel, whose philosophy greatly influenced his thinking. The main feature was that Slavic science should integrate all the sources of knowledge, that is, sense, reason, and also intuition and revelation. Štúr's followers believed that the Romans developed a one-sided empiricism, the Germans rationalism, and the Slavs should add their own “spiritual eye” or inner vision to make a complete knowledge. Štúr's Slavic science should not be considered as outdated, but on the contrary, it is necessary to see its links to the future. Štúr did not give preference to Slavonic nations over the other peoples, but he did give priority to their national liberation and proper integration into the community of European nations, as well as the adequate integration of their spiritual and cultural contribution. In keeping with his deep conviction, he should serve humanity and the moral uplift of all mankind. Such visions are current even today, when in the swirl of historical events, European integration, and under the influence of the ideas of multiculturalism, countries with new perspectives perceive their cultural and national identity.

It is clear that the political program of L. Štúr sought to address issues of culture and education in addition to economic and social issues. In this context, he promoted the importance of education, setting up Sunday schools and libraries, and encouraged the cultivation of national art and culture. Several members of Štúr's generation were also concerned about improving the status and education of teachers. Improving women's education was a particular challenge. As a result of several articles published on this topic in the Slovak National Newspaper, girls' schools were established in the villages of Vrbovce and in Liptovský Mikuláš.

The Slovak Tatrín Club was established in 1844. It was an important institution for Slovak education and training, which according to its articles not only published and disseminated books and textbooks but also financially supported education for

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<sup>7</sup> “Slovenské národné noviny”, 1846, N. 74.

boys.<sup>8</sup> Jozef Miloslav Hurban, Štefan Závodník and Juraj Holček were the most active of L. Štúr's followers regarding these issues.<sup>9</sup>

L. Štúr entered political life to actively fight for the interests of the Slovak nation, and in 1847 he became a deputy of the free royal city of Zvolen in the Hungarian Parliament. The upcoming meeting of the Senate and the previous Hungarian draft of the Law on National Education led L. Štúr to formulate requirements about the Slovak language and schooling before the meeting. From his published article *Our hopes and demands on the coming Senate debate* we can see the importance attributed to Slovak education during this period: "On behalf of our nation, what we ask for primarily, and what we must ask for in our most sacred interest, are schools [...] from the depths of the soul we ask for national Slovak schools."<sup>10</sup> In this proposal, L. Štúr stated the following minimum requirements: he demanded teaching in the Slovak mother tongue in all elementary schools and teachers' institutes, in which teachers were trained to teach in schools in Slovak regions. For high schools he asked for religion to be taught in Slovak, and the Slovak language as a separate subject. He also required the teaching of Slovak as a separate subject at all faculties, institutes, as well as at the Pester University. In his first speech, delivered to the Hungarian Senate on November 17, 1847, L. Štúr emphasised the importance of education, by saying: "Education is more important than working on a manor." In his view, it was essential to provide education to all, regardless of gender and social status.

According to L. Štúr the question of Slovak education was very close to the urgent need to address the child labour issue. Urbarial duties weighed heavily on the Slovak nation, and it was impossible for children to go to school because of their work. In his opinion, it was not enough just to introduce compulsory school attendance and establish schools, it was also necessary to remove circumstances that prevented proper attendance at school.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, he called for the adoption of two laws: the abolition of urbarial duty and the introduction of mandatory attendance at general schools. He saw widespread alcoholism as another major obstacle to the development of education.<sup>12</sup> Therefore Štúr's followers devoted themselves to founding *Soberness Centres*, which often originated mainly in rural areas along with Sunday schools. Sunday

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<sup>8</sup> Tatrín (1844–1848) was one of the most famous Slovak societies. It was a secret association headed by Michal Miloslav Hodža. Its main focus was the publication of books, textbooks and scientific works. A notable meeting of the society was in Čachtice, from 9th to 10th August, 1847, during which the Slovak Evangelical and Catholic intelligentsia was united.

<sup>9</sup> J.M. Hurban, *Slovo o spolkách miernosti a školách nedel'nych*, Banská Bystrica, 1846, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> J. Ambruš, *Ludovít Štúr*. Tomus 1. *Politické state a prejavy*. Bratislava: Slovenské vydavateľstvo krásnej literatúry, 1954; *Ludovít Štúr: Politické state a prejavy*, Zlatý fond denníka SME, 2012: [https://zlatyfond.sme.sk/dielo/1691/Stur\\_Politicke-state-a-prejavy/bibliografia#ixzz50J0zKfcd](https://zlatyfond.sme.sk/dielo/1691/Stur_Politicke-state-a-prejavy/bibliografia#ixzz50J0zKfcd).

<sup>11</sup> J.M. Hurban, *Ludovít Štúr – Rozpomienky*, Vydavateľstvo Slovart, Bratislava 2015, p. 666–670.

<sup>12</sup> J. Ambruš, *Listy Ludovíta Štúra I*, Vydavateľstvo SAV, Bratislava 1954; *Listy Ludovíta Štúra II*, Vydavateľstvo SAV, Bratislava 1956; *Listy Ludovíta Štúra III.*, Vydavateľstvo SAV, Bratislava 1960; V. Matula, *Listy Ludovíta Štúra IV*, Národné literárne centrum, Bratislava 1999.

schools were a priority for Štúr and he saw great potential in them. Sunday schools should substitute elementary education for those who could not attend classes, and expand their education, „tailored to the needs of the state and region.” According to this, L. Štúr distinguished education for the „uneducated” (lower school) and for “undergraduates” (higher school).<sup>13</sup>

The demand for Slovak education had already become a nationwide movement. The first Slovak comprehensive national-political program *Requests of the Slovak Nation* was formulated on 10 May 1848 in Liptovský Mikuláš.<sup>14</sup> Two of its 14 points were devoted to school requirements:

„VI. We demand the perfect establishment of national schools, that is, elementary, realschule (type of middle school), secondary modern school, and institutes for Women and Girls, institutes for the teaching of teachers and priests, then institutions of higher education: grammar schools, lyceums, academies, polytechnic institutes and university. All these should be based on free teaching, and the language of instruction for the sons and daughters of the Slovak nation should not be other than the Slovak one, so that on the basis of this nation the Slovaks could raise their sons faithful to their lands.

VII. We ask that the Hungarian County establish literary departments of Slovak language for the Hungarians and the Slovak County establish Hungarian language departments for the Slovaks so that the two nations grow closer together especially during sessions in the Senate, that Slovaks could understand Hungarians speaking Hungarian and Hungarians could understand Slovak speaking Slovak.”

However, the demands of the Slovaks provoked Hungarians to persecute Štúr's followers, and an arrest warrant was issued on L. Štúr, J. M. Hurban and M. M. Hodža.

Another solution to Slovak school requirements was destroyed by the start of revolutionary events in Hungary and, even after the defeat of the Revolution in 1849, the requirements were not fulfilled. Nevertheless, the demand for Slovak schools was established and at the same time became a central issue for Slovak national existence.<sup>15</sup> The Štúr generation did not wait for the state and the law to solve the school issue, but actively contributed to the building of Slovak education by the establishment of Sunday schools, libraries and reading societies. The introduction of Hungarian language as a teaching language in Slovak national schools, however, became a new factor in Hungarian school policy. Further waves of Hungarianisation in Hungary, as well as persistent quarrels with the Slovaks concerning their own literary language, combined with the unfavorable political situation in Hungary, and meant that the fight for

<sup>13</sup> “Slovenské národné noviny”, 1847, N. 205. P. Vajcík, *Štúrovci a boj o slovenskú školu*, ref. 4, p. 149.

<sup>14</sup> The program was published: *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti I*, Národné literárne centrum, Bratislava 1998, p. 307–309; D. Rapant, *Slovenské povstanie roku 1848–49*, I.2. Martin 1937, p. 202–205.

<sup>15</sup> *Ludovít Štúr. Život a dielo 1815 až 1856*, HŮ SAV, Bratislava 1956, p. 519.

the Slovak schools lasted practically until the outbreak of the First World War. The history of the Slovak school in this period is a history of the fight for the right to use the mother tongue in Slovak schools.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The study was done based on a grant project: VEGA – The estate. Business of landowner's economy (No. 1/0645/17 project).

### The Štúr's and Slovak education in the first half of the 19th century

**Abstract:** In the first half of the 19th century a law of 1806 was still in force in the field of education in Hungary. This law defined the organisation and content of education and was based on the school reforms of Empress Maria Theresa (1740–1780). The state had strengthened its influence on education and adapted it to the changing needs of economic and social life. The political freedom of the Slovak nation, including its language and education system, naturally became a focus for Ludovít Štúr, who at that time was a key representative of Slovak national life and a leading personality of the Slovak national revival, as well as his collaborators, who in Slovak history were called “Štúr’s followers”. But the Štúr generation did not wait for the state and the law to solve the school issue, but actively contributed to the building of Slovak education by the establishment of Sunday schools, libraries and reading societies. The introduction of Hungarian language as a teaching language in Slovak national schools, however, became a new factor in Hungarian school policy.

**Keywords:** history, education, Slovak school, Slovak language, policy, Hungary, Magyarisation, 19th century

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