

EDUCATIONAL MATTERS OF MAGYARS AND OTHER MINORITIES IN DANUBE BANATE. OFFICIAL STATISTICS

BY

IMRE PROKOPY

At a meeting of the Council of the Danube Banate held on 27th February last, *Dr. Milan Petrovitch*, head of the Department of Education, submitted a report on schooling in the Banate. According to that report, the number of elementary schools open this year is 1076, of which 939 are village and 137 municipal schools. The number of classes is 4955: of these 3712 are Serbo-Croatian, 595 German, 438 Magyar, 110 Slovak, 22 Ruthenian and 80 Rumanian. In other words, there are 3712 classes in which the medium of instruction is the official language of the State, and only 1243 in which instruction is to a certain extent given in the language of the minority concerned.

But it is only when we reckon how many elementary classes the national minorities in the Danube Banate would be entitled to on a proportional basis that the real significance of these figures and their meaning becomes clear. The Magyars, who represent 18.3% of the population, would be entitled legally to 907 classes instead of the 438 figuring in the report, i. e. they should have 469 more than they have been given. The other minorities, the Germans, Slovaks, Ruthenians and Rumanians, would also be entitled to a larger number of elementary classes. The percentage of the Germans being 16.3%, they should have 215 classes in addition to the 593 they have been given. The Slovaks and Ruthenians (3.7%) would be entitled to 73 classes more, and the Rumanians (3.8%), who have only 80 classes, should have another 110.

In the sphere of elementary education the grievance of the above-mentioned minorities is that, although they together represent 42.1% of the population, and consequently

would have a right to 2088 elementary school classes, there are only 1243 in which teaching — in part at least — is done in minority languages. According to these figures, the five national minorities are no less than 845 elementary classes short of the number they are entitled to. On the other hand, in the case of the Serbo-Croatian elements, who represent 57.9% of the population of the Danube Banate, it will be seen that they have no right to more than 2869 of the 4955 elementary classes which according to the official report they have been given. Here we have a surplus of 843 classes, obtained at the expense and to the detriment of the minorities.

If to this we add the fact that the so-called "parallel minority elementary school sections", instead of being independent educational institutions, are merely parallel sections of the State schools almost without exception under head teachers of Serb or other Southern Slav origin, and that certain subjects are taught in the official language of the State, not in the mothertongue of the pupils, and in many cases by teachers whose knowledge of minority languages is very poor or nil, we shall obtain a clear idea of how the educational matters of the minorities in the Danube Banate stand.

The situation is practically the same in respect of the statistics of the pupils attending the State schools and the so-called "parallel minority sections." According to the report, of a total of 233.207 elementary school pupils 170.075 attend State schools, 35.049 more, that is to say, than ought to in conformance with the proportion of Serbo-Croats in the Banate. This considerable surplus is due, on the one hand, to the notorious system of name-analysis, and, on the other, to the circumstance that in many places where the minimum number of minority school-children required by the Elementary Education Act of 5th December, 1929, was forthcoming, no minority sections have been established in the State schools.

According to the percentage of minority inhabitants and the officially recorded number of school-children, 42.676 Magyar, 38.027 German, 8.628 Slovak and Ruthenian and 8.610 Rumanian pupils should be attending parallel minority

classes. As things stand, only 26.953 pupils attend the so-called "Magyar", 24.815 the so-called "German", 7.067 the so-called "Slovak and Ruthenian" and 4.297 the so-called "Rumanian" parallel classes. This in effect means that in the Danube Banate alone 15.723 Magyar, 13.212 German, 1.521 Slovak and Ruthenian and 4.564 Rumanian pupils — in all 35.020 children of schooling age belonging to the national minorities — do not receive any elementary education at all in their own mother-tongues, and are compelled to attend State elementary schools, where the medium of instruction is the official language of the State.

In connection with the educational affairs of the Magyar minority it should be noted that the report for the year 1929/1930 published by the Department of Education of the Danube Banate Office mentions 528 Magyar elementary classes, while the report laid before the Skupshtina on 5th March, by M. Dragutin Koyitch, then Minister of Education, speaks of 532. When we compare M. Popovitch's report, in which the number of Magyar elementary classes is given at 438, we may establish *that the classes in the so-called parallel Magyar sections of the elementary schools have decreased in number by 90 or 94, which certainly cannot be regarded as an improvement of the educational situation. Another circumstance deserving special mention is that the Germans, whose quota is exactly 2% less than that of the Magyars, have 155 classes more than the Magyar minority, which in other respects, too, is treated with less consideration than the German minority.*

In conclusion we must point out that the Magyars in the Banate of Croatia and the Drave and Drina Banates, in number about 100.000, have not a single elementary class in which Magyar is the language of instruction. Mention must also be made of other cases of unequal treatment. A whole series of German sections, for instance, have been opened in the elementary schools for the Germans living outside the Danube Banate, as for instance in Croatia and the Drave and Drina Banates. Besides, and contrary to law, the German minority has been granted the special privilege of being allowed to establish a private teachers' training college and two private boarding schools at its own

expense, and to supplement the teaching staff of the college by the importation of masters from Germany. A similar privilege has been accorded to the Rumanian minority too under the Educational Agreement concluded with Rumania on 10th March, 1933. The Germans also enjoy another privilege. Namely, with the exception of Yugoslav history and geography, the German pupils in classes V and VI of the elementary schools are allowed to learn all subjects in their mother-tongue.

Seeing that at present negotiations are in progress between the Yugoslav Premier and some of his Ministers on the one hand and the leaders of the Magyar minority on the other, it is to be hoped that the Yugoslav Government will not rigidly refuse to do away without delay, with the anomalies referred to above, and that a radical redress of the grievances of the Magyar minority, in the field of education at least, will speedily follow.

OSZK
Országos Széchényi Könyvtár