

Grammar School in Revuca

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Slovakia has long-year and rich educational traditions which go back to the 9th century when two Byzantine apostles Constantine (827 - 869) and Methodius (815 – 885) came to this territory and through their Christian mission in the Great Moravian educational establishment they had founded they laid the foundations of the Slovak culture, education and letters. For more than one thousand years, during the Middle Ages and the New Age, the further schools arose from elementary level up to the highest level – the establishments of higher learning, eventually, universities.

In the 19th century the Slovak schools underwent a complex period of their development when the remnants of the feudal way of life were definitely removed in the economic and social life; and the process of forming a modern Slovak nation reached a climax. This process was strongly motivated by the Štúr's group tradition, the period of resounding the ideas that were formulated for forming the national life by Ľudovít Štúr (1815 – 1856), the most significant representative of the national movement in the first half of the 19th century, and his followers. Štúr was significantly influenced by the fact that the formation of the national life took place in the multicultural environment of the Hungarian Kingdom where the Slovaks were not granted full rights and were faced with a strong denationalisation pressure. In this process the education also played significant civilization as well as national emancipation role. Education reflected the entire societal life of the Slovaks as in a big mirror as illustrated in the history of the First Slovak Evangelic Grammar School (*ev.a.v.gymnázium*) in Revuca.

The small town of Revuca in Central Slovakia was one of the centres of the Slovak national life in the 19th century. Thanks to the nationally conscious intelligentsia, nationally conscious craftsmen and leading personalities in the mid-19th century the establishment of a secondary school was founded; at first representing “*reálka*”, later on “*gymnázium*” with Slovak as a teaching language. Until then, the Slovaks had no secondary school of their own on their territory. If they wanted to receive a higher level of education they had to visit a secondary school with the language, ideas and nature completely alien to them. The target of the schools was, besides educational work, to deprive the members of non-Hungarian nations of their nationality. The establishment of a grammar school in Revuca was enabled by the short existence of consequences of a more liberal educational regulation of 1848 and the issue of a Church patent giving the right to the churches to establish their own schools with the language of teaching used by the respective nation of the Old Hungary. Preparation for establishment of the secondary school lasted more than one year; in the school year 1868/63 the lessons already started in the initial two grades. The school was founded by help of financial collections of the Slovak people without any support of the Hungarian State.

The school represented at first a lower grammar school with 4 grades, since 1867, it had already a full programme for 8 grades. In 1868, a teacher training school was open at the grammar school. By its curriculum and mastership of teachers the school offered a full-value standard secondary education in Slovak language; while the teacher training school provided education to all those interested in teaching career in primary schools with Slovak as a teaching language. The Grammar School in Revuca represented, beside the Lower *ev.a.v.* Gymnasium in Martin (1867 – 1875) and the Lower Catholic Gymnasium in Kláštor pod

Znievom (1869 – 1875), one of the three secondary schools with Slovak as the teaching language with the longest duration (1862 – 1875).

The Grammar School in Revuca cannot be considered without its outstanding teachers. For long years it was headed by Evangelic priest and scholar August Horislav Škultety (1819 – 1892). The pedagogical orientation of the school was implemented mainly by one of our greatest educational theoreticians Samuel Ormis (1824 – 1875). Another, internationally acknowledged pedagogue was Ivan Branislav Zoch (1843 – 1921); who was also active as a headteacher of grammar schools in Croatia (Osijek, Sarajevo and Petrinj). The latter had significantly contributed to the economic operation of the school, to its educational activities, by writing textbooks, developing many-sided cultural activity and enlightenment among students (educational circles, theatre performances, choirs, student newsletters, sports clubs, etc.).

After a decade of success at the beginning of the 70s of the 19th century the activities of the grammar school in Revuca became undesirable for the Hungarian official and educational authorities. The pressure was more and more manifested on teachers of the school, on intimidation of the students, on incorrect accusations of the school of advocating Pan-Slavism and of supporting national life and of protecting the national rights of the Slovak people. In 1874, there was a political investigation of activities of the school that was charged of Pan-Slavism, lack of loyalty to the Hungarian authorities. On the basis of these accusations the Hungarian Minister of Education Mr. Trefort decided at last to dissolve the school in 1875. The gymnasia in Martin and Kláštor pod Znievom as well as the Slovak national institution of Matica Slovenská faced a similar fate. In the last quarter of the 19th century the Slovak leading educational and cultural institutions were one by one dissolved and the Slovak national life became paralysed for decades. The space was created for a forced Hungarisation of the Slovaks through education and training starting with the preschool facilities up to secondary schools and high education institutions. The example of the Grammar School in Revuca clearly demonstrates the significant role that the school played in the national emancipation process of the Slovaks in the 60s and 70s of the 19th century and the strong protest, which it evoked by its activity in the ranks of the Hungarian official authorities.

The Grammar School in Revuca and its activities on the national field were also recorded by the Slovak educational historiography. Shortly after the school dissolution its governor August Horislav Škultety documented its development in a factographic publication entitled “*Pamäti slovenského ev. a v. gymnázia a s ním spojeného učiteľského semeniska vo Veľkej Revuci*” (History of the Slovak Evangelic and Upper High School and Teacher Training Seminary in Veľká Revuca) (1889). Some decades later its history was worked out by Ján Gallo in his book “*Revúcke gymnázium*” (1862-1874) (1969) and by Dušan Dubovský in the book “*Revúca, kolíska slovenského stredného školstva*” (Revuca, the Cradle of the Slovak Secondary Education) (1993). The archival documents on the history of the school are kept in the Slovak National Archives, while the museum exhibits are stored in the Commemorative Room of the First Slovak Evangelic a.v. Upper Grammar School in Revuca. Some historical textbooks written by teachers of the Revuca Grammar School are also stored by the Museum of School and Pedagogy in Bratislava.