

# DISTRIBUTION OF NATIONALITIES IN SLOVAK ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

BY

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Quite recently the Slovak Bureau of Statistics published the figures showing the distribution by nationalities of the pupils of the elementary schools. When we examine these figures, we obtain an interesting reflection of the nationality situation in Slovakia. And these figures enable us to draw interesting conclusions in several important respects. This is all the easier in view of the fact that the publication of the official statistics provides an opportunity for a comparison of the figures for the years 1939—40 and 1940—41 respectively.

With respect to the school-year 1939—40 we learn that in the elementary schools with Slovak as the language of instruction there were 344.661 pupils. And the distribution of those pupils by nationality was as follows: —

Slovaks	. . . . .	328.909
Ruthenians	. . . . .	3.080
Jews	. . . . .	3.728
Czechs	. . . . .	1.498
Magyars	. . . . .	1.354
Poles	. . . . .	929
Germans	. . . . .	488

This distribution reveals many facts of great interest. In the first place it must be established that *in Slovakia, despite the assertions made by the Slovak Press and Slovak propaganda, elementary education is not based exactly upon an enforcement of the ethnic nationality principle. In the Slovak elementary schools we find a relatively large proportion of pupils of non-Slovak nationality.* The word "relatively" has been used deliberately; for if we take into

account the circumstance that, for instance, the number of Magyars living in Slovakia is roughly 200.000, we must describe as decidedly large the number of Magyar children attending elementary schools (1354) who are not in a position to obtain their elementary education in schools in which the language of instruction is their own mother tongue. We must regard as equally large — relatively speaking — the number of German elementary school pupils (488) when we take into account the circumstance that the number of Germans living in Slovakia is about 150.000. If we take into account also the fact that the German ethnic group is the "favoured" nationality in Slovakia, it seems absolutely incomprehensible that nearly 500 German children should be compelled to attend elementary schools where the language of instruction is not their own mother tongue.

Very surprising is also the figure relating to Ruthenian children contained in the above statement. So far *Slovak propaganda has almost consistently asserted that there are barely any Ruthenians in Slovakia*. And now official Slovak statistics reveal the fact that, *not only is there such a minority ethnic group of Ruthenian nationality in existence in Slovakia, but also that a considerable proportion of that ethnic group are unable to enter their children in elementary schools in which Ruthenian is the language of instruction*. This means that the Ruthenians in Slovakia are exposed to a far-reaching process of assimilation.

But extremely interesting conclusions may be drawn also from the number of Jewish and Czech children attending elementary schools in which the language of instruction is Slovak. It will be remembered that *in connection with the Jews the Slovak Press has consistently stressed that the Jews in Slovakia are today still in the service of the Magyars everywhere in that country*. That was one of the reasons given by Slovak propaganda, for instance, in justification of the removal of Jewish settlers. *From the official statistics we see that there are a large number of Jewish children attending the schools in which Slovak is the language of instruction*, a circumstance which by no means justifies our concluding that the Jews in Slovakia are not on the side of the Slovaks. The Slovak Press has

frequently declared that after the establishment of the Slovak State the Czechs left the country in a body: and now we find that *there are still some 1500 Czech children attending the Slovak elementary schools. Taking this figure as a basis for calculating the number of parents, we may conclude that there are still several thousands of Czechs in Slovakia.*

Where any nationality (ethnic) group is unable to have its children educated in their mother tongue, assimilation is bound to ensue as a matter of course. The foreign schools infuse a foreign spirit into the way of thinking of the respective nationality; and if this process continues for any length of time, the various sections of the nationality in question become completely assimilated. In Slovakia the work of assimilation is proceeding with the utmost intensity. The degree of intensity of that process must be estimated — and may be estimated — exactly on the basis of relativity. In the case of the Magyars we must calculate the number of Magyar elementary school pupils, and then we must estimate the proportion of such elementary school pupils deprived of the possibility of being educated in their own mother tongue. We find that the elementary school pupils of Magyar nationality were distributed by schools as follows: —

No. of pupils attending Magyar schools . . . .	4127.
No. of pupils attending Slovak schools . . . .	1354.
No. of pupils attending Slovak-Ruthenian schools	557.
No. of pupils attending German schools . . . .	159.

If we compare with the total number of Magyar elementary school pupils (6194) the number attending Slovak schools, we find that the latter represent 21% of the total number. *This may be taken to mean that 21% of the elementary school pupils whose mother tongue is Magyar are exposed to the danger of assimilation by the Slovaks.* And when we add the figures showing the numbers of Magyar elementary school children attending schools with a non-Magyar language of instruction, we find to our surprise that 33% of the elementary school pupils whose mother

tongue is Hungarian are unable to obtain an elementary education in that mother tongue, — that meaning that *roughly one-third of the said pupils are exposed in Slovakia to some form of assimilation!*

The Slovak official figures reveal the fact that all the nationality elementary schools have pupils of other tongues. But the fact is also revealed that it is in the schools where Slovak is the language of instruction that there are the largest numbers of non-Slovak children; and that means that it is the Slovak schools which most intensively and most decisively serve the cause of assimilation — naturally in favour of the Slovaks. The distribution of nationalities in the schools where Hungarian was the language of instruction was as follows: —

Magyars	. . . . .	4068
Slovaks	. . . . .	32
Germans	. . . . .	8
Jews	. . . . .	1
Others	. . . . .	18
Foreign citizens	. . . . .	72

Let us at this juncture note the relative ratios of Magyars and Slovaks. We find, then, that, whereas there were 1354 Magyar children attending Slovak schools, the number of Slovak children attending Magyar schools was only 32.

What development of the situation do we find in the school-year 1940—41? The number of pupils attending elementary schools in which the language of instruction was Slovak was 345.261. These pupils were distributed by nationalities as follows: —

Slovaks	. . . . .	329.094
Ruthenians	. . . . .	3.771
Czechs	. . . . .	1.672
Jews	. . . . .	4.235
Poles	. . . . .	1.108
Magyars	. . . . .	875
Germans	. . . . .	312
Others	. . . . .	41.093

When we compare these data with the figures for the previous school-year, we ascertain the following facts. In the first place, there was an advance in the number of Ruthenian children attending the Slovak elementary schools. As a consequence, *a larger proportion of the Ruthenians has naturally been drawn within the magic circle of Slovakization.* The number of pupils of Czech nationality also shows an increase; from this circumstance we may conclude that *there was absolutely no decline as compared with the previous year in the number of Czechs living in Slovakia. This circumstance allows of our presuming to assert that the Slovaks have no intention of realizing the plan so often stressed as a political catchword in Slovakia and weakening their connections with the Czechs.* There was a considerable advance also in the number of pupils belonging to the Jewish ethnic group in Slovakia, — a sign that *notwithstanding the anti-Jewish measures taken there the Jews are adopting a more and more decided pro-Slovak attitude. This is a particularly striking phenomenon in view of the fact that the Slovak Press keeps on proclaiming day after day that the Jews have been completely ousted from Slovak national life.* We see that there was an increase also in the number of pupils whose mother tongue is Polish. On the other hand, there was a decline in the numbers of Magyar and German children respectively. This must be attributed to the fact that these two nationalities are coming to realize more and more clearly the full extent of the danger that may arise as a consequence of their younger generations being educated in foreign tongues. And the Magyar minority in Slovakia has indeed in recent years been carrying on an increasingly intensive struggle for its cultural existence and for the Magyar schools which are the basis of that existence.