



ΠΡΑΚΤΙΚΑ

Β' ΔΙΕΘΝΟΥΣ ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΟΝΙΚΟΥ ΣΥΝΕΔΡΙΟΥ

ΟΙ ΣΕΡΡΕΣ

ΚΑΙ Η
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ΑΠΟ ΤΗΝ
ΟΘΩΜΑΝΙΚΗ ΚΑΤΑΚΤΗΣΗ
ΜΕΧΡΙ ΤΗ
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DRAGICA JANKOVIĆ - MOUGKRAKIS

THE SERBIAN SCHOOL IN SERRES AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY

By starting a duty in a newly opened Serbian Consulate in Serres, a vice consul Branislav Nusić started propaganda in the area of Macedonia where Serbia had certain historical rights but no national alibi. By acknowledging absolute Greek domination in Serres, Mr. Nusić began a very difficult, exhausting and complicated struggle for his first aim. The application for opening of the Serbian school in Serres was submitted to the Turkish municipal authorities on 9 November 1897. By respecting the Turkish legal conditions and having in mind all the demands that authorities could have imposed, Mr. Nusić tried to make this application free of all possibilities that could have stalled its approval.

Even though, according to the Turkish laws 30 signatures were enough for the application, one hundred people who, according to the words of consul, had been respectable citizens of Serres, mostly merchants, signed it¹. That was the first application with such a large number of signatures in the area of Thessalonica. The idea -more signatures means more importance in the eyes of authorities- was not the only one Mr. Nusić had had. The Serbian movement in Serres was a completely new phenomenon in Serres, and Mr. Nusić had not been satisfied with completing the minimal law requirements. Fearing the opponents in Serres, above all the Greek party, Mr. Nusić tried to minimize conditions for opposing arguments with this number of signatures. Together with the application, school program and books, which would be used, were submitted, thus formally all legal conditions had been fulfilled in advance. During these first and carefully chosen steps, Mr. Nusić counted on help by Mustafa Naim, mutesarif of Serres, whom he considered a very close friend.

Signature collecting was performed in silence and secrecy. When the first news about it appeared, the Greeks were indifferent believing that the application would not have enough signatures, and the Bulgarians were focused on the arrival of the trade agent Mr. Ivanov. Only after the application had been submitted to the authorities, the separated actions against Serbian request followed. The Bulgarian attempt to interfere with the first steps for opening the Serbian school by offering firstly-signed, Mr. Konstantin Govedarevic, economical benefits from Bulgarian boarding-house was crushed at the very

1. AC (Archives of Serbia), Конзулат Краљевине Србије у Сересу, ПП Но 67/1897.

beginning thus they had no chance to make further attempts. Medzlis from Serres approved the application and referred it to the valija of Thessalonica on 10 November 1897, for further proceeding². Mutesarif told the valija that ‘certain citizens of Serres ask for opening of a school where their children would study Turkish and Serbian language’, that the founder of a school would be Mr. Konstantin Govedarević, a Turkish subject from Serres and Mr. Rista Stavrić, a Turkish subject from Ohrid, would be responsible administrator, and that the signers had been middle-class people belonging to guilds³.

Expecting a prompt approval of the application, Mr. Nusić managed to find one male and one female teacher. The condition they had to fulfill was knowledge of Greek language, which was an official language in Serres. Speaking of Christian citizens structure, Mr. Nusić noted that Serres was a town with the largest percentage of intellectuals among all towns in the provinces of Turkey, with doctors and lawyers educated in Europe and all gymnasium teachers and traders graduated from the Greek Gymnasium in Serres. It was necessary for teachers to speak Greek language in order to communicate with children, at least in the beginning. This was especially important for female teacher as the girls mainly spoke only Greek. Rista Stavrić, graduated from the Greek Gymnasium in Serres, and Sultana Stambolić, a teacher in Jenidze-Vardar up to that point, fulfilled the condition and they were appointed to teaching positions in Serres on 8 December 1897.

At the beginning of December 1897, the Greeks tried to force some of the signers of the application to renounce their signatures, but when they failed to do so, they took more radical measures. They sent letters to the Turkish authorities and the Metropolitan of Thessalonica and organized a signing of a petition against the Serbian school. Mr. Nusić did not announce a precise number of the signatures⁴, but he didn’t miss a chance to repeat mutesarif’s statement that nothing would be done about the Greek petition.

The actions of the Greeks started to get a religious character, thus the behavior of Orthodox brothers contributed to the delay of the Serbian school opening. The Metropolitan of Serres, who was away for a long time in Holy Mountain of Atos, was also called for help. One archimandrite in the church of the mahala (part of town – Turkish) with the largest number of signatures for Serbian application spoke against the Serbs and after religious service collected signatures around the houses.

While Greek resistance grew in Serres, the valija of Thessalonica managed the Serbian application as all-previous in order to delay the solution to eternity. In order to respond to the valija’s question whether there were Serbs at all in Serres, mutesarif requested from Mr. Nusić to ask 10-15 most respectable

2. АС, Конзулат Краљевине Србије у Сересу, ПП Но 69/1897.

3. АС, МИД, ПП, 647/1898.

4. АС, Конзулат Краљевине Србије у Сересу, ПП Но 81/1897.

signers to declare themselves as the Serbs in public, at the session of Medzlis.

All the people who had signed the Serbian application were invited to the Metropolis, where they were threatened by schism and anathema unless they said that they had been deceived and hadn't asked the Serbian school but given signatures for vocational school. The statement comprising of 47 signatures of people from Arabadzi mahala was referred to the Turkish authorities. Mutesarif ordered a police investigation, which determined that only one of these signatures, a signature of one shoemaker, also appeared on the Serbian application. Greek petition signers were questioned at the police station because of deception of authorities and false statement about renouncing their signatures at the Serbian application (which they hadn't signed at all). Frightened by these questions, they responded that the Metropolis hadn't told them what they were signing and that they were not against the Serbian School. Moreover, Serbian application signers were questioned separately where some of them declared as Serbian by origin while the others said that they couldn't establish whether they were Serbian but they wanted the school to educate their children. The police report was sent to the valija concluding that the petition was fabricated by the representatives of the Greek Metropolis and signed by persons deceived about the contents of the petition, and that the signatures were collected by a certain teacher called Panigazi. When the valija of Thessalonica asked for the statement about the house where the school would be placed, the Greek consulate one more time collected signatures against the Serbian school in mahala where the house was. There were also threats about riots if the school opened. Regarding this, mutesarif asked several signers suggested by Mr. Nusić to declare that they didn't have anything against the Serbian school but were forced by the Metropolis to sign. Based on the given statements, mutesarif decided to place the petition in the archive⁵.

Mr. Nusić calls this passionate and fanatic fight of the Greek party 'the crusade war' with the aim to force «us Christians» from «holy places». He held against the Greeks the means they had used (denunciations, betrayal, threats), and especially exclusiveness regarding the church interpreted by Mr. Nusić as an intention of the Greeks to show that the Serbs were not fully equal to the Greeks in the matters of religion. Mr. Nusić complained to the Serbian government about the actions of the Greek consul, Mr. Sturnaris, whom he had met earlier during service in Skopje. He accused him of isolation of Serbian consulate and consul, threats to the citizens of Serres in order not to visit the Serbian consulate and even attempts to forbid the doctor to go to Mr. Nusić's house. Having in mind his previous dispute with Mr. Sturnaris in Skopje about the religious service in St. Salvation Church, Mr. Nusić accused him of 'setting the fire' in Serres and dishonest usage of Greek interests. By declaration, Mr.

5. АС, МИД, ПП, 647/1898.

Nusić stood for a certain agreement with Mr. Sturnaris and the Metropolis of Serres, and when it wasn't realized, he blamed Mr. Sturnaris who spoke his mind that «he wanted to work here as in Skopje, for he learnt there he was going the right way». Acknowledging the Greeks, with well-concentrated citizens, as lords in Serres and completely neglecting the Bulgarians, who hadn't managed to get many sympathizers during 30 years in Serres, to which they allegedly claimed rights, the success of the Serbs was uncertain or even minimal. Thus, Mr. Nusić estimated that it was a right choice to make a deal with the Greeks. He offered the following: he would not ask for a separate church for singing in Slavic; Greek would be taught in the Serbian school as a foreign language; children attending the Greek school would not be accepted in the Serbian school and not a single village would be conquered by propaganda. In return, he asked the Greeks not to interfere with the opening of school but to help as much as they could. Considering his terms more than generous, and already informed that Mr. Sturnaris would not accept them, Mr. Nusić offered them in order to put Mr. Sturnaris in position to refuse them, which would be a turning point in relations between the Greeks and the Serbs in Serres. Mr. Nusić started to believe that Mr. Sturnaris wanted him out of Serres because he knew Greek well and because, in the absence of the Greek consul and the metropolitan, he had made strong connections with certain citizens.

The Metropolis of Serres asked the Patriarchate to argue with the Turkish authorities and not to allow the opening of Serbian school. When the metropolitan returned to Serres in the middle of June 1898, Mr. Nusić feared that he «would try with all his efforts to foil the opening of the school»⁶. On 10 July 1898, Mr. Nusić asked the Porta, through Mr. Stojan Novaković, a Serbian representative in Constantinople, to intervene and prevent bad behavior of the valija and his subordinates and makes them subject to orders from Constantinople. When Mr. Nusić received rusat-name to open the school on 6 August 1898 he could not keep a stiff upper lip. The Serbian school within earshot of Trakija and under borders of Eastern Rumelia was a great success for, as Mr. Nusić metaphorically said, «the white wall making this area a fenced China of our pretensions is demolished».

The approval was obtained but the struggle was not over. A much harder work followed according to stages already predicted by Mr. Nusić – the leasing of a house, religious ceremony of house dedication and enrollment of pupils.

According to orders of the metropolitan, all Greek priests started to visit the homes of their rentals threatening them not to lease their houses for the Serbian or Bulgarian school or they would be subjected to aphaeresis by the church⁷. This caused an extremely high lease price and long-term lease with numerous obligations if the lease was terminated. On 16 August 1898, Mr.

6. АС, МИД, ПП, 647/1898.

7. АС, МИД, ПП, 647/1898, Конзулат Краљевине Србије у Сересу, ПП Но 134/1898.

Nusić signed a contract for leasing of a house in St. Nikola's mahala, owned by a Jewish, with a rental fee of 690 Dinars a year and a 3-year obligation.

The enrollment into Greek schools started on 15 August, even though it had started on 1 September in previous years. As for the Serbian school there was no admission fee, this was probably the reason for an early enrollment. Considering the large number of signatures and the respect of people who signed, Mr. Nusić expressed his fears about not being able to justify Serbian expectations with a small number of pupils as early as 1 December 1897, when the situation in Serres was much more favorable and when there was still hope for an agreement with the Greeks. Covering his failure, on 19 August 1898 Mr. Nusić assured the Serbian government that the mood was changing as the day of opening was approaching. In order to give faith to the citizens, Mr. Nusić himself enrolled his immature child in school as an argument for indecisive people. Immediately before the opening, Mr. Nusić asked for a change of a teacher Sultana Stambolić, because of her insufficient knowledge of Greek language and her poverty, which could harm the reputation of the school. Instead of her, on 30 August 1898, Anastasija Hristić was sent to Serres. Up to that point Anastasija Hristić, of Serres origin and with good knowledge of Greek language, was a teacher in Voden. At the same time, a teacher of Turkish language and school janitor were hired and school inventory was bought⁸.

It was clear that Mr. Nusić would not be able to provide a priest for school dedication. If a priest was appointed, the Metropolis would be in trouble with the citizens who were threatened by anathema and the school was presented as schismatic. In order to win this situation and not to challenge at the same time, Mr. Nusić decided to notify the metropolitan by a letter that the school started to work and that it was his wish to begin with the church blessing and a prayer for the health of His Majesty the Sultan. With this letter, the metropolitan was placed in inconvenient position where Mr. Nusić could benefit. By priest arrival, Greek actions would be compromised with people and Mr. Nusić could provide the enrollment of pupils. If the priest didn't appear, mutesarif could see it as a refusal of dedication for the Sultan's health, which could provoke a dispute between the Turkish authorities and the Metropolis. To provide a full success of the ceremony, Mr. Nusić planed to invite a special guest to Serres, archimandrite Vasilije, a priest from the Holy Mountain of Athos, who would perform a ceremony without the approval of Serres metropolitan, if Greek priest did not appear. Mr. Nusić was ready to accept the responsibility for misconduct with the Patriarchate. At the same time, he wanted to accomplish another goal with the presence of archimandrite – a threat to the Greeks that Vasilije could perform ceremonies in future if they refused.

Rista Stavrić, a teacher, carried an invitation written in Greek language

8. АС, МИД, ПП, 647/1898, Конзулат Краљевине Србије у Сересу, ПП Но 182/1898.

asking the metropolitan himself to come or send a priest for the ceremony of dedication of holy water and blessing of His Majesty the Sultan. On the same day, Mr. Nusić visited the metropolitan allegedly because of Czar Dusan's pictures in the monastery of St. Jovan, but actually to try to persuade the metropolitan one more time to let the representative of the church dedicate the school. The metropolitan refused saying that he did not know Rista Stavrić and that he had heard that there were Jewish children in the school, thus it was Jewish school he could not dedicate. At Mr. Nusić's remark that there were also Jewish children in Greek schools, the metropolitan suggested to postpone the dedication, which would be performed by Serbian priest Atanas Ivanović from the village Skrisevo in Drama sandzak, for a week. He would approve it silently. With this suggestion, the metropolitan aimed to obtaining more time for propaganda so he could reduce the number of enrolled to 8 Jewish children, thus showing that the school was heterodox and refusing the dedication without further problems. Probably, the metropolitan estimated a week would be enough for this work to be done. Even though the offer was tempting, Mr. Nusić was not deceived by it. He asked to call a priest from Thessalonica by telegraph and to perform the ceremony as planned, but this was refused.

The school was opened on 13 September 1898. Mr. Nusić's report on the ceremony was incredibly poor considering his usual mania for descriptions and writing. He noted modestly that there were many people and children at the ceremony, that a teacher held a speech and that people left disapproving the actions of the metropolitan⁹. 17 children registered for the Serbian school, which was insufficient considering time and efforts, invested in it. Mr. Nusić's justifications changed constantly. He described the situation in Serres to the Serbian government using his narrative style. It seemed that the metropolitan, the Greek consul, 50 priests, 48 church episcopos, professors, and teachers spoke strongly against the Serbian school every step of the way – at home, in pubs, shops and streets. The metropolitan and priests cursed, threatened by anathema, schism, aphaeresis and prohibition to be buried in the cemetery. The professors and teachers called people the traders of a great Greek sole-salvation idea. All the other citizens of the town were also fanatic. As a consequence, there were two divorces because fathers wanted their children to go to the Serbian school and mothers didn't. Mr. Nusić pointed out that in 10 years of work in Macedonia he had never seen such a behavior and added «just as each Muslim believes that he obtained a place in Heaven (Dzenet) by converting one faithless into Islam, here everyone believes that he would find place in Paradise if at least one child is pulled out of the Serbian school»¹⁰.

By placing information to the Serbian government about the request of a town called Dzuma for opening of a school on 20 September 1898, Mr. Nusić

9. АС, Конзулат Краљевине Србије у Сересу, ПП Но 192/1898.

10. АС, Конзулат Краљевине Србије у Сересу, ПП Но 195/1898.

wanted to persuade the government that the decision about the school in Serres had been correct and in a certain way he wanted to justify his failure. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs pointed out to Mr. Nusić that the quality of work and number of pupils, together with all invested efforts, did not justify opening of another school east of Serres. With clear recommendation, Mr. Nusić was warned to direct efforts to places of most importance.

During the first ten days of work, there was a great struggle for children. The number of pupils changed every second. While the Greeks removed children, the Serbs enrolled others, and the only consistent pupils were Jewish children.

The Greeks cancelled tuition fee, the books were given for free (which hadn't been a case earlier) and poor families were given financial help. At the time when the Serbian school had only three pupils, Mr. Nusić decided to provide lunch and enable the survival of the school by that subvention. The honor and respect of the first school in the area of eastern Macedonia were defended, but also Mr. Nusić's respect and justification of his decisions. Upon the provision of lunch, the number of pupils increased to 50. The Serbian government had to find resources in the budget for this forced measure introduced by Mr. Nusić. Vladan Djordjević, Serbian government Prime Minister, approved this unplanned expense because the vice-consul faced the government with an accomplished fact each later information about a village asking for school was accepted by the Serbian government with caution exactly because Serres school proved as a bad idea of a single man. The first school year ended on 27 May 1899 with exams observed by consul himself together with the parents. According to the report by Mr. Nusić, all the present were impressed by responses especially of those children who hadn't known a single word of Serbian before starting the school. The accomplishments of children coming from Bulgarian schools and Debar colony were especially praised¹¹.

Two-year propaganda led by Mr. Nusić in the Eastern Macedonia, without the unreserved support of the Serbian government, and also his resistance, which was tiring to his opponents, especially the Greeks, made him also tired. At the moment of sincerity, this Serbian diplomat gathered his strength and courage to admit it. A diplomatic career of Mr. Branislav Nusić ended in Serres. He was taken off the diplomat list and was appointed an administrator of the National Theatre in Belgrade. Considering the fact that the consulate

11. Simultaneously with the school in Serres, there was a Sunday school for adult migrant workers from Debar. The data Mr. Nusić provided about migrant workers from 300 houses seems overestimated. Until the opening of the Serbian consulate, people from Debar were directed to the Bulgarians. During the propaganda war, with the help of the Greeks who considered people from Debar as Serbs, Mr. Nusić took over 11 out of 16 people attending the Bulgarian school and organized for them a Sunday school for adults. The school started working on 13 December 1898.²⁸ Mr. Nusić hadn't left many written evidence about this school probably because there weren't many problems about it.

in Serres, where he ended his diplomatic career, was Mr. Nusić's idea, it is not necessary to draw a conclusion about his performance there.

The beginning of a new school year matched the personal shift in the Serbian consulate. A new vice consul, Mr. Sima Avramović, a diplomat in Macedonia for many years who knew extremely well the situation in this area, was appointed. The first appeal to the Serbian government by Mr. Avramović was to send teachers because Rista and Anastasija Stavrić had left Serres. As Mr. Nusić, Mr. Avramović demanded that the teachers spoke Greek language, not only because this was the language of citizens and proof of good education but also because it was necessary, at least in the beginning, to communicate with children and explain to them in Greek. He suggested Mr. Petar Bandjerović, a teacher in Voden, who graduated from the Greek Gymnasium.

A very modest and careful person, Mr. Avramović criticized Mr. Nusić gently and between the lines but still justified his decision about lunch considering it the only way to preserve the Serbian school in Serres. Otherwise, it would be possible that, even with obtained license, the school could not be opened because of small number of pupils, which would be unprecedented in the Serbian educational work in Macedonia.

At the time of Mr. Avramović's arrival, the situation was not changed in Serres. Compared to Mr. Nusić's time, maybe it was even worse, especially when the rumors started that the Serbian Consulate would be closed and that the Serbian school would not start a new school year.

The number of pupils was again the issue. The excuses, such as that the Greeks interfered with the enrollment and pointing out the provision of lunch to the pupils as the only way out, pose a question of justification of the school itself and its opening. Mr. Avramović estimated the situation in Serres realistically, he appreciated the large number of Greek schools, which were better organized, and he qualified the Greek language as more valuable because it was used at homes and in the streets. As the enrollment approached, Mr. Avramović sincerely pointed out that there was no use to try the opening of a school without lunch for it would be embarrassing if nobody applied. To the mostly poor parents lunch for their children, besides lessons, was the only compensation for troubles they were subjected by the Greek citizens and the church. Besides, the pupils came from distant parts of the town (mahalas) and it would be impossible for them to go home for lunch in the middle of the day. If there were no lunch, parents would rather enroll children into the Bulgarian school in mahala Kamenica, with the largest number of Serbian pupils, or into Greek schools in their own mahalas. A special group of Serbian pupils, as Mr. Avramović pointed out, were the children of migrant workers from Debar, whom the Greeks recognized as the Serbs. Without lunch, these children would be left in the Bulgarian school with full board.

Once opened, the Serbian school in Serres had to be preserved. The closing

of a school would be catastrophic for the Serbian work and reputation in Macedonia. That would be a terrible defeat not only in the eyes of citizens of Serres but much further, and would be harmful to the complete Serbian educational work elsewhere. The Serbian weakness and incapacity would be confirmed and pretensions by others in Macedonia would be encouraged by Serbian concessions. Mr. Avramović admitted that if he were given orders to close the school, he wouldn't be able to do that. This great diplomat, who served in Thessalonica and Bitola, when schools were opened and where Serbian pretensions were considered without exceptions, recommended to the Serbian government to treat Serres as a border of Serbian sphere where diplomats had to use all resources against much more powerful opponents in order to succeed somewhere else¹². As Mr. Nusić, he also demanded certain funds in order to provide lunch, shoes and clothes for the pupils.

Mr. Avramović, although more moderately than Mr. Nusić, also criticized the Greeks and their attempts to interfere with the work of the school and accused the Bulgarians that they had tried to persuade parents from Kamenica by offering them full board to enroll their children into Bulgarian school there. Very cautious in his reports to the Serbian government, Mr. Avramović said that he was pleased with a «nice number of pupils» enrolled, that he wasn't ashamed of it, at least not with the Bulgarians in Serres, pointing out that the school was in the center of Greek mahala, very distant from Kamenica and had no full board. Besides 50 enrolled pupils about 20 parents intended to enroll their children, but they gave up because of various Greek-Bulgarian intrigues and especially because the priests were banned to visit their homes. Out of those 50 pupils, two were sent to the Thessalonica gymnasium, two were dismissed and three-left school, so on 25 November there were 43 pupils, 25 boys and 18 girls, attending the school. 31 of them were from Serres, 10 from Debar and two from a village in Serres area. Nine girls were of Jewish religion and they were admitted in gratitude for their attendance during previous year when the school was almost empty. All other children were Christians.

Comparing the Serbian school with the Bulgarian, which was in Serres for 29 years and had a boarding house, the Serbian school had more pupils. In relation to the success of Bulgarian propaganda, the Serbs had no reason to be unsatisfied the number of enrolled pupils could demonstrate that. In the first year of school existence, 22 pupils finished the school year, and in the second year the number doubled. Mr. Avramović assured the government that pupils would not be a problem if money were provided for opening and maintaining of a boarding house. In that case, all the children from surrounding villages, who were rejected because they couldn't be provided with a place to stay and food, could be enrolled. Mr. Avramović reproved the Greeks for not helping.

12. АС, МИД, ПП, 664/1899.

He could not estimate who had been a worse sinner and a greater enemy in the eyes of the Greeks – schismatic-exultant or an Orthodox whose child attended the Serbian school - but still concluded that the latter ones were ruthlessly persecuted and rejected by the church.

The school started with regular work on 5 September Petar Bandjerović, a school administrator, taught the second and fourth grade, and Mihailo Veljić the first and third. There were 24 classes a week in the first and second grade, and 33 in the third and fourth. For French lessons, the classes were combined into two groups with three classes a week, and there were five classes a week for Turkish language. The beginning of the second school year was also marked by communicational problems because children from Serres mainly spoke Greek. Because a special attention had to be paid to Serbian language lessons, the programs for other subjects were decreased. This was a characteristic phenomenon in the first and second grade¹³. The relations between the church authorities and the Serbian school basically hadn't changed much during Mr. Avramović's time. However, they were much less tense. Soon upon his arrival to Serres, Mr. Avramović established a normal and friendly relation with the metropolitan. On the other hand, the metropolitan's attitude towards the new consul was much better than towards Mr. Nusić.

The metropolitan apologized to Mr. Avramović for not being able to be different towards the Serbs. On one occasion, Mr. Avramović suggested to the metropolitan that the Greeks could help the Serbs against the Bulgarians in the villages. In that case, many Bulgarian villages would abandon schism and approach the Patriarchate under the condition they got a school and Slavic ceremony in the church. The metropolitan did not contradict, but he pointed out that work by mutual consent was possible only in the case of agreement between Serbia and Greece. The metropolitan's confession that the Serbs, together with Greek help, could successfully win over Slavic villages for the Patriarchate was very sincere, but he also stated that it wouldn't be such a benefit for Fanar and Athens comparing to concession and that it would be, as he metaphorically said «pouring water from the sea into the well and vice versa». He stated that in the areas, which cost the Greeks that much material sacrifice, spreading of Greek language and religious ceremony could not be abandoned¹⁴. The school day on 14 January, dedicated to the Serbian Archbishop St. Sava, was also celebrated in Serres. A teacher, Petar Bandjerović, asked the metropolitan Gligorije to come or send a priest to perform a religious ceremony in the school. Mr. Avramović was convinced that the invitation would be refused and wanted to show that the Serbs stayed loyal to the Patriarchate even with its non-Christian behavior. The change was obvious; while in previous year the metropolitan didn't want to see the

13. Конзулат Краљевине Србије у Сересу, ПП Но 107/1899.

14. АС, МИД, ПП, 666/1899.

representative of the school, this year he did. However, he refused the invitation, explaining that the school worked without his knowledge and approval from the Patriarchate. Mr. Bandjerović responded that this was not only the case in Serres but throughout Macedonia¹⁵. But, the metropolitan was ready to respond, saying that the citizens would react against the metropolitan and then stop obeying the Patriarchate. This kind of refusal had a severe impact to the orthodox people representatives. The metropolitan expressed his regrets because of the situation, and especially because of Mr. Avramović, whom he appreciated as a reasonable and smart man acting according to the situation and not «making too much noise as others who put the metropolitan in trouble with the Patriarchate», implying to Mr. Nusić in this statement.

One of Mr. Avramović's last reports about the school was on 16 March 1900. Namely, with the Royal Decree on 17 February, the consulate in Serres was cancelled and Mr. Avramović was appointed a vice consul in Pristina. The school destiny was directly related to the survival of the consulate. Mr. Avramović insisted on questioning the survival or closing of the elementary school in Serres before the cancellation of the Consulate. It was the minister's decision but Mr. Avramović, having in mind his duty, wrote an opinion. By Mr. Avramović's opinion, the cancellation of the consulate would mean complete abandoning of the Serbian educational activities, not only in the watershed of the Struma and Mesta rivers, but also in the whole left bank of the Vardar River. A school without the consulate would be hard to preserve. It wouldn't demand efforts by the Greeks or Bulgarians, because the parents would remove the children themselves believing that the consulate was cancelled because there was no room for successful work. This is exactly what happened. When information about the cancellation of the consulate was published in Constantinople newspapers, the number of pupils began to decrease.

Mr. Avramović made a proposition about school closing at the end of the school year, well aware that the simultaneous closing of the school and consulate would acknowledge a relation between Serbian diplomacy and an institution founded with propaganda aims. Mr. Avramović left Serres on 5 April 1900, and on his way to Pristina delivered all school files to the Serbian consulate in Thessalonica which, according to the government decision, continued to administer the school.

Mr. Nusić's enthusiasm, his great hopes and desire to make his diplomatic mission in Serres successful, Mr. Avramović's continuation of this idea, and in the end a decision to cancel consulate, all demonstrate pragmatism of the Serbian foreign policy in the area of Macedonia.

15. АС, МИД, ПП, 666/1899.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

DRAGICA JANKOVIĆ - MOUGKRAKIS

ΤΑ ΣΕΡΒΙΚΑ ΣΧΟΛΕΙΑ ΣΤΙΣ ΣΕΡΡΕΣ
ΣΤΟ ΤΕΛΟΣ ΤΟΥ 19^{ΟΥ} ΑΙΩΝΑ

Με την ίδρυση Σερβικού Προξενείου στις Σέρρες ο Μπράνισλαβ Νούσιτς ξεκίνησε παράλληλη προπαγανδιστική δραστηριότητα μεταξύ του σλαβικού πληθυσμού της πόλης. Αυτή η νέα κίνηση, έχοντας ανταγωνιστική διάθεση, ήταν φυσικό να προκαλέσει τη δυσπιστία και την αντίδραση του ελληνικού πληθυσμού. Αμέσως μετά την τοποθέτηση στα καθήκοντα του προξένου, ο Νούσιτς ως προτεραιότητα έθεσε την προετοιμασία του κλίματος για τη δημιουργία εκείνων των προϋποθέσεων που θα επέτρεπαν τη λειτουργία σερβικού δημοτικού σχολείου στην πόλη. Σε σχετικά σύντομο χρονικό διάστημα συγκέντρωσε εκατό υπογραφές, κυρίως επιφανών Σερραίων εμπόρων. Ταυτόχρονα καλλιέργησε φιλικές σχέσεις με το μουτεσαρίφη των Σερρών, επιτυγχάνοντας την υποστήριξη των επίσημων αρχών. Η αίτηση για την ίδρυση δημοτικού σχολείου παραδόθηκε στο μουτεσαρίφη για τα περαιτέρω στις 9 Νοεμβρίου 1897. Η όλη διαδικασία για τη θεμελίωση του σχολείου έλαβε χώρα κάτω από άκρα μυστικότητα, διότι υπήρχε φόβος από την αντίδραση Ελλήνων και Βουλγάρων. Παρ' όλα αυτά, η πρωτοβουλία αυτή γρήγορα έγινε γνωστή, με αποτέλεσμα Έλληνες και Βούλγαροι να ξεκινήσουν τη δική τους καμπάνια ενάντια στο σερβικό στόχο. Καμία πλευρά δεν εγκατέλειπε τα μέσα προκειμένου να πετύχει το σκοπό της. Οι Σέρβοι την ίδρυση σχολείου, ενώ οι Έλληνες και οι Βούλγαροι την αποτροπή της. Εξαιτίας αυτής της αντιπαράθεσης, η επίσημη έκδοση της άδειας για τη λειτουργία του σχολείου εκδόθηκε έπειτα από δέκα μήνες.

Ο ίδιος ο Νούσιτς, αναφερόμενος στα προβλήματα που αντιμετώπιζε, αναγνώρισε ότι η ελληνική γλώσσα ήταν κυρίαρχη στις Σέρρες και πως η ελληνική αντίδραση υπήρξε εντελώς φυσική και αναμενόμενη. Αναζητώντας δάσκαλο και δασκάλα, ο Νούσιτς επέμενε στην επιλογή προσώπων που γνώριζαν τα ελληνικά, διότι κατά την έναρξη της εργασίας τους στο σερβικό σχολείο, δίχως τη γνώση των ελληνικών δεν θα μπορούσαν να συνεννοηθούν με τους μαθητές. Το σχολείο λειτούργησε μόλις την 1η Σεπτεμβρίου 1898 στο μαχαλά (συνοικία) του Αγίου Νικολάου, σε νοικιασμένο οίκημα. Αρχικά η διδασκαλία ξεκίνησε με 24 μαθητές, εκ των οποίων οι 8 ήταν Εβραίοι. Ο αριθμός των μαθητών είχε διακυμάνσεις, αλλά ποτέ δεν ξεπέρασε τους πενήντα. Το ενδιαφέρον για το σχολείο υπήρξε σημαντικό μεταξύ του αγροτικού πληθυσμού. Όμως, η οικονομική αδυναμία φοίτησης σε οικοτροφείο είχε σαν αποτέλεσμα οι αιτήσεις εγγραφής παιδιών από τα χωριά ν' απορρίπτονται. Η ανάπτυξη του θέματος βασίζεται σε έγγραφα του Υπουργείου Εξωτερικών και του Υπουργείου Παιδείας της Σερβίας που φυλάσσονται στο Αρχείο της Σερβίας.



ΧΟΡΗΓΟΙ:



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