

ANTON ŠTEFÁNEK AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN SLOVAKIA

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There is no question that in 1918, the Slovak people suffered from serious educational poverty, though dire predictions about their fate were exaggerated. After the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic, it fell to Anton Štefánek, a 41-year old journalist and future sociologist, the task of establishing an educational system in Slovakia. As Referent for Education in the government of the Minister Plenipotentiary for Slovakia, Štefánek devoted the bulk of his efforts to the development of secondary education, for it was from these schools that the intelligentsia, crucial to the continued existence of a nation, would emerge.

This article describes in detail how he did so. As the major criterion for deciding the fate of each institution, he followed „the democratic principle of religious and racial equality before the law.“ In practice, it meant reclaiming the

cities for the Slovaks. In a little over three years, 9427 students were attending 37 Slovak gymnasia and 14 teacher training institutes. It is in this connection that Štefánek's work in Slovakia must be praised. For it was he who created the educational system without which the new Czechoslovak state could not have been successful.