

THE SCHOOLING OF SAMUEL TEŠEDÍK AND HIS “PRACTICAL AND ECONOMIC INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL” IN SZARVAS

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Abstract: The author presents one of the most important Slovak personalities from the so-called “Dolná zem” (engl. Lowland) : Samuel Tešedík from Szarvas, who created – especially in the field of agriculture education – works of European format. Tešedík’s greatest pedagogical contribution was the establishment of the first practical agricultural school in Hungary. He devoted himself not only to teaching of students but also to education of the common people. Thanks to his work and activities, he is still highly acclaimed by Slovak historical science. At the same time, he is a constant source of inspiration for people engaged in agriculture. In this study, the author emphasizes that the work of Samuel Tešedík in the field of public education and reformist work in agriculture is quite unique – and not only from the perspective of 18th century.

Keywords: Education. Practical and Economic Industrial School. Samuel Tešedík. Szarvas

1 Introduction

Samuel Tešedík occupied himself with pedagogical activities since his early youth. When he was twelve years old, he became a home educator in several prominent families in Bratislava. He recalls this period in his autobiography: “I have learned then more about habits, thinking, prejudices, household management, speech, mistakes, transgressions, virtues and the needs of various kind of families – bourgeois (especially craftsman) families, business families and also juristic families. How could I learn that at school? And what for is all the learning without this knowledge? I examined the talents and abilities, the mistakes and weaknesses of my students, but also the sources and causes of their shortcomings. I learned to recognize the good and bad morals of gentlemen and ladies, children and servants, helpers and apprentices, „patvarists“¹ and weavers, cooks and maidens, family friends and interlocutors. In my early years, I have gained such a knowledge of the world and people, without which it is not so easy for a person to succeed in the world” (Čečetka, 1959).

After his university studies, full of reform enthusiasm and devotion to the affairs of the people, he begins his teaching career in Szarvas, situated in the Lowland² of Kingdom of Hungary. At first, he focused only on occasional public education. For that purpose, he used family visits and his sermons. Gradually, he found out, that in the recovery of the village involvement of the school is needed. In 1779, he founded a school in Szarvas, which he called the “Practical and Economic Industrial School” (but in historical documents we can also find other names of this school: “Economic and Industrial Educational Institute”, “Practical and Economic Industrial Institute”, “Practical Agricultural and Industrial Institute”).

¹ It means “trainee lawyer”.

² This term “Dolná zem” (which can be translated as “The Lowland”) historically originated by the translation of the Hungarian expression Alföld and in the first three following meanings still corresponds to it. It can denote following things:

- The Great Danube Basin or, to be more precise, historical geographic region in its territory;
- In older geography: The Great Danube Basin together with the Little Danube Basin;
- Opposite of the northern predominantly mountainous part of Kingdom of Hungary (which means today’s Slovakia), i. e. southern (predominantly) lowland part of Kingdom of Hungary;
- the territory of Kingdom of Hungary south of today’s Slovak-Hungarian border;
- all (historically created) Slovak settlements lying south of the Slovak-Hungarian border – including regions in Zadunajsko (Engl. Southern Transdanubia), Novohrad (Germ. Neograd, Hung. Nógrád), Bukovina (Germ. Buchenland/Bukowina) and some regions in present-day Bulgaria;
- Bulgaria plus the southern part of Kingdom of Hungary: Danube and Tisza Basin (The Great Danube Basin located only in the territory of present-day Hungary, Romania, Croatia, Serbia), which – after the displacement of Turks – became the center of great internal migration of the population;
- parts of Hungary, which were in the 18th century and 19th century colonized by Slovaks (i.e. the parts of present-day Hungary, former Yugoslavia and Romania inhabited by Slovaks);
- territory with Slovak settlements (only) around the Hungarian, Romanian and Serbian borders;

This institute had two levels. The first level consisted of general or elementary school; it was basically an improved *Volksschule*³. For the needs of this school, Tešedík also published the book named *Knížečka čítaní a k prvním začátkům vzdělání školských dětí, spořádaná podle potřeby dolnozemské mládeže evangelické* (engl. The Small Reading-Book Designated for the Very Beginnings of the Education of Pupils, Organized according to the Needs of the Evangelical Youth of Lowlands) (1780) (Sliacky, 1973). In the first level, children learned to read, write and count. Within the subject of reading, pupils also acquired factual knowledge (so-called “factual learning”). In an accessible style, he lectured to children about economic knowledge, nature, health, duties, virtues and mistakes of future servants and farmers; he was teaching them children songs of educational and useful character; he also introduced games that were instructive in nature and also served to relax. Tešedík made sure that the correct knowledge of God was spread. He raised people of reasonable reason from his students, warning them of naivety, superstition, harmful opinions and sins. He also received Catholic children at his school, although many evangelical pastors did not like it.

The second, upper level of the school has a character of vocational education and practical high school. At this second level, the preparation for the practical profession was carried out: it was taught geography, natural history, physics, chemistry, gymnastics, health science (dietetics), veterinary medicine, civil engineering, finance, trade, agriculture technology and pedagogy. Part of the inmates at the second level was to devote special attention to the teaching profession, which Tešedík placed great emphasis on. According to the ideas of Samuel Tešedík, the teacher is to be very much involved also in the education of the common people. He should be well prepared not only for work in school, but also for public education. He should study the people, their ways of thinking, acting, their habits, morals, prejudices, so that they can be really good public or “folk” educators.

Tešedík’s Institute was also a manufacturing company. It was engaged in agricultural and industrial production as well as business. He had his own land and a number of different workshops at the level of advanced manufactory. The Institute organized production, teaching and recreation of pupils; it consciously linked education with production and gainful employment. Pupils were able to progressively enroll in 60 different types of work according to current seasons, their physical abilities and also their interests. The pupils were engaged in the cultivation of agricultural crops, fruit growing, beekeeping, silk production, textile production, joinery. In a similar way, the school also educated girls. There was the focus on practical training in horticulture and household chores, textile production (spinning, weaving, dyeing, cutting and sewing), but also in the collection and use of medicinal plants. Despite promoting his idea of linking theory with practice, Tešedík did not fall into pure practicalism. On a regular basis, pupils had to work out also theoretical papers and projects (Kmet’, 1998; Hirner, 1999).

Despite the fact that Samuel Tešedík focused primarily on raising children from an early age, his school was accessible to adults as well. In the premises of the Institute, he created so-called “folk education center”, where he organized different courses for adults, which were associated with practice of production. The library, which contained thousands of books from 12 subject fields, was open to all citizens from the village and the wider area.

³ This German term generally refers to compulsory education, denoting an educational institution every person (i.e. the people, “Volk”) is required to attend. This name is being used to designate the first level of elementary school for poor children, who could not afford to pay private teachers, but were obliged to attend the school.

Tešedík, in addition to the education of pupils, constantly paid attention to improving and further training of teachers. He organized school conferences where teachers exchanged their opinions and experiences and collected a number of materials to compile a methodological book for teaching various subjects (Čečetka, 1959;).

Tešedík's Institute in Szarvas focused on education of pupils, common people and teachers became a model for the establishment of schools of the same nature in Germany, in other parts of Austria-Hungary and also in Russia. In fact, the Practical and Economic Industrial School in Szarvas is considered to be the first agricultural school of its kind in the world and it became the foundation for specialized agricultural, forestry and veterinary education in Hungary and Slovakia (Kmeť, 1993; Martuliak, 2004)..

2 Method

In the processing, we used direct method, with which we verified the reliability of the sources. Subsequently, we used a progressive method that is consistent with the time course. Then we followed with the retrospective method, which is the opposite of the progressive method. By using this method, we explain older phenomena using newer phenomena. We were aware of its danger, namely the danger of modernization, which arises when assessing history from the current perspective.

3 Samuel Tešedík and his pedagogical and educational work

Samuel Tešedík has written more than 150 books, studies, articles and records; mostly in German, less in Latin and some in Slovak (or Czech). Of all his works, only 18 were published in form of books or articles. Others were preserved only in manuscripts or were lost (Čečetka, 1959;).

His main literary work is the book *The Peasant in Hungary*, what it is and what it could be; with a plan of a modified village (German original *Der Landmann in Ungarn, was er ist und was er sein könnte; nebst einem Plane von einem regulierten Dorfe*) from 1784. In this work, Tešedík criticizes in many ways the situation in the village and human society and quotes particular cases of oppression and exploitation. He also points out to the poverty of subjugated people and the lack of activity among the people. The work proposes the ideal organization of the village and its development, including the construction of educational and cultural institutions, health and social facilities (Čečetka, 1952; Himer, 1999). Tešedík's views on the rectification of the moral and material misery of the subjugated people differed significantly from those of other enlightened and philanthropic educators who regarded education as the only possible remedy. Despite his great appreciation for education, Tešedík sees a significant moment in correcting the poor position of the people in the reform of the socio-economic area of society. Samuel Tešedík firmly defended his view that education should not be limited to school, but should seep into the family and the whole life of society. In this spirit, he then develops his pedagogical writings and works.

From the pedagogical point of view, the most important works of Samuel Tešedík have been preserved only in the form of manuscripts, which were gradually translated into Hungarian and Slovak. They were published in printed form only during the 20th century. In this study, we decided to discuss in detail his four most acclaimed pedagogical works:

- *Knížečka k čítaní a k prvým začátkům vzdělání školských dětí, spořádaná podle potřeby dolnozemske mládeže evangelické* – 1780 (Engl. *The Small Reading-Book Designated for the Very Beginnings of the Education of Pupils, Organized according to the Needs of the Evangelical Youth of Lowlands*)
- *Úprava dekanom – Pokyny Tešedíka, kňaza v Sarvaši, pre dekana, čiže školské pripomienky, z ktorých sa môžu poučiť dekaní, farári ako miestní školskí inšpektori a učitelia* – 1781 (Engl. *Dean's Adjustment – Instructions of Tešedík,*

Priest in Szarvas, for Dean, or School Remarks, from which Deans, Pastors, Local School Inspectors and Teachers Can Learn)

- *Dvanásť paragrafov o uhorskom školstve* – 1791 (Engl. *Twelve Sections on Hungarian Education*)
- *Mój názor na školskú učebnicu pre väčšie prakticko-ekonomické vidiecke školy* – 1793 (Engl. *My Opinion on the School Textbook for Bigger Practical and Economic Rural Schools*)

3.1 The Small Reading-Book Designated for the Very Beginnings of the Education of Pupils, Organized according to the Needs of the Evangelical Youth of Lowlands – 1780

This work was based on various German sources. It is mainly inspired by the works of pedagogical philanthropists such as Friedrich Eberhard von Rochow (*Versuch eines Schulbuches, for Kinder der Landleute, oder Gebrauch in Dorfschulen*, 1772; *Der Kinderfreund*, 1776), Christian Felix Weiss (*Kleine Lieder für Kinder*, 1766; *Neues ABC-Buch*, 1772) and Joachim Heinrich Campe (*Robinson der Jüngere*, 1779). It can be unambiguously said that Tešedík was largely influenced by the opinions of Friedrich Eberhard von Rochow (1734 – 1805). Under the influence of his philanthropic and pedagogical principles, the main purpose of Tešedík's reading-book become the formation of the child's world of opinion, the formation of its moral profile, diligence and obedience. It was Rochow, who inspired Tešedík to write an encyclopedic textbook for elementary schools. Its aim was to write a book for children that would fill the gap between the classic curriculum and the Bible in teaching (Sliacky, 1973).

The book is divided into three parts. The Latin introduction is addressed to teachers. Tešedík, in accordance with the pedagogical realism, points out that "it is unnecessary to present the abstract truth to the very young and inexperienced generation, and it is vain to impose it by knouts, sticks and cane, because the child will even more probably forget that, to which have stronger distaste and dislike." The introduction also serves as a methodological instruction for the teacher; Tešedík reminds teachers to analyze, explain and repeat the individual articles in the book for a long time, but also to apply them to various practical examples, until the pupils understand the whole problem. He completed his teaching requirements by appealing to teachers to respect the individual pupil's personality.

The methodological introduction is followed by the curriculum part, which presents to the pupil the alphabet, individual phonetic groups and words.

The reading part itself consists of 30 lessons. The aim of each lesson is to acquaint children with divine wisdom, the nature of good and evil deeds, the need for a hierarchical organization of society and the Christian religion. There are also lessons about seasons, continents, animals, health, good farming and dietary rules. A large number of moral practical examples and parables are used throughout the text. Educational examples are characterized by two forms: the first represents the so-called positive, following example and a second negative, deterrent example. His use of examples and parables in the textbook is considered as pioneer deed in the development of didactic discipline.

Stylistically, the work alternates the explanatory text with dialogues. The so-called Socratic form is used in dialogues, when basic information is given in the form of an interview (for example, in a mother-child interview) (Sliacky, 1973).

The texts, he has taken from Rochow's books, extend the theme of traditional elementary textbooks to mundane motifs, have an educational perspective and are given a pedagogically more effective perspective than that used in the earlier curriculums and catechisms (Ružička, 1966; Sliacky, 1973).

Until the publication of another reading-book of the Enlightenment era (in 1825), this book was the only universal type of textbook designated for Slovak children. Despite the fact

that Samuel Tešedík made it especially for the children of the Slovaks in Lowland of Kingdom of Hungary, it has become much more famous in Slovakia than in the Lowland. The textbook was condemned by the Lowland's church high officials because Tešedík did not include in the book traditional religious texts (although the true cause probably consisted in the generally hostile attitude of the Lowland's ruling class towards Tešedík's pedagogical and social reforms – as evidenced by the fact that a textbook was ordered in large amounts only in Slovakian part of Kingdom of Hungary, where were used in many ecclesiastical communities; Tešedík's texts were also later adopted by other Slovak curriculums) (Sliacky, 1973; Kmeť, 2005).

3.2 Dean's Adjustment – Instructions of Tešedík, Priest in Szarvas, for Dean or School Remarks, from which Deans, Pastors, Local School Inspectors and Teachers Can Learn (1781)

In this work, Samuel Tešedík summed up his comments about the work of the deans (*the dean* here means the inspector of church schools), but also the pastors, teachers and local school inspectors. He divided his comments and instructions into nine chapters (Čečetka, 1952; Čečetka and Vajcík, 1956).

The first chapter, entitled "Errors and shortcomings of schools, mainly folk schools⁴", deals with all the shortcomings he encountered during his pedagogical work in schools. He appeals to the deans to try to remedy these shortcomings and errors, or to inform the higher institutions and seek redress the wrongs. He reproaches teachers that they teach subjects mechanically, that they are not exemplary for their pupils in their behavior and morality, and that they often use pupils for household chores. Teaching time is sometimes too long and pupils spend many hours at school completely idle. Teaching subjects do not meet people's needs; too much time is devoted to the Latin language and too little, on the contrary, to real subjects. Tešedík finds also many mistakes in textbooks that do not match the abilities and needs of pupils. It also criticizes teaching methods, which, while imposing great demands on the pupil's memory abilities, do not at all develop their judgment and independent thinking. He suggests that more games and rest should be included in the learning process so that children do not get used to the idle way of life and so that their attention will be relaxed. He also suggests that the pupils should become accustomed to stay in nature.

Tešedík devoted the second chapter of the work to teachers. He appeals to the deans to permit only moral and qualified people to the teaching profession. Every candidate must undergo a public examination and prove his/her school reports and references proving his/her integrity. Furthermore, in this chapter, he explains in detail how deans are to assess work of teachers. It emphasizes that the teacher must be able to highlight the need for his/her subject and its importance for society. He also considers it very important whether the teacher uses methods and language appropriate to the age and understanding of the pupils so that they can steadily pay attention. He also suggests that deans should keep records of inspections and teachers and acquaint with them their successors and higher institutions. Furthermore, he advises them to hold meetings (so-called "school conferences"), to which pastors and teachers would be invited, and then take the lessons of these meetings that they will check and assess at further school visits. This chapter concludes with a precise definition of the activities of the deans.

The third chapter of the work deals with pupils. He commands to deans to check how many pupils are placed in the classrooms, whether they are entering school at the right age, or if they are mature enough to enter, whether they left school prematurely, and if so, what is the reason. Tešedík has strong reservations about the fact, that pupils are learning to read from catechism or other religious books. According to him, pupils should learn in appropriate time that there is a big difference between the

reading-book and the Holy Scripture, which they should deal with due respect and without a fuss. He emphasizes the need for reading-books in many of his writings.

The fourth chapter deals with the concept of teaching. The bulk of this chapter consists of different advices. Tešedík advices to teacher to try to root out superstition and prejudices from schools, because these things prevent the truth from being known. Religion needs to be explained cohesively at school and in the church, so close cooperation between the teacher and the parish priest is required. Tešedík also suggests to include in the teaching more real subjects that are necessary for the rural man, which will help him to know the laws of nature and aid him to integrate to and better live in society.

The fifth part of the work is entitled "Morals". The dean should draw up moral principles for school needs and submit them to a higher institution for approval. Once approved, it can be read in the presence of the pastor to the pupils and continuously assesses whether the pupils behave according to them. In case of violation of these principles, the dean must take strict action.

In the sixth chapter, he included instructions for punishing pupils. He urges teachers not to punish those pupils who are diligent, but their skills and abilities are not enough to achieve a good learning outcome. Especially pupils who are wicked and who are lying, stealing or committing other offenses should be punished.

The seventh chapter deals with school prayers and songs. The dean must warn teachers to explain each prayer to the pupils perfectly so that the pupils were aware what they say and not just recite the text mechanically, as it often happens. Similarly, the choice of songs – even during worship service – should be appropriate to the current season of the year.

In eight chapter, Tešedík states guidelines for testing of pupils. The dean should introduce two exams a year in schools – in autumn and in spring.

In the last chapter, he emphasizes the importance and need of activity of deans. Again, he appeals to the creation of close cooperation between teachers and spiritual representatives of the community.

3.3 Twelve sections on Hungarian education (1791)

In this work, Samuel Tešedík again elaborates on his pedagogical principles and advice. This is his proposal for the reform of education, which he submitted to the Regional Study Commission. It is based on the Comenius speech on the spirit of the education named *Oratio de cultura ingeniorum* and it endorses its principle "We are looking for easy ways of learning, although we should rather take care to exclude laziness from schools" ("*Methodos docendi querimus faciles, quum potius hoc agendum esset, ut e scholis pallatur ignavia*") (Čečetka, 1952, 1959).

In this work, he included in the twelve paragraphs his most important views and ideas for the development of the Hungarian education system. He considers it a fundamental idea that pupils should learn not only for the school itself, but primarily for life. Therefore, he is consistently proposing to remove unnecessary subjects from schools, and vice versa, to include in the concept of teaching real subjects, which are necessary for the development and uplifting of the rural man. He criticizes the absence of a real teaching plan, the neglect of physical, civic, economic and politic education. It proposes to develop an economic method of teaching ("practical-economic" as he calls it) with a purposeful school industry. Teaching methods should be taught at teacher training institutes and spread throughout the country. The subject should be taught in such a way that pupils could acquire real knowledge that they can use in real public life. According to Tešedík, practical economic education would eliminate the shortcomings of common teaching methods. In this way, children could prepare for their future profession from an

⁴ As we said before, in English-speaking countries, these schools are known under the term Volksschule.

early age, which would allow them integrate more easily into community.

Tešedík had already applied all these principles and proposals earlier in the establishment of his institute. They also did set off the establishment of other similar types of schools – even though they did not meet the expected interest and understanding in Hungary.

3.4 Analysis of a school textbook for bigger practical and economic rural schools (1793)

This work written by Samuel Tešedík was published under the title *Meine Idee eines Schulbuches für Grössere Praktisch-Ökonomische Landschule* in the journal *Novi ecclesiastico-scholastici Annales Evangelicorum Augustanae et Helveticae Confessionis in Austriaca monarchia* (Engl. New School and Church Chronicles of Evangelicals of Augsburg and Helvetican Confession in the Austrian Monarchy). The magazine was being published by Samuel Ambrosius in Banská Štiavnica (Schemnitz).

In this work, Tešedík made a concrete plan for the compilation of a universal textbook that would serve both school and domestic purposes. In this plan, he strives for creating a kind of draft of content-intensive book that would include a lot of educational information while being also practically focused. Structurally, it proposes to divide this practical knowledge handbook into twelve chapters (Čečetka, 1952, 1959).

He intends to include in the first chapter a “food for thought”, by which he means “observation, memorization and recognition exercise”.

To the second chapter, he assigned the name “physical education”. That should be a guide to knowledge of nature and use of natural resources and its aim should be to prevent prejudices and superstitions. This chapter should also include the basics of knowledge of the human body (anatomy, physiology), but also knowledge of health care (causes of diseases, rules of prevention and home remedies) and dietetics.

The third chapter, entitled “Civic or Political-Economic Education”, should address the needs of the rural man and include instructions for proper cultivation of land, the basics of horticulture, viticulture, livestock production and beekeeping, as well as veterinary medicine. It also recommends to include in this chapter a collection of general laws entitled “village code” and guidelines for writing economic correspondence (drawing up letters, statements, contracts, income tables).

The fourth chapter, aimed at the needs of the Christian, should be called “Christian education” and should draw attention to the dangers of superstitions and should highlight the importance of education. At the same time, it should provide guidance for the good morals of individual walks of life and social classes, and its conclusion should include a summary of the Bible.

In the fifth chapter, Tešedík – in the spirit of his pedagogical conviction – emphasizes the necessity of cooperation between school and family.

The sixth chapter should deal with “weather science” and in the seventh “school laws and instructions about school, village and country police” should be published.

In eight chapter, he says that children should be introduced to “folk songs for all seasons and works”.

He called the ninth chapter “training of young people to diligent work already in school”. This chapter should contain didactic procedures and methods for practical teaching and sorting of particular experiments and work for particular seasons and classes.

In the tenth chapter, he proposes to include instructions for various “children's games”, which develop the knowledge and skills of pupils.

Eleventh chapter should be of particular benefit to adult citizens and should familiarize them with the activities of all publicly beneficial facilities working for the benefit of the countryside (firefighters, insurance companies, poorhouses, police house, grain stores, etc.).

The last chapter should deal with “teaching about speech”.

Although the pioneering plan for this encyclopedic textbook was elaborated and published in the magazine, it was never realized. The thing is that at that time the ruling class's critical attitudes towards the Tešedík Institute and his reforms of social and pedagogical activities were being strengthened. It was not until research in the 20th century that literary scholars found out that this writing by Samuel Tešedík served as an essential source in the compilation of the first encyclopedic reading-book (*Čítanka alebo kniha k čítaní pro mládež ve školách slovanských v městech a dědinách*, engl. Reading-Book or Reading-Book for Youth in Slavic Schools in Towns and Villages), which was published in 1825 in Pest and whose main author was Ján Kollár. Its structure and themes are almost identical to Tešedík's template (Sliacky, 1973).

4 Conclusion

The reforms introduced by Samuel Tešedík in the field of education were certainly the starting point for many of his followers, and many of them were involved in improving the situation and raising the level of Slovak schools. I guess the only Tešedík's idea that did not come true until today is the idea of the high social status of the teacher.

Many contemporaries considered Samuel Tešedík only a utopian. In the end, however, they had to admit that his utopias and fantasies were not at all unrealistic and that many of them had succeeded.

In the field of Slovak and Central European pedagogy he is rightfully entitled to several dominances:

- He proved that his ideas about the education of all social classes are not unrealistic and he was the first to make wider education available to the subjects;
- He wrote the first children's book, which for many years served as a model for different reader-books and curriculums not only in Slovakia, but also in Hungary and Russia;
- Last but not least, he was the founder of vocational education in Hungary;
- His aim was to bring Hungary closer to the developed European countries and today we can say that in many fields, he got ahead of them in his time.
- His agro-industrial institute has become a model for establishing similar educational institutions in many European countries – from Russia to Germany. With its expertise, his school has been considered unique in the world.

Samuel Tešedík created a magnificent pedagogical work during his life, imbued with the ideas of humanism, Christianity and democracy. His pedagogical realism, unlike other his enlightened colleagues, was enriched with the technical and practical component. In his autobiography, while defending the need for his practical institute and institute for teachers, he expressed a very wise and serious idea: “A project is one thing, but who will implement it? This requires cultivated and well-prepared teachers. Good experts with a moral profile.” Even after almost two centuries, this thought had lost none of its wisdom; it points directly to what is missing in today's schools: a practical focus on bringing pupils and students into society in order to confirm the well-known: “We learn not for the school but for life.”

In conclusion, we would like to point out one – in our view – not a very positive fact. While in Hungary, Samuel Tešedík is a “big name” (streets, schools, museums, folklore groups and organizations are named after him; his busts are located in many

institutions and the people with merits in the field of agriculture are being awarded by the plaque of Samuel Tešedík), most Slovak people have not met with his name, yet. With this article, we also wanted to make sure that the name of this giant of Slovak pedagogy will not sink into oblivion.

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