

Serbian Elementary School “Jovan Miletić” Trieste

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A metà del diciottesimo secolo, i Serbi cominciarono a vivere nella città libera di Trieste e a frequentarne il porto. In meno di cinquant'anni, riuscirono ad adattarsi ad un ambiente per loro straniero, alle nuove condizioni di vita ed a creare particolari caratteristiche culturali che, sebbene con un orientamento internazionale, erano ancora legate ai loro luoghi d'origine. Intorno al 1850, l'educazione religiosa era rimpiazzata da scuole pubbliche primarie e, quindi, secondarie. Il fondatore dell'educazione moderna fu Johann Felbiger, il quale fondò, sulla scorta del suo metodo, una scuola a Vienna nel 1771; solo quattro anni più tardi fu aperta a Trieste una scuola elementare di lingua tedesca e, in seguito, nella città operarono due analoghe scuole di lingua italiana. Nel 1782, una scuola slava, la scuola elementare serba, in seguito denominata “Jovan Miletić”, cominciò la sua attività. I suoi fondatori furono ricchi commercianti che, sebbene poco istruiti e talora addirittura analfabeti, furono capaci di riconoscere l'importanza dell'educazione nella madre lingua. L'opera dei maestri e del personale amministrativo subì col tempo una certa trasformazione, passando dalla fase iniziale di scuola privata a quella pubblica attraverso la chiusura durante la Seconda Guerra Mondiale e dalla chiusura dovuta agli eventi socio-politici alla fase di inclusione nel sistema educativo serbo nel 2012. Considerando l'importanza delle scuole serbe all'estero, l'articolo tratta della fondazione e dell'attività della scuola “Jovan Miletić”, che, per più di due secoli, superò molte difficoltà, salvaguardando l'identità nazionale tra i Serbi residenti a Trieste. È un'occasione per illustrare momenti importanti nella vita di questa scuola e per vedere il suo significato nella storia della scuola e dell'educazione serbe.

In the middle of the 18th century, Serbs began to inhabit the free city and port of Trieste. In less than half a century, they managed to adapt to the unknown environment and new living conditions and to create special cultural features that, although internationally oriented, were still tied to the places where they came from. In the second half of the 18th century, religious education in the city of Trieste was replaced by public primary and later secondary schools. The creator of modern education was Johann Felbiger, who, according to his own method, founded a school in Vienna in 1771, and only four years later the first German-language primary school was opened in Trieste, and later two Italian language schools were operated. In 1782, the Slavic school, the Serbian primary school, which was later named “Jovan Miletić”, began to work. Its founders, rich merchants, despite being insufficiently educated, and some of them illiterate, were able to recognize the importance of education in the mother tongue. The work of its teachers and school administration has undergone certain transformations – from its establishment as a private and later public school, through its closure during World War II and closure due to socio-political events, to its inclusion in the supplementary education system of Serbia in 2012. Having in mind the importance of Serbian schools outside Serbia, this paper is dedicated to the founding and work of the “Jovan Miletić” school, which, for more than two centuries, resisted many challenges and influenced the development and maintenance of national identity among Trieste Serbs. This is an opportunity to

highlight important moments of its existence and to see its significance for the history of schooling and education among Serbs.

Parole chiave: Trieste, educazione, serbi, commercianti, rinascita nazionale

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Serbs from different part of Ottoman Empire and those under the Venetian Empire started to inhabit Trieste (in „Riječniku” by Vuk Stefanović Karadžić it is stated as Trieste, Trst, Tergestum) during the rise of the city in the beginning of 18th century. Few decades after, there was so many Serbs in Trieste, that together with Greeks, they established Orthodox church Parish and in 1748 they made first regulations and rules under the name of “Ustanovlenija i pravila nacije i bratstva Iliričeskavo utverženo goda 1748 u gradu i pristanišću slobodnomu Trieste”. Few years later, in 1753, gathered around the church with common Greek priest, they listened to the service alternately, every other week, in Slavonic and Greek. This condition did not appeal to the Greeks in the church and parish - bilingual liturgy was causing the issue.

For many years Serbs were fighting for their position in the church, but not before 1772, the Serbs regain their priests - authorities have issued an order “temple church ceremonies were performed not only in the Greek language and by the Greek priest, but in the old Slovenian language and by the Serbian priest”¹. The same year they renew the Rules from 1748 which are known as „Ustanovlenija i pravila nacije i bratstva Iliričeskavo utverženo goda 1748 u gradu i pristanišću slobodnomu Trieste”². Based on these rules every Orthodox resident of Trieste, who has reached the age of 18, could be part of the Brotherhood. At the head of the Brotherhood stood committee of 24 members who were elected every three years; in addition to members, the Board consisted of the president, two vice presidents, two members of the Supervisory Board and Secretary. Clergy are elected every year - Greek priest was from the Sveta Gora and Serbian priest was from Gornjekarlovačka Diocesan³. Clergy were required to indicate spiritu-

¹ V.Đerasimović, *Serbian church community in Trieste*, Trieste 1993, p. 11.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 37.

³ The municipality was under Kralovac Archbishopric from January 15, 1757, to September 7, 1795; subsequently received priests from the Dalmatian diocese. The

al comfort to believers, to visit the sick, to take care of Books of births, marriages and deaths, every Sunday at two o'clock in the afternoon to teach children religion – Greek religion to the Greek children and Serbian religion to the Serbian children.

Unsettled relations between the Serbs and Greeks lasted all until 1782, when the Greeks, with financial compensation, left the municipality and the church of Saint Spyridon. A year earlier, in November 1781, the Serbs have chosen their Administration. This Administration, whose members were Jovan Conte Vojnović, Jovo Kurtoviić and Jovica Riznić have done a lot for community and church – they rebuilt the church, brought a new priest and first teacher. That teacher marked the start of Serbian elementary school in Trieste, which then had the status of private school⁴.

The above stated Rules from 1748 were adopted on 1st September 1793 on the assembly of the Brotherhood and with presence of Commissioner Franz Philip of Rota⁵. A few years later, in 1798, they were also printed in the University of Serbian printing in Buda. By these rules, also known as “Ustanovljenija i pravila nacije i bratstva Iliričeskavo utverženo goda 1748 u gradu i pristanišću slobodnomu Trieste” (Statuti e Regolamenti Della Nazione e Confraternita Illirica stabilita nella citta e Portofranco di Trieste 1793), life of Serbs was regulated – these Rules was regulated for trade, seafaring, and the free practice of the Orthodox faith⁶. These Rules stated, according to the 77 clauses, that members of the Brotherhood are electing Board (Capital) among its members, and councilors among themselves elect Administration which consists of president, two vice president, two members of the Supervisory Board and Secretary. The mandate of the elected members of the Board lasted three years. Board meetings contained discussions regarding all aspects of life, and the decisions were final, if meetings were attended by two thirds of members. Duty of Capital was that every first Sunday of the month holds a session that resolves economic, political, and religious issues. In addition, its duty was also to allow the classes of “National Illyrians School” which was

municipality was independent until 1921, when it fell under the spiritual authority of Holy Synod. M. Purković, *History of Serbian Orthodox Church Community of Trieste*, Trieste 1960, p. 76.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 59.

⁵ Serbs called the Municipality *Serbsko Triestinsko občestvo* and state authorities until 1782 called it *Slavoiliričeska*.

⁶ The rules are replaced in 1950.

officially approved to work by government decree from 21st July 1792. By listening in their homes that Serbs want to join the enlightened world, and to get rid of the Ottoman occupation. Trieste Serbs at the beginning of the 19th century were present in many decisive moments of the Serbian people. Thanks to the rich merchants, Trieste for some time became, beside Vienna and Sremski Karlovci, place of Serbian culture. Trieste Serbs were hosting almost all carriers of ideas of enlightenment and national revival, materially helping the printing of their works. In the early 19th century, as patriots attached to the idea of liberation, they were supporting the Serbian rebels.

What attracted educated Serbs in Trieste was the ability to print their books, through language and script affect national revival. On the other hand, rich traders or Trieste Serbs were ready to help in all of this, to help national, political, and cultural activities of the Serbian people. Subscribers of the Serbian book, who have their money, were very important for printing books. Most of them were priests, men from the richer classes, book lovers who wanted every Serbian book, as it was Vuk Stefanoć Karadžić, and a woman named Maca, the wife of Sima Milutinović Sarajlija. Subscribers were usually subscribed to one copy, but also to more than one like Dimitri Frušić who ordered 30 copies of the book “The Official Serbian proverbs” by Vuk Stefanović Karadžić.

For the life of Serbs in Trieste of great influence was the church of Saint Spyridon and the Serbian school “Jovan Miletić” which is related to education in the city of Trieste. To the time of enlightened absolutism was also related to Jesuit education in Latin. In the second half of the 18th century, this religious education was replaced by public primary and later secondary schools. Founder of modern education was Johan Felbiger who, by his own methods, in 1771 founded a school in Vienna, and just four years after in Trieste, the first elementary school in German was opened. Four years later, in 1779, in Trieste, two schools in the Italian language were working, and after fifteen years, modeled to the one of first modern German school, Slovenian schools started to work, that was Serbian elementary school.

Prior to the establishment of private Serbian elementary school in 1779, there have been attempts that Dositej Obradović, who at the time lived in Trieste, to become a teacher, but for financial reasons there was no agreement. As stated in the Statute of the Serbian church community from 1793, school which worked on modern principles

like those in Vienna started its operations on 1st January 1792. It was assumed that this School with the support of publicity was required for male and female children, except that class for female children occurred at home. School was based on the „Structure of Serbian schools in Trieste” from 1st January 1792⁷. Based on these Rules it was envisaged that education of Serbian youth should take 6 or 7 years, and that children should enroll in school at the age of 6. The subjects taught by teachers are in native language, German and Italian – reading and writing, the religious, the calculation to the triple rules, the basic concepts of law and economics. Since the Municipality was taking care of the school, education was free, and students had a snack. During Sunday’s priests were teaching children Christian sciences at the end of the school year, students were taking tests in all three languages – Serbian, Italian and German.

The school was founded thanks to Serb Jovan Miletić, who was born in Sarajevo around 1715 where he gained the most basic literacy. At 14 years old, when his father died, he went to a furrier whom he mastered three years. After that, the master sent him to do trading in Trieste, Venice, Ancon and Split, where he met with wealthy merchants. Since he lost his mother due to plague, he took little leather, wax and honey and went to Vienna, where he sold the goods at a high price. Obviously, he was a good trader and as such remained in Vienna, where he died on the September 8th, 1790. Towards the end of his life, on 16th May 1787; he made a testament by which he left the sum of 24,000 forints to the Serbian school in Trieste⁸.

The school began with only two grades, but in the first decade of the 19th century, third grade was opened. However, in all three grades there was not one single girl, which was in accordance with orders from the government in 1808, which was to ban coeducation. Providing women teacher was necessary for the education of girls, and the problem was that at that time in Trieste, there was no adequate person who knew Italian and Serbian language and the church administration

⁷ The plan was drawn up in Italian, a handwritten copy can be seen on the website of the Orthodox church municipality of Trieste.

⁸ Miletić testament was denied by his nephew and partner in action Tripko who felt that he did not get enough. The dispute ended in 1804 in the Sublime Porte in Constantinople where Tripko said he will not seek money having received sum of 5000 florins. Testament is kept in German and Italian. M. Purković, *Op. cit.*, p. 62.

asked the competent authorities to exempt this school. Already in 1815, the list of students contained 13 girls⁹.

Characteristic of the initial decades of School working were constant personnel changes, and the work of teacher Dimitrije Vladislavljević that, by the Contract of 1812, and with a salary of 450 florins committed to teaching pupils reading, writing, grammar, arithmetic, and other necessary lectures. School was working before and after noon, except Thursdays, Sundays, and holidays; teacher was obliged to feed in the church and had two private lessons per day from 11 to 12 and from 5 to 6, for what he was particularly honored¹⁰.

In accordance with the educational system, this in those years was present in Austria and the needs of the Serbian people in Trieste, Serbian school „Jovan Miletić” constructed Educational program in 1822 that included all primary school subjects¹¹. Analyzing educational program, we are finding that teaching in the early 19th century, takes place in four grades – first, second, third and fourth. During the four years of education, following courses were thought:

- in Serbian - reading and writing, Serbian grammar, writing, composition, translation, dictation, arithmetic, catechism, Christian Science, Holy Scripture, Christian History, calligraphy, and orthography.

- in Italian - reading and writing, grammar, translation and dictation, calculation, geography, arithmetic, natural history, and general history¹².

- in German language - reading and writing, grammar, translation, dictation, calculation, geography, history, and arithmetic.

Organization of teaching was like the few elementary schools in Serbia – lessons were before and after noon, and Thursdays and Sundays were days off. Lessons on native and a foreign language contained practice in reading and writing, writing composition, preparation, and translation of dictation. Other subjects like arithmetic, calculation, history, geography, and natural history were taught in three languages. It is obvious that special attention was given to education in the Orthodox spirit and teaching religion, since the subjects such as Catechism, Christian Science, Holy Scripture, and Christian history were taught throughout the school.

⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 78. In 1845 The Illyrian community were five girls of whom three went to private school, and the two had a private home teacher. M. Mitrović, Trieste in Obradovic’s time, in *Dostej garden*, Belgrade 2013, p. 22.

¹⁰ M. Purković, *Op. cit.*, p. 100.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 105.

¹² Only natural history was taught in Italian.

Serbian Orthodox municipality of Trieste was first subscriber of many Serbian books and textbooks. For itself, for the school and for its youth, in 1825 it ordered 30 books, “Novejša zemleopisanije celoga sveta” by Joakim Vujić. In 1840 Serbian Orthodox municipality of Trieste ordered 20 pieces of “Ogledi dječskog vospitanija za školu” and in 1841, it ordered also 50 pieces of “Istorija starog zaveta za srpsku omladinu”¹³.

What was important for the organization of teaching in the school „Jovan Miletić” in mid-19th century was certainly the „Constitution” of Serbian schools in Trieste by the Austrian state regulations and the proposal made by the schools administration approved by the Municipal Board on 22th March, 1842¹⁴. In fact, it was a comprehensive and methodical guide, and the teaching took place based on it. It contained all the tasks in the field of education of Serbian youth, which were requirements regarding the behavior of students and teachers. Analyzing the requirements set out in the Constitution, it is recognized that the primary purpose of a primary school is education of individual, and the formation of moral and useful members of society. The function of education was to educate and make an impact on intellectual abilities and learning. To successfully achieve this, it was necessary to meet some formal requirements - to take account of the mental abilities of students and its predispositions, and to continue to use methods such as dialogue, analysis, and synthesis. The introduction of the dialogue in the educational process implied, on the one hand, the training of teachers for this method, and on the other, students were enabled, not just to use rote learning, but learning with understanding.

Regarding the content of the course, it remained approximately the same as the one in the educational plan from 1822. It remained as top priority learning all three languages – Serbian, Italian and German, regarding reading and writing, grammar, spelling, penmanship, translation, and written expression. Then came the religious lessons such as most necessary prayers, small Catechism, large Catechism, Sacred history, reading Slavonic-church languages and nurturing national consciousness, language and culture was certainly enriched by the introduction of a new subject – knowledge of ecclesiastical language.

¹³ Lj. Durković-Jaksic Ljubomir, *History ... Serbian*, Belgrade 1963, p. 68.

¹⁴ Microfilmed manuscript is preserved in the University Library in Belgrade, UBS, M, 2/249. and photographic copies of the manuscript with a note in the Pedagogical Museum in Belgrade.

Other subjects like account, arithmetic, geography, natural history, and history Mirski, were taught, as before, in all three languages.

Four-grade primary school worked at the established order. As before, classes occurred on weekdays and Saturdays, and on Thursday afternoon and Sunday it was free day, reserved for education in the Orthodox spirit and the development of national feeling.

The inertia of teachers and no interest of Municipality for schoolwork in the eighties of the 19th century, led to stagnation in teaching and educational process. Absolutism that ruled in the community would not allow teachers and priests to modernize their work; poor organization and the fact that parents didn't send their children to school almost led to the closure of the institution. Few students who didn't know Serbian language and better spoke Italian, German, or French, after leaving school they were leaving church. To awaken the "dormant and neglected awareness of Serbian sons" members of the new Board took the first steps.

For improvement of schoolwork, they put in charge Aničić Lazar (1854-1938), he was school principal on three occasions, the Deputy Mayor for the period of 1909-1913, its president, 1913-1919. On his own initiative Night School and Kindergarten in 1911 and Serbian Reading Room in 1909 were open; also from 1893 he introduced the „gallant” celebration of Saint Sava. Thus, the School before the end of the century had become a nursery of Serbs and Orthodox faith – Education has been reformed and they brought a new teacher.

When it comes to the celebration of religious holidays such as St. Sava and Vidovdan, should be noted that these celebrations were not always well perceived by the authorities. In some periods it was necessary for the celebration program of student's recitation of poems, to be checked and given a special permission for performance.

But, regardless of all the difficulties, members of the community have always been willing to support the work of schools. Entering the 20th century was marked by the reception of the new teacher Milivoje Berberović¹⁵. The question that was unresolved, was the question of the number of students. In academic 1900/901 there were only four, and 1901/02, 8 students¹⁶. This is something that Haim Davičo once indicated and said: "What God has given me I will gladly sacrifice that some of our municipal houses, schools and churches become more crowded from

¹⁵ M. Purković, *Op. cit.*, p. 154.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 154.

Serbian families and small little Serbs, and that there echoed throughout the city outbursts Serbian patriotism. You’re right, without Serbian families and with empty Serbian school; it goes straight to the outcasts. But you should be preceded by a good example, and send your own children in the Serbian school, as all the local Greeks do”¹⁷.

In the first decade of the 20th century Kindergarten was open. In his welcome speech, on 1st March 1911, Aleksa Micić said that: “We now officially open Kindergarten, where each child will at the beginning of life thoroughly hear Serbian word, Serbian song and learn Serbian dance and Serbian customs, and so will these institutions operate as Serbian baptism place”¹⁸. In fact, the proposal to open a Kindergarten originated from teacher Zorka Bubale, since 1906 when she pointed out the difficulties in her work because, there was lack of knowledge of Serbian language by the students. But only after entrance of Andjelka Petrović who finished Serbian Teacher Training College and Entertainment course in Sombor, Kindergarten began to be operational. Soon after, they opened an Evening school in which adults learn their language and national history.

Sometime before the war, in 1913, St. Sava celebration was organized, which has attracted the attention of the Austrian government. That year, as well as previous, after the church service teachers and students came to the school, where icon of St. Sava decorated in tri-color was placed and as well as the image of the Emperor Franz Joseph, decorated with the flag of the Austrian imperial house. The priest Nićifor Vukadinović gave appropriate speech, and then organized the refreshments¹⁹. Beside students, celebration was attended by about 50 people, 150 programs were printed, and in the words of one of the teacher’s, celebration had a purely cultural and religious character. Probably because they demonstrate nationalism regarding Balkans War, the Austrian authorities, and advisor of Imperial and royal regency in Trieste, on 17th February 1913, sent a letter to the School. In this letter it was stated that it is necessary for the future, to seek permission for organizing the celebration, to submit songs and recitations for the check, and this day, which is self-declared holiday, needs to be compensate in the classroom for two afternoons.

¹⁷ H. Davičo, *The Adriatic Sea*, in “Brankovo round”, S. Karlovci, July 22, 1899, p. 902.

¹⁸ M. Purković, *Op. cit.*, p. 152.

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 161.

It should be emphasized that the school, thanks to the involvement of the then Queen Jelena Petrović Njegoš, worked during World War I. Classes were held by Miloš Kulačić and Katarina Subotić who gave the children shelter and spiritual sustenance in their native language²⁰. At the beginning of the inter-war period schoolwork was realized in two classes and six grades. These undivided classes were held by temporary educational program issued by the Italian authorities, respecting the program which Italian government prescribed for schools of Slavic minority in Venetia Giulia, with learning materials from the history and geography of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Since the school year 1931/32, schoolwork was done by educational program that was in force in Serbia, but Italian language was compulsory subject, from the second grade. Within classes, following subjects were taught religious, Serbian, or Serb-Croatian language, Italian language, obvious lessons, nurture, geography, history, account, women's handicrafts, drawing, singing, calligraphy, and gymnastics. Learning national subjects was covered by lessons from the history of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and the geography of the Kingdom of SCS and later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Religious education was taught by priest until the school year of 1936/37, and after that by the teachers themselves. Besides education, particular attention was on the education of children in the national spirit and on the discipline that was consistent with respect for order. Due to the small number of participants Evening School was closed immediately after the First World War, and in 1926 it was the same with the kindergarten. Since 1928 the school received the stamp with the title "Serbian national school in Trieste".

During this period, classes were conducted by previously set teachers Miloš Kulačić and Katica Subotić and since 1927, when Kulačić left school, Velimir Đerasimović and 1929 by Predrag Stanković and Darinka Stanković. Italian teacher was Silvio Koci. Classes took place in the beginning within two, since 1927 when teacher Đerasimović came, to three, and from 1931/32 within four departments. From 1935/36, number of students stagnated; classes were conducted by three, and before the War, due to the small number of students, only two teachers.

As for the students there was approximately every year around 50 of them. According to the stored data, the biggest number of them was

²⁰ V. Đerasimović, *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

in 1934 and the least number before the Second World War. Ethnic data for 1933/34 was showed that there were 66 Yugoslavs, 4 Italians and 3 others, and in 1934/35. Yugoslavs were 59, 1 Italian and 4 others. By religion, in 1933/34 Orthodox was 12, Catholic 57, and others 4, and in 1934/35 there were 8 Orthodox, 8 Catholics, and 49 others. Such many students of the Catholic faith were the result of the actions of the Italian authorities in the suppression of Slovenian nationality.

As schools in Serbia, Serbian school in Trieste organized celebration of St. Sava and Vidovdan. At these ceremonies, which were attended by members of Consulate, to develop a national consciousness, students recited and sang Serbian songs.

Classrooms were equipped with modern school benches, movable panel, and modern teaching tools were used and from 1931 projection device were in usage. In addition to the gymnasium, the school had on disposal libraries dedicated to teachers and students.

According to the data from the survived reports about schoolwork, student's health, which was under supervision of school doctor, was mainly good. Teaching has been repeatedly cutoff due to scarlet fever and other infectious diseases, and as a protection, students were vaccinated against smallpox and during the winter months they were given fish oil. Female Relief Society was providing free snacks and holiday of one month in Yugoslavia to the poor.

School support felt on the burden of the Municipality, which was initially paying teachers, school maintenance and required textbooks and student supplies. But because the funds obtained from the municipality was insufficient for life in Trieste, Ministry of Education through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs allocated funds for teachers' salaries. In the years before the Second World War, on the grounds that a larger number of Catholics than Orthodox is among children who attend school, the municipality has suspended all payments, so maintenance of the school had been undertaken by Ministry of Education and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Key role in the work of the School Committee had the parish, as well as Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the General consulate in Trieste.

Certainly, beside financial difficulties, the school had other problems related to their education. Since, during thirties of the 20th century, School obtained Yugoslav character and children who did not know enough Serb-Croatian were enrolling. Classes which were in those years performed according to the educational plan that was in

force in Serbia were relatively difficult for children from six years old that went to school earlier, because of the Italian law.

During World War II School was closed. But despite the difficult economic and political situation, school was in October 1945, opened with two prewar teachers V. Djerasimović and K. Subotić, with approximately 15 students²¹. The Educational plan was largely the same as in schools in Yugoslavia or Serbia; except that in addition to learning Serbian it was mandatory learn Italian. And textbooks were the same, and teacher Đerasimović has introduced a new „Alphabet” with the image of Tito²².

After 1950, teaching in the school was carried out according to educational plan, which was every year, on the proposal of the School Council approved by the Committee. In the Educational plan, special attention was dedicated to Serbian history, geography and literature, Serbian traditions and songs, biography of St. Sava and St. Spiridon, as well as the life and history of Jovana Miletić and history of Serbian municipality of Trieste. Till Sixties of the 20th century, with the provisions of the new Statute, predicted opening of the kindergarten and the course that would teach mother language to facilitate teaching in the first grade. In addition, a possibility was given for conducting variety of courses for the purpose of national enlightenment that could be visited by adults. In Article 61 of the Statute of 1950, it was stated: “Teaching in the school is in Serbian: Required as both of our alphabet: Cyrillic and Latin. Both of our alphabets were obliged: Cyrillic and Latin. Religious Serb-Orthodox classes were mandatory”²³. The Italian language is taught as a compulsory subject, starting from the first grade.

Each year in School there was less students. In 1959 there were only 29 brotherhoods – people are dying, children are not born, and many of them went to live outside Trieste. In 1935, the school had 80 students, in 1945 there were 30 students and two teachers, and in 1952, the school was reduced to one teacher and one classroom. As far as the school during the period from 1978 to 1988, it worked sporadically as evidenced by the report of the President V. Djerasimović,

²¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 16.

²² M. Vuković Birčanin, *Victory brotherhood Serbian Orthodox church in Trieste over the forces of atheism and dark*, Munich, 1962, p. 52.

²³ *Op. cit.*, p. 39.

which was read at the Election Assembly on 20th March 1988. The report stated: “School Jovan Miletić continues part of its educational and cultural mission with eternal remembrance and gratitude to its founder and biggest benefactor of a great Serb Jovan Miletić”²⁴. What remained regular, was celebration of St. Sava and Vidovdan. On St. Sava day in 1988 Velimir Đerasimović lectured on St. Sava, after which he performed at the event which, in addition to the choir, the student’s recited poems and sang Serbian poems²⁵. To foster the traditions and connections to the Serbian people, the students at this school with the parish priest Ilija Ilić, visited, in 1987 Vuk’s Parliament in Tršić.

Towards the end of the 20th century, with the turbulent political events in Yugoslavia and Serbia, once again emerged the idea of the reconstruction of the school. What contributed to that idea, was the establishment of the Serbian-Italian cultural charity in May 1990. Two decades later, in 2012, recognizing the importance and relevance of Schools, Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia officially recognized the school and included it in the system of supplementary education in the Republic of Serbia. Thus, the Serbian school, which is one of the oldest schools outside of Serbia and which had a decisive role in the culture of the Serbian people became part of everyday Serbian life.

Given the importance of Serbian schools outside of Serbia this work is dedicated to the establishment and work of the school “Jovan Miletić”, which is for more than two centuries, resisting many challenges which are influencing the development and remaining of national identity in Trieste Serbs. And not only that, this was an opportunity to highlight the important moments of its existence and to examine its significance for the history of education and education among the Serbs who were displacing in various countries with different economic and cultural conditions of life, but who, in spite of everything, felt belonging to the homeland of its people.

This is an attempt to reconstruct the school, cultural and political life of an educational institution that in certain historical moments was crucial for the survival and life of Serbs in Trieste; This is an attempt to look at existing institution that resist many temptations in different historical moments – from the Habsburg monarchy through the Aus-

²⁴ V. Đerasimović, *Op. cit.*, p. 54.

²⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 55.

tro-Hungarian Empire and the Kingdom of Italy to the Republic of Italy. Those who initially established group of Trieste Serbs were simple and temperamental people whose high national consciousness, linked to religious feeling, language and tradition gave the will and the energy to work and acquisition. Looking for spiritual and moral unity they gathered around church community which, knowing the characteristics of education, found Serbian elementary school, which, in addition to education, was working on other delicate tasks. With influences and relationships that are constantly intertwined and made the basis of cultural development and promotion of cultural ties, it also developed Slavic and Yugoslav national values, it was the one that tried to achieve national unity and general social ideals.