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STUDIE/ARTICLES

MUSEUMS IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC (1939–1945) – ORIGINS, VISIONS AND REALITY

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ABSTRACT/ABSTRAKT:

Constitutional changes in the Czechoslovak Republic in 1938 and the subsequent emergence of an independent Slovak State in March 1939 had a fundamental impact on the sphere of museums. The Union of Czechoslovak Museums, which was active in Czechoslovakia in the interwar period, was dissolved and the intent to unite museum workers in Slovakia was adopted by the employees of the Slovak National Museum in Turčiansky Svätý Martin. The Union of Slovak Museums was founded in December 1939, but its activity did not begin until November 1940 when its statute was approved. The paper gives an overview of successes and failures of the organisation of museum workers during the World War II. Attention has been paid to the elaboration of the first Act on Museums, establishment of a museum network, controlling activity, unification of forms for professional and administrative management in museums, protection of monuments, as well as to possible ideological influence on the exhibition activity of museums.

Múzejníctvo v slovenskom štáte (1939–1945) – východiská, vízie a realita

Štátoprávne zmeny v Československej republike v roku 1938 a následný vznik samostatného Slovenského štátu v marci 1939 otriasli aj múzejníkov sférou. Sväz československých múzeí, ktorý pôsobil v krajine

v medzivojnovom období, zanikol a myšlienku združiť múzejných pracovníkov na Slovensku prevzali zamestnanci Slovenského národného múzea v Turčianskom Svätom Martine. Zväz slovenských múzeí vznikol v decembri 1939, avšak aktívnu činnosť začal vyvíjať až do novembra 1940, keď boli schválené jeho stanovy. Príspevok v priereze mapuje úspechy a nezdary organizácie múzejníkov v období druhej svetovej vojny. Pozornosť je venovaná otázke prípravy prvého múzejného zákona, vytvoreniu siete múzeí, kontrolnej činnosti, zjednoteniu tlačív na odbornú a administratívnu správu múzeí, ochranu pamiatkového fondu, ako aj možnému ideologickému ovplyvneniu expozičnej činnosti múzeí.

KEYWORDS/KLÚČOVÉ SLOVÁ:

Museums – Slovak Republic (1939–1945) – World War II – monuments – Union of Slovak Museums múzejníctvo – slovenský štát (1939–1945) – druhá svetová vojna – pamiatky – Zväz slovenských múzeí

The cultural sphere at the time of the Slovak Republic in 1939–1945 was until recently as good as neglected by historians. The research was mainly focused on the political development in the new state, manifestations of authoritative regime in the spheres of economy, foreign relations, human and civil rights. However, the study of impacts of the regime on culture also became recently intensified, laying focus

on the influence of governmental power on libraries, theatre, radio or film.¹ The museum sphere

1 See for example: HANÁKOVÁ, Petra. Udávať, dozerať a trestať. Slovenské kino 1939–1945 v policajných a iných archívoch. In KANÚCH, Martin (ed.). *Film a kultúrna pamäť*. Bratislava: Asociácia filmových klubov a Slovenský filmový ústav, 2014, pp. 114–127; BAJCUROVÁ, Katarína, Petra HANÁKOVÁ and Bohunka KOKLESOVÁ et al. (eds.). *Sen × skutočnosť. Umenie & propaganda 1939–1945. Katalóg k výstave*. Bratislava: Slovenská národná galéria, 2016. 437 p.; MISTRÍK, Miloš et al. *Slovenské divadlo v 20. storočí*. Bratislava: VEDA, 1999. 539 p.; DRAXLER, Vladimír. Slovenský rozhlas 1938–1945. *Acta Universitatis Carolinae – Studia territorialia*, 2013, vol. 13, no. 1-2, pp. 141–175; PALÁRIK, Miroslav. *Zväz slovenských múzeí v období slovenského štátu 1939–1945*. Nitra: UKF, 2011. 198 p.; PALÁRIK, Miroslav. The fate of objects of artistic or historic interest owned by Jews during the Second World War. *Historický časopis*, 2011, vol. 59, no. 3, pp. 515–534; PALÁRIK, Miroslav and Alena MIKULÁŠOVÁ. The Nitra cinema during the Second World War. *Historický časopis*, 2015, vol. 63, no. 2, pp. 291–312; PALÁRIK, Miroslav and Alena MIKULÁŠOVÁ. Libri prohibiti. Zásahy politiky do knižnej produkcie a knižničných fondov počas druhej svetovej vojny na príklade mesta Nitra. *Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo*, 2016, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 117–137; JAKSICOVÁ, Vlasta. *Kultúra v dejinách. Dejiny v kultúre: moderna a slovenský intelektuál v siločiarach prvej polovice 20. storočia*. Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV: Veda, 2012. 360 p.; CIEL, Martin. *Film a politika. Ideológia a propaganda v slovenskom filme 1939–1989*. Bratislava: Občianske združenie Vlna, 2017. 148 p.; FALATHOVÁ, Zuzana. Múzejníctvo a výstavníctvo v Bratislave v období prvej Slovenskej republiky (1939–1945). *Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo*, 2017, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 61–76; KAČÍREK, Luboš. Editorial activities of museums in late 19th and early 20th century. *Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo*, 2017, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 43–56; KÁZMEROVÁ, Lubica. Hranice a štátnosť: prenasadzovanie ideí slovenskej štátnosti ľudovou stranou vo vyučovacom procese v rokoch 1938–1945. In OSYKOVÁ, Linda and Matej HANULA (eds.). *Ideológia naprieč hranicami: myšlienkové transfery v Európe a na Slovensku v 1. polovici 20. storočia*. Bratislava: Veda, 2015, pp. 157–179; SCHVARC, Michal and Ludovít HALLON. Nemecká kultúrna politika na Slovensku v rokoch 1939–1945. Náčrt problematiky. In SOKOLOVIČ, Peter (ed.). *Život v Slovenskej republike – Slovenská republika 1939–1945 očami mladých historikov IX*. Bratislava: ÚPN, 2011, pp. 259–284; ŠTEFKO, Vladimír. *Slovenské činoherné divadlo 1938–1945: Pokus o načrtnutie problematiky*. Bratislava: Tália – press, 1993. 171 p.; KAMENEC, Ivan. Zmietanie sa medzi politikou, kultúrnou tvorbou a vlastným svedomím. In KAMENEC, Ivan.

during the World War II became research topic for multiple authors, among them for example: Jarmila Strelková,² Milan Rybecký,³ Daniela Prelovská,⁴ Štefan Mruškovič,⁵ Elena Machajdíkova,⁶ Marcel Lalkovič,⁷ Ľubomír Lipták,⁸ Miroslav Palárik⁹ or Zuzana Falathová.¹⁰ Of great benefit for a detailed documentation of this sphere was the conference titled *Museums in War*,¹¹ which traced the fortunes of individual museums

Spoločnosť, politika, historiografia. Pokrivené (?) zrkadlo dejín slovenskej spoločnosti v dvadsiatom storočí. Bratislava: HiÚ SAV a Prodama, 2009, pp. 133–139; KAMENEC, Ivan. V pozícií duchovného satelita. Miesto kultúry v slovensko-nemeckých vzťahoch v čase druhej svetovej vojny. *História*, 2009, vol. 9, no. 5-6, p. 77.

2 STRELKOVÁ, Jarmila. Vznik a počiatky činnosti Zväzu slovenských múzeí (1939–1945). *Múzeum*, 1999, vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 14–18; STRELKOVÁ, Jarmila. Slovenské vlastivedné múzeum a Zemědělské múzeum v Bratislave ako priestor na realizáciu českých odborníkov z rôznych vedných odborov a oblastí participujúcich na múzejnej práci. In *Zborník Slovenského národného múzea*, 2003, vol. 97, Etnografia – 44, pp. 121–132.

3 RYBECKÝ, Milan. *Muzeálna slovenská spoločnosť*. Bratislava: Osveta, 1983. 232 p.

4 PRELOVSKÁ, Daniela. Čo chceme mať z našich múzeí? (K niektorým aspektom povojnového vývoja slovenského múzejníctva). In ČUKAN, Jaroslav (ed.). *Acta Nitriensiae* 3. Nitra: Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre, 2000, pp. 165–182; PRELOVSKÁ, Daniela. *Zväz slovenských múzeí a kultúrna politika (1945–1959)*. Nitra: UKF v Nitre, 2011. 266 p.

5 MRUŠKOVIČ, Štefan. Slovenské národné múzeum v Martine (1944–1948). Boj o prežitie a poštátnenie. In *Zborník Slovenského národného múzea*, 1997, vol. 91, Etnografia – 38, pp. 9–25.

6 MACHAJDÍKOVÁ, Elena. Prinavrátene kultúrnych hodnôt z Maďarska podľa dostupných dokumentov v Archíve Slovenského národného múzea v Bratislave. In *Zborník Slovenského národného múzea*, 2003, vol. 97, História – 43, pp. 43–57.

7 LALKOVIČ, Marcel. Pavol Florek – prvý predseda Zväzu slovenských múzeí. In *Zborník Muzeálnej slovenskej spoločnosti*, 1995, pp. 78–85.

8 LIPTÁK, Ľubomír. Múzeá a historiografia na Slovensku v rokoch 1918–1945. In *Zborník Slovenského národného múzea*, 1989, vol. 83, História – 29, pp. 209–225.

9 PALÁRIK, Miroslav. *Zväz slovenských múzeí v období slovenského štátu 1939–1945*. Nitra: UKF v Nitre, 2011. 198 p.

10 FALATHOVÁ, Zuzana. Múzejníctvo a výstavníctvo v Bratislave v období prvej Slovenskej republiky (1939–1945). *Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo*, 2017, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 61–76.

11 PODUŠELOVÁ, Gabriela and Viera MAJCHROVIČOVÁ (eds.). *Múzeá vo vojne. Druhá svetová vojna a jej dôsledky na činnosť múzeí a ich zbierky*. Bratislava: Slovenské národné múzeum a Zväz múzeí na Slovensku, 2015. 212 p.

during the World War II and after its end. Despite a positive effort of the organisers, some of the papers were based on a standard factual structure: emergence – short development, without any analysis of important source materials such as, for example, visitors' book, accession book, catalogue and others, which could elucidate some unclear questions regarding the relation between museums and society and the level of enrichment of Slovak historiography by professional museum activities carried out in museums. The topic of museum development during the World War II still offers a wide space for research.

Since the 19th century, the museum sphere in Slovakia underwent a complicated development which proceeded from “naive” collecting towards its professionalization. When we want to write about museums during the World War II, we must search for the origins in the interwar Czechoslovakia. After the emergence of state in 1918, the Slovaks were offered extended possibilities of employment in various spheres of political, social and cultural life. Positive changes also occurred in the sphere of museums. The number of museums in Slovakia gradually rose in the interwar period. Their relation to state, however, was more complicated: it was not regulated by any legislation, so that museums arose without consent of the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment and without any detailed documentation of their activity. The absence of an Act on Museums was the most serious drawback in the museum sphere, which was finally handled as late as in 1959, or in 1961 for the Slovak part of the republic. The lack of personnel, absence of unified methods of professional and administrative management of museums, unclear conception in the sphere of communication

with visitors represented only a few of many problems which the museum workers in the interwar Czechoslovakia have encountered. The Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment was aware of this situation and in order to solve the problems it supported the efforts to establish an organisation which would unite museum workers on a voluntary basis. The *Union of Czechoslovak Museums*, as the organisation has been called, tried to improve the position of museums in the state and raise their level, but most of its decisions could be only declared and not enforced, because the Union was not authorized to do so. The decision making by the top representatives of the Union was all the more difficult because the general level of museums in Czechia, Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia was diametrically different. Each part of the Republic underwent its own specific development with a different degree of involvement of nationally oriented intelligentsia and different impulses to their functioning.¹² The impact of the Union's activity on most of the Slovak museums was minimal.¹³ It was caused by the fact that they either did not enter the Union and the decisions simply did not reach them, or they did not have sufficient personnel capacities and financial means to put them into effect. The vast majority of the above-mentioned problems in Slovak museums thus remained unsolved and survived until the following periods.

After emergence of the independent Slovak State in March 1939, the Union was naturally dissolved. The

¹² For details see for example: LIPTÁK, Ľubomír. Múzeá a historiografia na Slovensku v rokoch 1918–1945. In *Zborník Slovenského národného múzea*, 1989, vol. 83, História – 29, pp. 209–225.

¹³ On the activity of the Union of Czechoslovak Museums and its impact on Slovak museums see: LALKOVIČ, Marcel. *Zväz československých múzeí a jeho prínos na formovaní slovenského múzejníctva*. In *Zborník Slovenského národného múzea*, 2003, vol. 97, Etnografia – 44, pp. 91–119.

opportunity to organise museum workers within the state was used by the employees of the Slovak National Museum in Turčiansky Svätý Martin, which was one of the largest museums in Slovakia, whereas the Bratislava museums (Slovak Museum of National History, Agricultural Museum with Museum of Forestry and Hunting as its autonomous component)¹⁴ experienced a crisis which culminated in their merging into a single institution named Slovak Museum in Bratislava. At that time, employees of the museum in Martin were fully capable of managing this demanding agenda not only professionally but also personally. In the museum namely worked significant figures of Slovak museum sphere, among them for example Ján Geryk, Mária Jeršová, but also a controversial personality Pavol Florek,¹⁵ who

14 For details see: MACHAJDÍKOVÁ, Elena. Slovenské národné múzeum a jeho predchodcovia v Bratislave počas druhej svetovej vojny alebo Inter arma silent musae. In PODUŠELOVÁ, Gabriela and Viera MAJCHROVIČOVÁ (eds.). *Múzeá vo vojne. Druhá svetová vojna a jej dôsledky na činnosť múzeí a ich zbierky*. Bratislava: Slovenské národné múzeum a Zväz múzeí na Slovensku, 2015, pp. 15–29; HALMOVÁ, Mária. Muzeálna slovenská spoločnosť a Slovenské národné múzeum v rokoch 1939–1945. In PODUŠELOVÁ, Gabriela and Viera MAJCHROVIČOVÁ (eds.). *Múzeá vo vojne. Druhá svetová vojna a jej dôsledky na činnosť múzeí a ich zbierky*. Bratislava: Slovenské národné múzeum a Zväz múzeí na Slovensku, 2015, pp. 5–14.

15 Pavol Florek was a historian, museum worker, deputy for Hlinka's Slovak People's Party in the Assembly of the Slovak Republic (1939–1945) and chairman of its local branch office in Turčiansky Svätý Martin. His professional historical and museological erudition is beyond question. However, he mainly ruined his reputation by political agility. He was a dedicated adherent of state ideology and he showed his attitude openly in the museum as well. After the war he emigrated with his family to Italy. When he came back, he was tried within the retributive justice. The court did not sentence him to prison, but he had to undergo the so-called re-education, which included corrective labour in a production factory and a special military exercise. For more details see: MAŤOVČÍK, Augustín. Príspevok k životopisu Pavla Florca. In MAŤOVČÍK, Augustín (ed.). *Biografické štúdié*. 23/1996. Martin: Matica slovenská – Biografický ústav, 1996, pp. 171–177; HALMOVÁ, Mária. Muzeálna slovenská spoločnosť a Slovenské národné múzeum v rokoch 1939–1945. In PODUŠELOVÁ, Gabriela and Viera MAJCHROVIČOVÁ (eds.). *Múzeá vo vojne. Druhá svetová vojna a jej dôsledky na činnosť múzeí a ich zbierky*. Bratislava: Slovenské národné múzeum a Zväz múzeí na Slovensku, 2015, pp. 5–14.

became Executive Chairman of the organisation. This team was still extended by workers from Bratislava, for example Miloš Jurkovič, Alžbeta Güntherová-Mayerová or Ľudmila Kraskovská. They all shared a common vision: to solve at least some of the fundamental problems in Slovak museums and raise herewith their quality level. In several cases they were able to find the way out from burning problems of Slovak museums, but the whole agenda often failed in putting the decisions of the presidium of the Union of Slovak Museums into practice. Also unfavourable in this regard was the fact that the organisation did not belong under the Ministry of Education, so that, similarly as in the interwar period, most of the decisions of the Union only remained in a declarative form. The statute, which was not approved by competent government offices until 1940, clearly defined the goals of museum workers for the coming years. However, it must be said that the content of the statute was adopted almost word for word from the original statute of the Union of Czechoslovak Museums. It is a proof that the most part of the agenda remained unsolved in the interwar period, or that Czechoslovak union workers were not able to implement it in Slovakia as well. The main programme of the newly established Union of Slovak Museums was as follows:

- Elaboration of the first Act on Museums
- Protection of monuments from military threat
- Creation of a museum network
- Unification of forms for professional and administrative management of museums
- Re-installation of permanent exhibitions in museums

- Enhancement of qualification of museum employees

In order to give reasons for the emergence of an organisation uniting the museum workers in the Slovak Republic (1939–1945), the staff from Martin also argued that “...*the founding of the Union is desperately needed, so that we can participate in elaboration of the Act on Museums...*”¹⁶ We can suppose that within a short period of time they intended to prepare legislation, which would define museums as institutions, decipher their place in the field of culture, set the criteria for realisation of professional museum activities and determine the necessary specialised abilities of museum workers. From the very fragmentary archive materials of that period only two proposals are preserved, which were elaborated earlier than the Union itself. The first proposal was created by employees of the State Office for Monument Protection in Slovakia early in 1939. The Act was mainly dealing with problems of monument care, the word museum was not mentioned at all. Nevertheless, it called for the protection of collection objects, their thorough recording and cataloguing. The state also had the right of pre-emption for the purchase of valuable historical objects. The above-mentioned Act, however, was not submitted for approval. The second proposal emerged in the Ministry of Justice in October 1939 and it virtually was only a compilation of legislative regulations which were valid in Czechoslovakia at that time. It did not bring anything new for the sphere of museums and, similarly as it was with the previous proposal, the word museum was not mentioned here.

16 Archive of the Slovak National Museum in Bratislava, fund *Zväz slovenských múzeí, 1939–1945*, box 2/1. A letter from the Slovak Museum Society to administrations of 25 museums in Slovakia from 4. 11. 1939.

The proposal of the government order was not approved because it contravened the paragraph 44 in the Constitutional Law No. 185/1939 of the Slovak Code of Laws, according to which the government was authorized to issue government orders as decrees only exceptionally, but this certainly was not the case. For comparison, the proposal of an Act on Museums which was prepared in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in 1941¹⁷ clearly defined these institutions and granted to the state the right of pre-emption for the purchase of valuable collection objects. As regards the museum documentation, the proposal demanded the museums to collect evidence of how the society has developed at that time – that is, to document the present. This was an area where Slovak museums lagged distinctly behind, which caused that the period of existence of the Slovak Republic (1939–1945) is not captured in detail in museums, maybe except the Slovak National Uprising.¹⁸ The negative aspect of the Czech proposal consisted in its ambivalence in determining the role of museums in the society. As far as the museum legislation is concerned, the Slovak museum workers in the period concerned thus did not bring any new proposal which would make the existence of museums at least easier.¹⁹

17 National Archive in Prague, fund *Ministerstvo školství, 1918–1949* – part II, box 3250. Návrh muzejního zákona (proposal of the Act on Museums) from 13. 3. 1941, p. 1.

18 Nevertheless, research into this area was not yet finished; preliminary investigations were carried out in the two largest museum institutions in Slovakia, namely the Slovak National Museum in Turčiansky Svätý Martin and the Slovak Museum in Bratislava. Smaller institutions were not yet examined in this regard. However, we can rightly suppose that because the documentation of the rise and development of the Slovak Republic in the two largest Slovak museums was neglected, this certainly also was the case with the other museums in Slovakia. This hypothesis, however, must first be proved by an in-depth research.

19 The problem of approval of the first Act on Museums was also treated by: ELIAŠOVÁ, Silvia. Proces formovania prvého muzeálneho zákona a prijatie Zákona SNR č. 109/1961 Zb. o múzeách

The fundamental task for Slovak museum workers and curators of monuments during the World War II was to ensure the protection of tangible cultural heritage. Since Slovakia did not adhere to any legally binding international treaty concerning the protection of monuments during a war conflict,²⁰ the problem was only treated by the Department of Monument Care at the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment. In cooperation with the Union of Slovak Museums it asked the administrations of individual museums to elaborate Plans for Civilian Air Raid Defence. They should have clearly explained to both employees and volunteers how to act during an air raid warning. They also should have determined the places where the most valuable collection objects would be stored. Since most of the Slovak museums did not regard the war as an acute threat, they have not elaborated these plans (only 11 out of 25 museums did so), which later had a devastating effect on their collections. After the end of the war, the Union made a survey of the condition of individual buildings and collections. It came to light that the war affected the following museums: Slovak Museum in Bratislava, Tatra Museum in Veľká near Poprad, Karpatikum Museum in Poprad, State Museum in Nitra, City Museums in Zvolen and Kežmarok, State Mining Museum in Banská Štiavnica, Museum of Spiš Region in Levoča and Slovak National Museum in Turčiansky Svätý Martin.²¹ Since some of the buildings were heavily damaged,

a galériách. In *Historické právne systémy a integrácia Európy*. Bratislava: UK v Bratislave, 2011, pp. 459–463.

20 For details see for example: PALÁRIK, Miroslav. Ochrana pamiatok počas druhej svetovej vojny. In *Komentované pramene k dejinám slovenského múzejníctva v 20. storočí*. Nitra: UKF v Nitre, 2015, pp. 89–114.

21 For details see: PRELOVSKÁ, Daniela. *Zväz slovenských múzeí a kultúrna politika (1945–1959)*. Nitra: UKF v Nitre, 2011, p. 31 sq.

they remained inaccessible to public for several years. The Slovak Museum opened its gates to visitors only some years after the end of World War II.

The problem of monument protection during the war conflict was also tightly associated with the policy of the Third Reich in Slovakia. Since the autumn of 1944, the frontline gradually advanced from East Slovakia to the West. The situation was carefully overseen by the German protector, who was mainly interested in historical monuments in the regions of Spiš and Šariš,²² which were inhabited by a numerous German minority since the Middle Ages already. The Germans wanted to evacuate historical monuments from this territory with the help of their own military forces. They should have gradually been deposited in safe places; in this regard the neighbourhood of Dresden was taken into consideration. When the government appointee for East Slovakia refused to give them permission to this venture, they began to push pressure on the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment and Government of the Slovak Republic. The latter eventually succumbed to the pressure and issued an order in early January 1945, according to which all monuments should have been evacuated from Slovakia and transported to the neighbourhood of Dresden. However, museums and the other owners of monuments were obliged to fund the venture by themselves. Episcopal offices, which administered some of the sacred monuments, completely refused to realise the venture. But at that time, Slovakia already was fully immersed in war events, so that the evacuation of monuments stayed on the

22 Slovakia also had another regions which were interesting for the Germans. The available materials so far document their eminent interest in the eastern parts of the country.

sideline. The transport of valuable objects would have been very complicated, therefore the curators of monuments, art historians and museum workers protested against this government order until it was finally abolished in early February 1945.²³

The Union of Slovak Museums was also concerned with creation of an ideal network of museums, which would provide for documentation of the development of society and nature on the whole territory of Slovakia. It was a quite difficult task, since until then museums were founded more or less randomly, without the need to gain positive response from the Ministry of Education. This model was also preserved during the World War II. The most necessary goal was to solve the situation in South Slovakia, which after the Viennese Arbitration lost a part of its territory in favour of Hungary. Slovakia herewith also lost the State East Slovak Museum in Košice, Museum of Danube Region in Komárno, City Museum in Levice, Museum of Gemer Region in Rimavská Sobota and City Museum in Rožňava. Their activity should have been replaced by new institutions which, however, had first to be founded. New museums were established at that time in Holíč, Žilina, Zvolen, Trenčianske Teplice, Modra, Myjava, Svätý Jur and Prešov. In this initial period of their existence, the Union workers offered them methodical help, which made them possible to overcome the difficult beginnings.²⁴

23 For details see for example: PALÁRIK, Miroslav. Ochrana slovenského pamiatkového fondu v čase existencie tzv. slovenského štátu. *Múzeum: muzejní a vlastivědná práce*, 2010, vol. 48, no. 2, pp. 19–29.

24 For more details see: PALÁRIK, Miroslav. Práca Zväzu slovenských múzeí na vytváraní múzejnej siete v rokoch 1940–1945. *Múzeum: metodický, študijný a informačný časopis pre pracovníkov múzeí a galérií*, 2011, vol. 56, no. 4, pp. 52–56.

The representatives of the Union of Slovak Museums were aware that individual institutions did not reach the same quality level, as regards the professional museum activities. On the one hand it was hindered by a lack of personnel who also would be “trained” museum workers, on the other hand the museums still used an obsolete type of documentation which did not meet modern needs. In this period, the museums therefore made a revision of forms which have been used with professional and administrative management of these institutions. The task was entrusted to special Union commission, who in the area of professional maintenance of collections prepared new forms for the inventory logbook, inventory index cards, professional inventory (catalogue) and inventory of deposits. The stumbling block in this matter, however, became the museum workers themselves, because many of them did not use these forms in practice. Interesting is the fact that among them also were those museum workers, who were members of the special Union commission for elaboration of individual forms.²⁵ The Union workers wanted to eliminate the drawbacks in administration of collections and in exhibition activities with the help of regular controls. The revisions pointed out that the museum workers did not manage to carry out these activities or were in a backlog. This was the reason why the controllers who were sent to individual institutions should have trained the employees in these fields of activity. It turned out that this method, namely the practical training of museum workers, could contribute in the

25 HRADECKÝ, Roman. Karol Kiszely ako kustód Mestského múzea v Banskej Bystrici počas druhej svetovej vojny. In PODUŠELOVÁ, Gabriela and Viera MAJCHROVIČOVÁ (eds.). *Múzeá vo vojne. Druhá svetová vojna a jej dôsledky na činnosť múzeí a ich zbierky*. Bratislava: Slovenské národné múzeum a Zväz múzeí na Slovensku, 2015, pp. 36–43.

future to gradual enhancement of professional quality of museums. However, because of the military conflict the Union controls and trainings were only made in several regional museums.

The issue of communication between museums and public became crucial in this period. Even though in Germany, which was the land of the protector of the Slovak Republic, museums were used for propagandistic purposes, in Slovakia it did not happen on a large scale.²⁶ The reason probably was that Slovak museums had nothing interesting to offer to the public. Except the largest museum institutions in Slovakia – the Slovak National Museum in Turčiansky Svätý Martin and the Slovak Museum in Bratislava, permanent exhibitions in regional museums rather resembled the windows of antique shops. The exhibition rooms showed everything that was collected in the institution over some decades. The most frequent form of acquisition was donation, and the supporters of the museum expected that their gifts will be shown in the exhibition premises. Permanent exhibitions desperately needed to be changed, which should have been made by workers sent by the Union. Within the period concerned, however, only four out of 25 museum institutions have reinstalled their permanent exhibitions. It remained a question, to what extent these modifications respected the trends spreading from Germany. According to these trends, permanent exhibitions should have had an unequivocal didactic and educational character. The exhibitions were intended to act as textbooks

26 On the problem of communication between museums and public in Slovakia and in the Czech Republic in a historical perspective see also: JAGOŠOVÁ, Lucie and Otakar KIRSCH et al. *Muzejní profese a veřejnost 1. Nástin historie a současnosti vzájemných vztahů muzeí a jejich publika*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2016, pp. 6–45.

divided into individual chapters and subchapters. The German model presumed that permanent exhibitions would mainly turn attention to achievements of the Modern Era and emphasize the progress which was made thanks to national socialism. The other type of exhibiting – reconstruction of the past for itself, without any didactic effect on the visitors – was not acknowledged. The above-mentioned German trends were regarded by one of the top Slovak art historians and museum workers Alžbeta Güntherová-Mayerová as the foundations of modern exhibition activities. Nevertheless, we probably do not find answer to the question: *To what extent the German exhibition models came into use in museum institutions where permanent exhibitions were reinstalled?*

The personnel working during the World War II in museums was mostly composed of volunteers or local enthusiasts, who did not have sufficient experience with museum work. The presidium of the Union, similarly as it was in the interwar period, organised regular professional courses, which were mostly associated with annual meetings. Trainings were not intended only for museum workers, but also for archivists, curators of monuments, librarians and restorers. They should have enhanced the quality of professional museum activities carried out in museums. Within the period concerned only three such courses have taken place, namely in February 1941 and in March 1943 in Turčiansky Svätý Martin, and in September 1942 in Spiš. The first three-day seminar was focused on the legislation of monument care, professional and administrative management of individual institutions. Top Slovak specialists paid attention to the basics of conservation and restoration of

objects and their exhibiting. The problem analysed in the first seminar was also addressed in two books: *Professional work in museums: Guidelines for museum administrators*,²⁷ and *Monument protection. Rules and instructions*.²⁸

The second course was dedicated purely to the problem of archives and libraries. The last seminar was practically oriented and the museum workers had the possibility to see conservation of collection objects. The Union tried to base the courses on practical needs, which came to light during regular revisions in museums. The courses were intended not only for museum workers, but also for employees in related institutions. Professional seminars dealing with selected problems of monument protection found response in the target group. This was also reflected in the number of participants, which always oscillated around 50. Although a course was also planned for the next period, it finally did not take place due to state of war.²⁹

Even though museums were not regarded by the state as the “first choice” as far as the dissemination of ideology and propaganda is concerned, their premises were used for this purpose. This was mainly the case with Slovak National Museum in Turčiansky Svätý Martin, where the director Pavol Florek tried to adapt the museum to representative needs of the state. The museum was visited by several official state delegations, inclusive of president Jozef Tiso, chief of the Propaganda

Office Alexander Mach and various German guests who were invited by the museum director. Although Florek made efforts to equip the museum exhibitions with a German-written guide and with German captions, these changes in the end did not take place. On the other hand, it is necessary to say that the museum continued to employ people who did not meet the standards of the governing regime concerning the nationality and political opinions.³⁰ The impact of political power on museums was particularly evident in the capital of Slovakia. Bratislava museums (Slovak Museum and City Museum³¹), with regard to immediate presence of state authorities, organised in this period several exhibitions, which were focused on state ideology. They mainly preferred artists whose works were based on national topics, well-understandable for the general public. The official state ideology was also disseminated through the medium of two new institutions in the capital of Slovakia – the Military Museum (opened to the public in 1940) and the Slovak Hygiene Museum (opened in 1941). The Military Museum mainly exhibited military stuff captured during the campaign against the Soviet Union.³² The Hygiene Museum was a branch of the German Hygiene Museum in Dresden. Its founding was actively

27 GERYK, Ján et al. *Odborné práce v múzeách. Pokyny pre správcov múzeí*. Turčiansky Svätý Martin: Zväz slovenských múzeí, 1942. 67 p.

28 WAGNER, Vladimír et al. *Ochrana pamiatok. Zásady a pokyny*. Turčiansky Svätý Martin: Zväz slovenských múzeí, 1942. 47 p.

29 For more details see for example: PALÁRIK, Miroslav. *Výročné zjazdy a kurzy Zväzu slovenských múzeí a ich vplyv na ďalší rozvoj slovenského múzejníctva v rokoch 1940–1945*. In WIEDERMANN, Egon (ed.). *Studia Historica Nitriensia 15*. Nitra: UKF, 2011, pp. 335–354.

30 HALMOVÁ, Mária. *Muzeálna slovenská spoločnosť a Slovenské národné múzeum v rokoch 1939–1945*. In PODUŠELOVÁ, Gabriela and Viera MAJCHROVIČOVÁ (eds.). *Múzeá vo vojne. Druhá svetová vojna a jej dôsledky na činnosť múzeí a ich zbierky*. Bratislava: Slovenské národné múzeum a Zväz múzeí na Slovensku, 2015, pp. 5–14.

31 For more details on exhibition activities of the Bratislava City Museum see: KURINCOVÁ, Elena. *Múzeum mesta Bratislavy počas druhej svetovej vojny*. In PODUŠELOVÁ, Gabriela and Viera MAJCHROVIČOVÁ (eds.). *Múzeá vo vojne. Druhá svetová vojna a jej dôsledky na činnosť múzeí a ich zbierky*. Bratislava: Slovenské národné múzeum a Zväz múzeí na Slovensku, 2015, pp. 54–63.

32 For more details see: CHORVÁTH, Peter. *Vojenské múzeum v Bratislave 1939–1945 (plány versus realita)*. *Vojenská história. Časopis pre vojenskú históriu, múzejníctvo a archívniectvo*, 2012, no. 3, pp. 6–16.

assisted by the Slovak-German Society headed by the radical pro-German representative of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party and Prime Minister Vojtech Tuka. Regarding the fact that the "parent museum" was oriented on documentation of eugenics, we can suppose that the Bratislava branch also was oriented in a similar way and disseminated racial ideology in Slovakia.³³ Hitherto research does not allow us to draw any exact conclusions about how was the situation in the other parts of the Republic.³⁴ We know so far of exhibition activities of museums and other cultural institutions on the territory of Bratislava City, but the other localities are still waiting for research. The only conclusion which can presently be drawn is that the presentation of state ideology in museum premises depended to a great extent on the museum workers and their political opinions.

The ruling power used for dissemination of propaganda far more intensively the premises outside the standard museums. These exhibition projects were prepared by the governing party, its organisations (Hlinka Guard, Hlinka Youth), government institutions and societies, who mediated cultural cooperation between Slovakia and countries belonging to the Axis powers. These events were organised with great precision, were presented to the public in a suitable way, the entrance fee mostly was none or only symbolical. To achieve the highest possible visit rate, the visitors were offered to pay reduced

33 For details on activities of the Slovak Hygiene Museum in Bratislava see for example: PALÁRIK, Miroslav. Príspevok k dejinám múzejných činností na Slovensku: (Hygienická výstava – "Zázrak života"). In WIEDERMANN, Egon (ed.). *Studia Historica Nitriensia* 13. Nitra: UKF, 2006, pp. 251–260.

34 FALATHOVÁ, Zuzana. Múzejníctvo a výstavníctvo v Bratislave v období prvej Slovenskej republiky (1939–1945). *Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo*, 2017, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 61–76.

travel costs. The exhibitions were arranged as touring events which travelled through multiple Slovak towns. Among these activities was, for example, the exhibition "Glass Man – the Miracle of Life", which was organised by the Slovak-German Society in Bratislava. The exhibits came from collections of the German Hygiene Museum in Dresden, which at that time paid attention to research in the field of eugenics. Therefore we can suppose that the research results of this Museum were also presented in the touring exhibition through Slovakia.³⁵ An anti-Bolshevik exhibition also travelled through Slovakia; it was installed in several railway carriages which passed through individual railway stations. It was a typical propagandistic campaign, which responded to the events on the frontline and was intended to entice the Slovaks to fight against the Soviet Union. There were more of these ventures in Slovakia at that time. All of them should have presented national socialism in positive light and imprint the ideology into the minds of people.

With regard to the results of hitherto research it can finally be said that the employees of the Slovak National Museum in Turčiansky Svätý Martin had the ambition to not only unite the museum workers in Slovakia, but enhance the professional level of individual museum institutions. Realisation of these visions, however, encountered practical obstacles which were mostly associated with staffing in individual institutions. The Union tried to remove the barriers by sending own experts to the

35 For more details see: PALÁRIK, Miroslav. Aktivity Slovensko-nemeckej spoločnosti v oblasti múzejníctva v rokoch 1941–1945: (Slovenské hygienické múzeum v Bratislave). In *Fenomén múzeum v 19. a prvej polovine 20. storočia: XVIII. ústecké kolokvium. Ústí nad Labem 22.–23. dubna 2010*. Ústí nad Labem: Albis international, 2011, pp. 83–100.

museums, who should have not only revealed possible drawbacks in professional museum activities, but also remedy them actively. This is also evidenced by the revision reports elaborated by Union workers, which enumerate the detected shortcomings and confirm their practical elimination by the inspectors. The corrections in professional management of individual institutions were actively assisted by museum administrators and the Union helped to train the museum workers directly in their home institutions. From this point of view, the activity of the Union of Slovak Museums can be regarded as positive. A negative aspect of activities of this organisation of museum workers was the practical implementation of the decisions adopted. Since the Union was not founded by the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment, their decisions were put into practice only voluntarily by administrators of individual museums. Nevertheless, regular revisions in individual institutions revealed that the theoretically well-managed resolutions of the presidium of the Union remain almost completely unimplemented. Even those workers who immediately participated in these decisions did not adhere to them. Similarly unsuccessful also was the activity of the Union in the field of monument protection during the state of war. The organisation of museum workers failed due to unwillingness of several museum administrations to work out the Plans for Civilian Air Raid Defence, which caused that their collections eventually suffered serious losses. The course of actions which the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment applied during evacuation of historical monuments from Slovakia also was quite buck-passing. The step back from the German pressure by issuing a decree on evacuation of historical monuments to the territory of the

Third Reich fortunately did not cause any severe damages. No unequivocal conclusions can be drawn with regard to the pressure of the governing power on museum institutions, since the research is not yet finished. The most intensive efforts to include museums in the group of disseminators of the official state ideology were identified in large institutions, or in museums seated in the capital of Slovakia, which were at hand to the ruling party. The research in the other museums did not yet begin. Hlinka's Slovak People's Party used for propagandistic purposes institutions other than museums, which mainly presented the achievements of national socialism in Germany or in countries under its influence.

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Lecturer in the Department of History at the Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia. He studied the combination of history – museology at the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (CPU). In his profession he has been long concerned with history of museums in the 20th century with special accent on the period 1939–1945. In this field he published a scholarly monograph titled “Union of Slovak Museums in the Years 1939–1945”, which

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Odborný asistent na Katedre histórie FF UKF v Nitre.
 Vyštudoval kombináciu história – muzeológia na Univerzite Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre.
 Profesne sa dlhodobo venuje dejinám múzejníctva v 20. storočí s akcentom na obdobie rokov 1939–1945. V tejto oblasti publikoval vedeckú monografiu s názvom: Zväz slovenských múzeí v rokoch 1939–1945, ktorá bola v roku 2011 ocenená rektorom UKF. Spoločne s ďalšími kolegami z nitrianskej katedry muzeológie pripravil a vydal súbor komentovaných prameňov k dejinám múzeí v 20. storočí a tiež lexikón strategických udalostí v slovenskom múzejníctve. Zaoberá sa tiež dejinami Nitry v období slovenského štátu. Výsledky výskumu pravidelne popularizuje pred širokou laickou verejnosťou. Pod jeho vedením bola pripravená pre základné a stredné školy učebnica regionálnych dejín s názvom: Mesto pod mestom. Dejiny Nitry v školskej praxi.