

COMMEMORATIVE SILVER COIN FOR THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF JOZEF ŠKULTÉTY

In November 2003, the National Bank of Slovakia prepared an issue of a commemorative silver coin for the 150th anniversary of the birth of Jozef Škultéty, a leading representative of the Slovak national movement.

Jozef Škultéty (25 November 1853 – 19 January 1948) – literary critic and historian, prose writer, linguist, editor, translator and publicist, life-long administrator of Matica Slovenská and university professor – was one of the leading personalities of the Slovak national movement and a fighter for national life and Slovak culture. For more than half a century, his activity strongly influenced and directed the development of political, cultural, literary and scientific life in Slovakia.

He began by publishing stories, but his literary critical and literary historical works are more important. The Critical Letters (*Kritické listy*, Orol 1880) are noteworthy. Together with Svätozar Hurban Vajanský, he formulated in them the idea of a national realistic canon and the need to emancipate literature from theology and messianism. In the pages of the *Slovenské pohľady* and the *Národné noviny*, he presented and critically evaluated the work of recent and older Slovak authors, as well as Slavonic and other world literature. Many of his literary historical works originated from polemics. This was also the origin of his comprehensive work *The History of Slovak Literature*, written in Hungarian in 1911 as the fourth part of a Hungarian history of world literature. He also devoted attention to historical themes: the Slovak Memorandum (1911), *Matica Slovenská* (1919), *A hundred and twenty five years of Slovak life* (1920). The last was an extensive work of a polemical character, outlining a view of Slovak history from the beginning of the national revival to the First World War, that is, from 1790 to 1914. The



book *On the Slovaks* (1928) contains literary historical studies of important authors of the national revival. He was also concerned with linguistic matters, especially the grammar and norms of written Slovak, which he helped to fix by his editorial work. His translation work concentrated especially on works of leading Russian writers.

The National Bank of Slovakia declared a public anonymous competition for the design of the coin. Thirteen artists participated and submitted nineteen proposed designs. An expert commission evaluated the entries. On the basis of its recommendation, the entry of the Kremnica artist Miroslav Ronai, designer of five previous Slovak commemorative coins, gained the first prize and was approved for production. The commission especially appreciated the interesting and high quality, characteristic portrait of Jozef Škultéty on the reverse, which is on the obverse worthily supplemented by a depiction of the second building of Matica Slovenská in Martin, for many years the workplace of Jozef Škultéty.

The second prize went to the son of the winner – Branislav Ronai, who chose the symbol of Matica Slovenská, temporarily used in the 1970s and 1980s, as the main motif on the obverse. He created for the reverse a lifelike and realistic portrait of Jozef Škultéty and a facsimile of his signature. A third prize in the competition was not awarded.

The commemorative coin with a value of SKK 200, diameter of 34 mm and weight of 20g is struck in silver with a fineness of 750/1000 at the Kremnica Mint. 11,500 pieces have been produced, including 2,700 proof. The edge bears the inscription „VYTRVALOSŤ A VERNOSŤ NÁRODNÉMU IDEÁLU“ (Endurance and faithfulness to the national ideal).

Ing. Dagmar Flaché, Photo: Ing. Štefan Fröhlich