

SPIŠSKÁ BANKA

The official history of the Spišská banka, originally the Kesmarker Sparkasse Aktiengesellschaft, Kesmark (Kežmarok Savings Bank Joint Stock Company of Kežmarok, began on 1 May 1863.

At the time of its origin, the bank was headed by a 24 member board of directors, which intended to manage the financial institution cautiously and not to impair the property of the shareholders with risky deals. It often emphasized its prudent attitude in annual statements and in the statutes. In 1886, the number of members of the board of directors fell to 5. A three member supervisory board supervised their activity. A general meeting was held once a year. People of any religion, sex or age could be shareholders, but they could vote only if they were over 20.

The activity of the bank was connected with the names of Kežmarok businessmen, owners of various companies, lawyers and noblemen. Above all, the businessman Theodor Genersich, who acted as a member of the board of directors from 1876 to 1926 and as its chairman for 45 years, is written into its history. He deserves praise for mastering the situation in the bank after a case of fraud in 1877, when the board of directors learnt that Ármin Görgey, a respected attorney, who had worked as chief accountant of the bank since its establishment, had falsified bills of exchange to a value of 128,000 thousand gulden, which was approximately three times the amount of the bank's registered capital. The guilty man committed suicide after being discovered.

However, the bank did not collapse. The shareholders expressed their confidence in the board of directors and accepted the measures it proposed. The registered capital was increased to 120,000 gulden and a guarantee fund was established. The bank stopped paying dividends for ten years. In 1886, the dubious receivable still amounted to 50,000 gulden, which was written off from the registered capital.

In 1883, the Kežmarok Savings Bank, together



with the Spiš Savings Bank joint stock company of Levoča and the Savings Bank in the Upper Hungarian Towns joint stock company of Spišská Sobota, formed the consortium Artificial Mill of the Hornád Valley at Betlanovce. It concerned a bankrupt mill, which they bought in an auction and operated.

They made a profit at first, but by the turn of the century it was making a loss, so the bank considered it a success, when it succeeded in selling it in 1905 for more than its residual value.

The Kežmarok Bank joint stock company existed in Kežmarok from 1872 and owned shares in various local firms. It suffered great losses during the First World War, so it went into liquidation in 1917 and was taken over by the Kežmarok Savings Bank.

The bank passed through a difficult period after the break up of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Its problems resulted from losses on war loans and decline in the value of Hungarian securities. The Spiš Germans and Hungarians even wanted to create an independent Republic of Spiš.

After the issuing of act no.302/20 Zb. from 14 April 1920, the 58th general meeting approved a proposal to change the name of the savings bank to Spišská banka joint stock company of Kežmarok. In the same year, the bank increased its registered capital to 5.1 million Kč.

By the liquidation of financial institutions, which had problems after the First World War, the bank created branches and branch offices throughout Spiš and penetrated into Gemer. In 1920, it already merged with the Podolinská sporiteľňa (Podolínec Savings Bank) joint stock company of Podolínec. By 1925, it established branches in Poprad, Veľká Sobota, Spišská Sobota, Spišská Bela, Gelnica, Levoča, present day Nálepkovo, Spišská Nová Ves, Rožňava and Plešivec. The last two were beyond the frontier after the Vienna Arbitration.

The general meeting for the trading year 1939 was held on 10 March 1941. The last point in the pro-



gramme was a resolution concerning merging with the German Commercial and Credit Bank joint stock company of Bratislava on the basis of decree of the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak State no.11912/40-II/16 of 7 August 1940. It was one of the concessions of the Slovak side to the Reich German Dresdner Bank and Deutsche Bank, in return for two thirds of the Slovak concern Legiobanka, which was freed from their influence.

The Spišská banka had 77 general meetings. It mainly acted as the bank of the Spiš Germans. It achieved its greatest success in the second half of

the 1920s. After the Second World War, it was no longer active and became one of the trophy banks of the Red Army, which confiscated its property. After long negotiations, it was released from the war loot.

The Commission of the Slovak National Council for Finance appointed a liquidator for it. In 1947, the Central Liquidation Office took over. The liquidation process culminated in 1951, when the whole agenda passed to the State Bank of Czechoslovakia, Regional Office for Slovakia in Bratislava.

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