



DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN ACTIVITIES OF THE ARCHIVES OF THE NATIONAL BANK OF SLOVAKIA

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The Archive of the National Bank of Slovakia is one of the archives of special importance. Apart from its basic activities of caring for the written records of the central bank and the archive collections of the central bank and of dissolved Slovak commercial banks, it is developing activities at home and in international fora. Knowledge of history is the only teacher of life, and only a nation which knows this, has its name and its future. Apart from the main long-term role of processing and preserving archive documents, deposited in more than 150 collections, the oldest dating from the mid 19th century and soon we believe to include documents in digital form, the archives succeeded in publishing the first volume of *DOKUMENTY Z ARCHÍVU [DOCUMENTS FROM THE ARCHIVES]* last year. It includes a brief outline of the history of Slovak central banking in Slovak and English, and twenty interesting archive documents ranging in date from 1868 to 1940. This volume, in the form of a bilingual annual, should become a platform for Central European banking archivists and historians.

In the course of 2002, a national conference on the theme „Money and Banks in the History of Slovakia“ will be held in the new building of the National Bank of Slovakia. About 50 expert papers by archivists, historians, numismatists, architects and linguists, concerning money and banks in the widest sense of the word will be heard at it. It will be the first event of this kind in Slovakia. The conference will produce a published volume, and perhaps provide the basis for a comprehensive history of Slovak banking.

Since 1997, the magazine *Biatic* has published a series of articles about personalities from the history of Slovak banking. The Archive of the NBS has already presented more than 55 mostly unknown personalities, founders, directors and staff of Slovak banks or Slovaks involved in foreign banks, for example, Andrej Kapustáš in Poland, Pavol Kuzmány in the oldest Czech *Živnostenská Banka*, Peter Rovnianek and Michal Bosák in the USA. They have also used archive documents to write two books about 32 personalities in Slovak banking - „Did we have bankers?“ and „Sons and Fathers“ which have already been published. A third volume: „More about the same“ is planned.

Since 1996, the Archive of the NBS has been a member of the European Association for Banking History (EABH) with its seat in the capital city of European banking -

Frankfurt. The activities of the EABH are many sided. Recently they have been increasingly oriented towards the activities of the archives of the European central banks. At the beginning of February 2002, a second workshop was held in Zürich for representatives of the archives of the central banks of the European Union and other states. The first such meeting of archivists, held in September 1999 in Frankfurt, decided to create „The European Guide on Banking and Business Archives“. Apart from the representatives of the fifteen EU central banks, it was attended only by representatives of Switzerland and the Archive of the National Bank of Slovakia. Representatives of Bulgaria, Croatia, Malta, Hungary and Turkey.

The programme of the workshop organized by the EABH the Swiss National Bank and the Bank of International Settlements (BIS) in Basel included the experiences of some banking archives with the digitalization of their archive collections. However, we learnt, for example, that the Historical Archive of the Banco d'Italia administers 64 collections with about 64 million documents dating from 1840 to 1955 (records are placed in it only after 45 years) and perhaps 6500 photographs. In Holland, the law on archives valid since 1995, requires that all documents must be accessible to the public after twenty years. In Croatia, the national bank does not have its own archive. The chief librarian from Zagreb Tvrtko Ujevič described their banking past as a black hole, for which only one employee has responsibility. The historic documents of Croatian banking either remain in Belgrade or are kept in the Zagreb National Archives.

The representative of the youngest bank archive, that of the European Central Bank in Frankfurt, wanted to praise Slovakia for cooperating with the EABH, but he spoke about Slovenia. He finally explained this, but it shows how we are still more or less unknown in the consciousness of Europe, so we should not be sorry to use resources to open the eyes of the world.

The most important part of the discussions was the decision on a form of „inventarization“ of the documents of all European central banks, including those not belonging to the EU. In the interest of closer cooperation and better access to the wealth hidden in the archives of central banks, they decided to provide information about the content of the archive collections of the central banks of European states at a common Internet address.

After the Zŭrich meeting and a preceding working visit of representatives of the EABH to Bratislava, there was no doubt that in 2003 the most important archivists and banking historians would come to us in Bratislava. The preparation of the international banking conference in honour of the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the National Bank of Slovakia can be regarded as the most important international activity of the Archives of the NBS and I think also of the Slovak historians concerned with banking, since the Archives of the NBS closely cooperate with them.

The date of the most important anniversary meeting of archivists, banking historians and economists was set for the end of May next year: from the evening of Thursday 29th May to Saturday 31st May 2003. The venue will be the new building of the National Bank of Slovakia in Bratislava. The conference will be devoted mainly to the historic and present-day place of small people's financial institutions in the banking system. Credit unions originated in Slovakia at Sobotište, where Jurkovič's Spolek Gazdovskŭ (Small Farmers' Society) was established on 9th February 1845. It had no forerunner in Europe. This is reflected in the official name of the conference: „Popular Banking and Financial System“.

The main themes of the conference, at which both Slovak and foreign historians, researchers and economists will speak will be:

- the banking system in Slovakia,
- the origin and development of people's banking,
- the inter-war period,
- the Soviet model,
- globalization or localization?

As a matter of interest, the concluding part of the conference was originally to be called „Privatization and supra-national banking“. The change in its name is an expression of an attempt to present the small financial institutions (that is: financial cooperatives, self-help organizations, savings banks and small banks) as representatives of local economic interests, which have long been a balance for the large banks or joint stock companies. At present, the concept of „economic localization“ is a balance or opposite to the generally applied „economic globalization. Small, local banking institutions should support domestic industry, domestic, that is local interests, which supra-national or „global“ institutions do not see.

The accompanying actions of next year's Bratislava conference should help to introduce Slovakia to the foreign experts, and the history and present state of money and banks to the Slovak public. There will be an exhibition: „Money and banks in the history of Slovakia“ in the new NBS building, and it will be accessible to the public. Another volume of Documents from the Archives is being prepared, this time with international participation. The planned television documentary or documentary series about the history and present state of money and Slovak banking will have special importance.

We conclude our information with an undelayable activity, which will change the address of the Archives of the NBS. It involves the transfer of the historic archive collections of the central bank to a building on CukrovĀ Street no.8 in Bratislava and the registrature of the National Bank of Slovakia to the new NBS building on KarvašovĀ Street.