

MATEJ MURTIŇ

(1905 – 1979)

Matej Murtin was one of the many personalities from Slovak banking, who distinguished themselves by their active participation in the anti-fascist struggle during the Slovak National Uprising. However, after the establishment of the Communist regime in 1948, their promising careers were forcibly ended, in spite of their high level of qualifications and ability. They were usually subjected to imprisonment and persecution.

Matej Murtin was born on 3rd May 1905 at Liptovský Mikuláš. After successfully completing his studies at the gymnasium in his native town in 1923-1927, he studied law at the universities in Bratislava and Vienna. After completing his studies and his military service by the end of 1934, he started work as an advocate, both as chief of the office of Dr. Milan Ivanek and independently. At the beginning of 1935, he was accepted into the service of the Zemská Banka in Prague as a clerk, and was assigned to the legal department of the Bratislava branch. According to the qualification assessment of the end of 1935, Matej Murtin „proved full knowledge of the legislation and legal norms of Slovakia“, and in a short time he was knowledgeable in the problems of communal and mortgage banking. He realized that the development of industry and business in Slovakia could not occur without advantageous and long-term investment, communal and mortgage loans. The directors of the Zemská Banka appreciated his abilities, so he was given a permanent position from 1st January 1937 with the title of local secretary of the legal department. After the declaration of the Slovak State, Murtin and other employees of the Zemská Banka were transferred to Slovakia on 1st July 1939, and taken into the service of the newly established Slovenská Hypotečná a Komunálna Banka in Bratislava (SHKB).

The outbreak of the Slovak National Uprising in August 1944 was a great turning point in his life. As an active participant in the anti-fascist struggle and banker, he participated in the transfer of a large quantity of financial resources to central Slovakia during the period of preparation of the uprising. On 1st September 1944, he was appointed a member of the Presidium of the Commission of the Slovak National Council for finance in Banská Bystrica, which secured financing of the army of the uprising and industry in the territory it controlled. After the arrival of the Red Army in Košice, Matej Murtin became the deputy to Tomáš Tvarožek, commissioner of the Slovak National Council for finance, from 5th February 1945. They dealt with a large number of complex problems in the finance and currency areas, which afflicted Slovakia after the passage of the front. Murtin also showed his abi-

lities and legal education by initiating various legislative measures of the Slovak National Council of a financial character. After the sudden death of Tomáš Tvarožek, he was temporarily entrusted with the function of commissioner of finance.

After coming to Bratislava in May 1945, he also returned with great vigour to his original work in the field of mortgage banking. On 14th April 1945, he became a member of the temporary administration of the SHKB with the title of deputy director, on the basis of a decree of the Commission of the Slovak National Council for Finance no.701/1945. At its session on 20th September 1945, the Board of Commissioners appointed Matej Murtin and Elo Šándor as chief directors of the SHKB. They jointly directed the activity of this bank from the abolition of the temporary administration in October 1946 until the end of March 1948. After a change in the statutes of the SHKB, Elo Šándor became general director of the bank with Matej Murtin as his deputy. In the period 1945-1948, Murtin, as an experienced lawyer, was entrusted with representing the bank as an advocate in enforcement and disputed matters. From 1st April 1948, he briefly held the function of head of the personnel division of the bank. In his work at the SHKB, he devoted great attention to gaining financial resources for the reconstruction and industrialization of war devastated Slovakia by means of long-term investment credits, as well as accelerated transfers of capital from the Czech Lands to Slovakia.

After the establishment of the Communist regime in February 1948, the Československý Reeskontný a Lombardný Ústav, the Zemská Banka for Bohemia, the Zemská Banka for Moravia and Silesia and the SHKB were merged into a new centrally directed Investičná Banka in Prague, on the basis of act No.183/1948 Sb. It happened in spite of the effort of Matej Murtin and Elo Šándor to preserve the independence of the SHKB, which they justified by the specific problems and needs of Slovakia where the provision of investment loans were concerned. Their only success was the establishment of the Regional Institute of the Investičná Banka in Bratislava, but this already lost its autonomous position in 1950 in connection with the adoption of a new act on the Investičná Banka no.61/1950 Sb. On 1st July 1948, Murtin was appointed deputy chief director of the Investičná Banka in Prague, and he held this important function until the reduction of the activity of the Investičná Banka in 1956. After leaving the Investičná Banka, he worked as a lawyer for the Central Liquidator of Financial Institutions and Enterprises in Prague. However, in 1958 he was accused of bourgeois nationalism,



and convicted of subversion of the republic in 1959 after a fabricated trial. He was rehabilitated only in 1969 during the temporary relaxation of the Communist regime.

It is also necessary to mention that Matej Murtin as a leading functionary of the Commission of the Slovak National Council was appointed as a member of the Temporary Administration of the National Bank of Czechoslovakia at a session of the Czechoslovak government on 24th July 1945, together with Ján Oliva. As a result of this function, he actively participated in the most important measures in the currency and financial field, such as unification of price and wage policy in the Czech Lands and Slovakia, introduction of a united Czechoslovak currency and freeing

of frozen accounts. He was also a member of various financial and currency commissions established by the Czechoslovak government with the aim of coordinating the steps connected with the implementation of currency reforms, as well as with the complete concentration and state control of Czechoslovak banking. After the end of the Temporary Administration of the NBCS on 15th October 1948, Matej Murin was appointed chairman of the three-member Revision Committee of the NBCS, on the basis of the act on the NBCS no.38/1948 Sb. He held this position until the dissolution of the NBCS in 1950.

Mgr. František Chudják, Archives of the NBS