

JÁN OLIVA (1903 – 1982)

Ján Oliva was born on 14th June 1903 into a Lutheran family at Holič. After completing his study at gymnasium, he worked for two years. He continued his education at the State Commercial School in Skalica, where he took his final examination in 1924. After completing his military service in Petržalka, he started his banking work in 1925 as an intern and later as an accounting official in the Bratislava branch of the Bank of the Czechoslovak Legion.



In January 1927, he applied for work at the National Bank of Czechoslovakia (below only NBCS) in Prague. His application was accepted on 31st March 1928, when he started work at the headquarters of the NBCS in Prague. He held various positions during his work in the central bank: executive, cashier, liquidator, auditor. He produced statements on gold and foreign currency, managed foreign currency accounts, acted as supervisor, deputy director of a branch and at the end of his career he reached the position of director of the NBCS.

At the end of 1928 he gained the position of a permanent official of the NBCS. On the basis of positive evaluations of his work, he held positions successively in the branches at Cheb and Olomouc. In March 1938, he applied for transfer to the Ružomberok branch with the post of deputy director. The director of the Olomouc branch recommended him as follows: "It is my duty to recommend him, because he is above average in every way, he is well informed about everything and he is obliging, but not intrusive." However, in spite of such recommendations, he was not appointed to the position. In December 1938, he was transferred to the Žilina branch of the NBCS.

After the formation of the Slovak National Bank, J. Oliva was accepted into its service in April 1939. He worked as deputy director of the central accounting department and directed the auditing service. In April 1945, the commissioner of the Slovak National Council for finance Tomáš Tvarožek appointed him a member of the Temporary Board of the SNB. Four months later Oliva and Ján Michalík were appointed joint directors of the SNB, to some degree receiving the powers of the governor and vice governor. In the period 1941 – 1943, he was also a member of the committee of the Pension Fund for employees of the bank.

During the occupation he worked illegally as a member of the group "Obrana národa" (Defence of the Nation) and cooperated with the exiles in London. In 1943 he became a member of the Communist Party of Slovakia.

At its meeting on 24th July 1945, the government of the Czechoslovak Republic appointed J. Oliva and Matej Murtin, an official in the Commission of the Slovak National Council for Finance, as the Slovak representatives in the Temporary Board of the NBCS. They performed their functions only until 15th October 1948, when the Bank Board of the NBCS replaced the temporary administration on the basis of act no.38/1948 Zb. In 1946, a govern-

ment resolution according to the presidential decree on the nationalization of private banks established the Central Administration of Banks, and Ján Oliva was appointed first deputy chairman of it.

Ján Oliva was appointed deputy to the chief director of the commercial administration of the NBCS at a meeting of the Temporary Administration of the NBCS on 14th June 1946 on the recommendation of the Presidium of the Slovak National Council, with retrospective effect from 1st January 1946. He held this position until the formation of the State Bank of Czechoslovakia in 1950. From July 1947 he also held the position of first deputy chairman of the Monetary Liquidation Fund, the main purpose of which was the liquidation of frozen deposits and improvement of the state of the Czechoslovak currency.

In December 1948, the Bank Board of the NBCS appointed J. Oliva chairman of the Disciplinary Commission of the Central Action Committee of the National Front for the Slovak regions, a post he held until 1950. In July 1949, he was also appointed to the board of the Slovenská Tatra Banka n. p. of Bratislava on the basis of his functions in the NBCS.

After the formation of the State Bank of Czechoslovakia, he worked in Prague, at first as director of the issuing and cash department, then as head of the precious metals section and finally as head of the section for auditing wage funds. On 4th November 1954, the SBCS received a letter from the Ministry of the Interior with the following text: "We inform you that on 27.10.1954, your employee Ján Oliva, by profession an official, was arrested by the authorities of the Ministry of the Interior for anti-state activities. He was left in prison by the prosecutor, so you should adopt the appropriate measures in relation to pay."

Officially, he was imprisoned "for loss of trust according to the provisions of section 1, § 34 of act 154/1934". Later he was convicted in a trial, together with JUDr. Leopold Chmel, former chief director of the NBCS. They were charged with "not creating the pre-conditions for



correct use of § 14 of presidential decree no.91/1945 Zb. on renewal of the Czechoslovak currency. They did not organize the correct procedure for freeing frozen accounts, and in particular, they supported lenient interpretations of the possibilities for freeing deposits. Such freeing of millions of sums in the new currency enabled the reactionary elements to continue leading an affluent and wasteful life at the expense of the working people.”

Oliva himself was accused of “criminal practices in freeing money, which he applied especially in Slovakia. He also led his subordinates Karol Markovič, Ján Michalík and Štefan Halabrín into these activities”. They also accused him of illegally freeing a sum of Kčs 4,811,627 from the regional office of the NBCS in Bratislava, and

that as chief of the cash section of the SBCS, he enabled some employees of the SBCS to steal gold and diamonds from the state gold and diamond reserves.

On 1st July 1955, the Regional Court in Prague sentenced Ján Oliva to six years in prison and a monetary penalty was also imposed. He submitted a complaint against the verdict on the basis of act no.82/1968 Zb. on judicial rehabilitation. In 1969 he was fully cleared of guilt by a decision of a special group of judges of the Regional Court in Prague. He died in Prague on 12th June 1982.

Mgr. Mária Kačkovičová, Archives of the NBS