

## DOCUMENTATION OF PRESENT TIME IN SLOVAKIA'S TWO LARGEST MUSEUMS DURING WWII

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### *Introduction*

The international crisis of the late 1930s affected strongly the course of history in then Czechoslovakia. The Munich Agreement, the announcement of Slovakia's autonomy and the First Vienna Award resulted in extensive domestic and territorial changes in the country, which had been described as an island of democracy in Central Europe. Subsequent developments in Slovakia led to the establishment of an authoritarian regime in the hands of a single political party – Hlinka's Slovak People's Party. Representatives of this political party used the short six-month existence of the Czecho-Slovak Republic (also known as the Second Republic) to curb civil and human rights under the guise of unifying political and national life.<sup>1</sup> As soon as Slovakia's autonomy was officially announced in October 1938, the new government sought to gradually take control of political, economic, social and cultural life. The first step on the path to a full seizure of power was the liquidation of rival political parties and their allied organisations, under the pretext of uniting the nation and its interests.<sup>2</sup> Representatives of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party had been styling themselves for some time as “spokespersons” of the nation, although they had never gained enough voter support to justify such an attitude.<sup>3</sup> The process of taking control of the country culminated in obstructions to the submission of election slates and eventually the general election itself, which was no longer a standard vote. The process was marked by the segregation of people on the ethnic principle – Czechs, Hungarians, Roma, Sinti and Jews<sup>4</sup> – and the subsequent elimination of their (physical or socially active) presence in Slovakia.

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<sup>1</sup> Concerning developments in the era of Slovakia's autonomy, see, for example: Valerián Bystrický, *Od autonómie k vzniku Slovenského štátu* [From Autonomy to the Establishment of the Slovak State] (Bratislava: VEDA, 2008); Róbert Arpáš, *Autonómia: víťazstvo alebo prehra? Vyvrcholenie politického zápasu HSEŠ o autonómiu Slovenska* [Autonomy: Victory or Defeat? Culmination of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party's Political Struggle for Slovakia's Autonomy] (Bratislava: VEDA, 2011); Ján Mitáč, ed., *Juh Slovenska po Viedenskej arbitráži 1938-1945* [Slovakia's South after First Vienna Award 1938-1945] (Bratislava: ÚPN, 2011); Valerián Bystrický et al., *Rozbitie alebo rozpad? Historické reflexie Česko-Slovenska* [Forced Destruction or Disintegration? Historical Reflections on Czechoslovakia] (Bratislava: VEDA, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Bystrický, *Od autonómie*, 198-249.

<sup>3</sup> Arpáš, *Autonómia: víťazstvo alebo prehra?*, 94 and next.

<sup>4</sup> Regarding the Roma, see, for example: Tomáš Kráľovič, “Perzekúcia Rómov v slovenskom štáte v rokoch 1939-1945. Problematika pracovných útvarov vo fondoch okresného, župného a policajného úradu v Nitre” [Roma Persecution in the Slovak State 1939-1945: Labour Camp Issues in Regional, County and Police Office Funds in Nitra], *Studia Historica Nitriensia* 23, no. 2 (2019): 456-474. Regarding the Jews: Miroslav Palárik, and Alena Mikulášová, “Vyhlásenie autonómie v októbri 1938 a prejavy protičeských a antisemitských nálad v regiónoch na príklade mesta Nitra a okolia” [Announcement of Autonomy in October 1938 and Manifestations of Anti-Czech and Anti-Semitic Sentiments in the Regions on the Example of the City of Nitra and the Nearby Area], in Marian Uhrin, ed., *Slovensko 1938. Československo v zovretí mocností* [Slovakia 1938. Czechoslovakia in the Grip of Powers] (Banská Bystrica: SNP Museum, 2019), 125-40.

In March 1939, under Adolf Hitler's pressure, the Czecho-Slovak Republic broke apart to produce the Slovak state and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. The emerging political elite brought along its own ideas of how a state would ideally operate. These ideas were based on Catholicism and laced with elements of Nazi and fascist ideologies.<sup>5</sup> This concept was authored by Štefan Polakovič.<sup>6</sup> Emphasis began to be placed on the promotion of nationalism, anti-Semitism (in any form), corporatism and totalitarianism (meaning that the nation was preferred over interests of the individual).<sup>7</sup> Although models had already been laid down, according to Polakovič, there should have been an exclusively Slovak way to achieve the goal, respecting the Slovak conditions.<sup>8</sup> The government also had some ideas about art and culture, and their form, limits and scope of influence on the public. However, similarly to constant confrontation between the moderates and radicals in the ruling party concerning their views on various aspects of life in the state, there was also considerable division and ideological eclecticism in the cultural sphere. Historian Vlasta Jaksicsová points to a certain specific feature of Slovakia after March 1939, namely artists being given scope to present ideas that did not always correspond to the main political line. She suggests that the Slovak political representation did not pursue totalitarian control of culture, as was the case in Germany.<sup>9</sup> However, this claim cannot be fully accepted. Efforts to control and enforce the ruling party's ideas were always present in Slovakia.<sup>10</sup> However, a lot depended on the contacts of individuals, their courage to resist the regime even at the cost of existential problems, and the ability to express their opinions indirectly by hints.

Cultural, educational and memory institutions were to take the lead in the system of promoting the government's ideas among the people, imprinting radicalism into the general public and creating a conformist, grey mass of citizens devoted to the party. It was a demanding task, considering the educational, social, religious, ideological and ethnic diversity of the population.<sup>11</sup> The museum was one of

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example: Michaela Lenčesová, "Comeback Štefana Polakoviča po vzniku Slovenskej republiky. K Polakovičovmu hľadaniu zmyslu slovenských dejín 20. storočia" [Štefan Polakovič's Comeback after the Establishment of the Slovak Republic. On Polakovič's Search for the Meaning of Slovak History of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century], in Milan Belej, Peter Keresteš and Miroslav Palárik, eds., *Mílniky 20. storočia v regióne Nitrianskeho kraja* [Milestones of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Nitra Region] (Nitra: UKF, 2018), 214-27; Miloslav Szabó, *Klérofašisti. Slovenskí kňazi a pokušenie radikálnej politiky (1935-1945)* [Clerical Fascists. Slovak Priests and Temptation of Radical Politics (1935-1945)] (Bratislava: Slovart, 2019).

<sup>6</sup> Štefan Polakovič, *K základom Slovenského štátu. Filozofické eseje* [On Foundations of the Slovak State. Philosophical Essays] (Turčiansky Svätý Martin: Matica slovenská, 1939); Martin Pekár, "Štátna ideológia a jej vplyv na charakter režimu" [State Ideology and Its Influence on the Nature of the Regime], in Martina Fiamová, Ján Hlavinka, Michal Schvarc et al., *Slovenský štát 1939 – 1945: predstavy a realita* [Slovak State 1939-1945: Notions and Reality] (Bratislava: HiÚ SAV, 2014), 137-52; Anton Hruboň, "Slovenský národný socializmus v koncepciách Štefana Polakoviča a Stanislava Mečiara. (Dva návrhy posalzburského smerovania prvej Slovenskej republiky)" [Slovak National Socialism in the Concepts of Štefan Polakovič and Stanislav Mečiar (Two Proposals of the Post-Salzburg Direction of the First Slovak Republic)], in Anton Hruboň, Zuzana Tokárová and Juraj Lepiš, eds., *Slovensko v rokoch neslobody 1938 – 1989. II. Osobnosti známe – neznáme* [Slovakia in Years of Bondage 1938-1989. II. Personages Known – Unknown] (Bratislava: ÚPN, 2014), 20-34.

<sup>7</sup> Pekár, "Štátna ideológia," 143.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>9</sup> See: Vlasta Jaksicsová, *Kultúra v dejinách (Dejiny v kultúre)* [Culture in History (History in Culture)] (Bratislava: VEDA, 2012), 169 and next.

<sup>10</sup> Monika Kapráliková, „Elán vo vojnej Bratislave: podoba a okolnosti vydávania časopisu v rokoch 1939 – 1944" [Magazine Elán in Wartime Bratislava: Form and Circumstances of Publishing It in 1939-1944], *Slovenská literatúra* 62, no. 1 (2015): 8-9.

<sup>11</sup> Pavol Tišliar and Branislav Šprocha, *Demografický obraz Slovenska v rokoch 1938-1945* [Demographic Image of Slovakia in 1938-1945] (Bratislava: MKD, 2016).

the nation's memory institutions that were supposed to be part of the state's educational machinery. At the time, this institution was still perceived by the public as a temple of the past – as Miloš Řezník and Martin Schulz Wessel put it: “a medium of remembrance culture”.<sup>12</sup> Preserving relics of the past, museums could have served as ideal bodies to spread a national story that resulted in a complete national emancipation. However, most museums were shaped during the Habsburg monarchy in the nineteenth century, collecting items that were to create a national story<sup>13</sup> of someone else than Slovaks.<sup>14</sup> The museum in Turčiansky Svätý Martin was an exception, apart from, of course, museums set up after 1918. In order to interpret history, as Adam Hudek points out, historians of that time used a new definition of Slovak history, based on the description of historical events that took place in the “national territory” of Slovaks and on the understanding of members of the nation as a simple Slovak people,<sup>15</sup> as presented by historian František Hrušovský in a new synthesis of Slovak history.<sup>16</sup> After the emergence of the Slovak Republic, it was required to make the national story result in an “independent” Slovak state, as was emphasised frequently by politicians. There was a problem, however. To complete the story, it was necessary to focus on documenting the present in the exhibition area. This was the only way to show the visitor where Slovakia and Slovaks had moved on their historical path. The issue of documenting contemporary events properly is also relevant today. When it comes to organising exhibitions aimed at presenting life during the Second World War in Slovakia, it is necessary to bring together enough original exhibits to constitute the core of the exhibition. However, it looks as if Slovak museums had ignored the era of the Slovak state's existence. For example, when setting up the exhibition project *Dream versus Reality*, which mapped the developments in Slovakia in 1939-1945 and which was prepared by the staff of the Slovak National Gallery in Bratislava, the curators were only able to obtain a limited number of items from the collections of Slovak museums, despite the fact that these institutions were active in the period in question.<sup>17</sup> What could be

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<sup>12</sup> Miloš Řezník and Martin Schulz Wessel, “Muzeum jako médium histoire croisée Nemců, Čechů a Slováků” [Museum as Medium of Histoire Croisée of Germans, Czechs and Slovaks], in Dušan Kováč, Miloš Řezník and Martin Schulz Wessel, eds., *Muzealizace dějin v česko-nemecko-slovenském kontextu* [Musealization of History in the Czech-German-Slovak Context] (Praha: MÚ AVČR, 2017), 14.

<sup>13</sup> Concerning the creation of national history, see, for example: Adam Hudek, *Najpolitickéjšia veda. Slovenská historiografia 1948-1989* [The Most Political Science. Slovak Historiography 1948-1989] (Bratislava: VEDA, 2010), 11 and next; László Vörös, *Analytická historiografia verus národné dejiny. „Národ“ ako sociálna reprezentácia* [Analytical Historiography Versus National History. “Nation” as Social Representation] (Pisa: Plus-Pisa University Press, 2010), 3 and next; Zuzana Hasarová, “Nový sviatok v kalendári komunistického režimu. K formovaniu osláv československo-sovietskeho vzťahu na konci 40. rokov 20. storočia” [New Holiday in Calendar of Communist Regime. How Celebrations of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Relationship Were Shaped in the Late 1940s], *Studia Historica Nitriensia* 20, no. 1 (2016): 135-60.

<sup>14</sup> Lubomír Lipták, “Múzeá a historiografia na Slovensku do roku 1918” [Museums and Historiography in Slovakia until 1918], *Zborník Slovenského národného múzea* 81, *History – 27* (1987): 273-89; Lubomír Lipták, “Múzeá a historiografia na Slovensku v rokoch 1918 – 1945” [Museums and Historiography in Slovakia in 1918-1945], *Zborník Slovenského národného múzea* 83, *History – 29* (1989): 209-25.

<sup>15</sup> Adam Hudek, “Historik František Hrušovský: žiak Václava Chaloupeckého ako tvorca ľudáckej koncepcie slovenských dejín” [Historian František Hrušovský: Václav Chaloupecký's Disciple and Creator of HSE's Concept of Slovak History], in Milan Ducháček, Jitka Bílková et al., eds., *Václav Chaloupecký a generace roku 1914: otazníky české a slovenské historiografie v éře první republiky* [Václav Chaloupecký and the Generation of 1914: Issues of Czech and Slovak Historiography during the First Republic] (Liberec – Prague – Turnov: Pekařova společnost Českého ráje, z.s., 2018), 124.

<sup>16</sup> František Hrušovský, *Slovenské dejiny* [Slovak History] (Turčiansky Svätý Martin: Matica slovenská, 1939).

<sup>17</sup> The exhibition was open to the public from October 19, 2016 to February 26, 2017. It was curated by Katarína Bajcurová, Petra Hanáková and Bohunka Koklesová. The exhibition project is currently presented on the website: <https://senxskutocnost.sng.sk>.

the cause of this? Had Slovak museums during that period been prepared at all to document the contemporary era? Would museum workers at the time have been able and willing to take on the role of documenting the emergence of the new state and regime? It is currently not possible to provide a clear answer, as there had been no thorough research into this issue until now. This paper is the first probe attempting to see how the present was documented by Slovak museums in 1939-1945. Since it would be quite difficult to examine all museums that existed at the time, I decided to focus on Slovakia's two largest museums of the era, namely the Slovak National Museum in Turčiansky Svätý Martin and the Slovak Museum in Bratislava (now the Slovak National Museum in Martin and Bratislava). In the study, I will also attempt to answer the following questions: Were Slovak museums able to take on the role of spreading the national story and state ideology? Was most of the public interested in them? What was their significance for the nascent state and the new political establishment? I will also attempt to shed light on reasons for the changes in museology after March 1939.

*Influence of Political Power on Art in the Slovak Republic 1939-1945*

After the constitutional changes in Slovakia in March 1939, efforts to “socialize” the artistic and cultural spheres came to the fore, reflecting the state's needs. These two spheres – art and culture – were considered vital for the nation and the state. As the author of the state ideology Štefan Polakovič put it: “culture creates spiritual bonds that hold the national community together. It is the only fodder of national consciousness. It is the strongest motive for defending national values”.<sup>18</sup> Nation with a lack or absence of culture was called by Polakovič mentally disjoined and unfocused.<sup>19</sup> In the spirit of Polakovič's theses, people were supposed to take an active approach to culture, while the state was to remove all barriers for artists and those creating cultural values. This included supporting them financially. However, state support should also have been linked to certain requirements, with Slovak artists expected to create a “original culture that will have Slovakia as its homeland and the Slovak genius as its father”.<sup>20</sup> According to Polakovič, Slovak culture was to be shown to be as original as possible, in order to prevent other nations from making land claims in Slovakia. Polakovič also explained the need of creating specific Slovak cultural values by claiming that by “accepting the culture of another nation, we accept its spirit”,<sup>21</sup> and that this would contribute to the nation's own demise. This approach made Germany a model only in the basic ideas, while their fulfilment was to be purely Slovak.

The term “socialisation of art and culture” raised many questions, however. It was not clearly defined at the time, so polemics involving leading government officials and art figures frequently appeared in the press to explain it to the readers. According to Štefan Polakovič, it meant the creation of works that would be widely accessible and comprehensible for the general public. So, culture and art in the future were not to be reserved only for the wealthy and educated, but were to be for everyone without distinction.<sup>22</sup> The definition was progressively adjusted to fit the needs of the regime. When explained in more detail, socialisation in art and culture was to be displayed mainly in themes. Works of individual

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<sup>18</sup> Polakovič, *K základom slovenského štátu*, 95 and next.

<sup>19</sup> Štefan Polakovič, *Slovenský národný socializmus* [Slovak National Socialism] (Bratislava: Generálny sekretariát Hlinkovej slovenskej ľudovej strany, 1941), 129.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* It should be noted that the demand for socialising culture and art, i.e. making it generally comprehensible and accessible to the broad masses, came to Slovakia from two centres – Germany and the Soviet Union.

authors were supposed to be adapted to the local people, to spring from the nation and to be based on tradition, while also meeting strict criteria of moral purity and national pride.<sup>23</sup> This particularly concerned visual arts, with emphasis being placed on the religious-ideological and political-didactic dimensions of individual works.<sup>24</sup> Thematic simplicity without a deeper moral or national appeal, focused solely on amusement, was criticised.<sup>25</sup> The pursuit of art, invention and creativity that would distinguish individual authors was perceived negatively by politicians and some artists, who claimed that this was allegedly incomprehensible to most of the public.<sup>26</sup> Nazi Germany, as an ideological and cultural centre, was becoming a particular model for art, while Berlin was also attempting to influence large swaths of the public in its satellites by spreading its “*Kulturpolitik*”.<sup>27</sup> The groundwork for these intentions was laid by the signing of an agreement on cultural cooperation, with its backbone being the exchange of cultural potential with the German Protector.<sup>28</sup> Efforts to promote German cultural production in Slovakia had their effects on exhibitions, theatres, film and music.<sup>29</sup> This one-sided orientation of Slovak artistic

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 67 and next.

<sup>24</sup> For more details concerning the situation in visual arts, see: Katarína Bajcurová, “Umenie – štát – umelci” [Art – State – Artists], in Katarína Bajcurová, Petra Hanáková and Bohunka Koklesová, eds., *Sen x skutočnosť. Umenie & propaganda 1939-1945* [Dream x Reality. Art & Propaganda 1939-1945] (Bratislava: SNG, 2017), 22 and next.

<sup>25</sup> Jozef Švikruha, “Periférna literatúra a verejné knižnice” [Peripheral Literature and Public Libraries], *Národný pracovník. Časopis Ústrednej osvetovej komisie* 5, no. 9-10 (1944): 365-69.

<sup>26</sup> Janko Alexy, “Čo s našim moderným umením?” [What to Do with Our Modern Art?], *Kultúra. Revue slovenskej katolíckej inteligencie* 12, no. 1-2 (1940): 40-43.

<sup>27</sup> In this context, Stein Rokkan's concept of the relationship between the centre and the periphery is interesting, as he distinguishes three basic ways in which the periphery can be subjugated – by conquest and administrative annexation (which occurred only in the case of the Czech part of the former Czechoslovak Republic); by economic attachment; and by cultural subjugation. In the case of the Slovak Republic during the Second World War, the latter two forms are particularly relevant. Stein Rokkan's theory was elaborated for Slovak conditions by art historian Ján Bakoš. See: Stein Rokkan, “The Centre-Periphery Polarity,” in Stein Rokkan, Derek Urwin, Frank H. Aarebrot et al., *Centre-Periphery Structures in Europe. An ISSC Workbook in Comparative Analysis* (Frankfurt – New York: Campus, 1987), 17-50; Ján Bakoš, *Periféria a symbolický skok. (Úvahy o teórii dejín umenia a kultúrnej histórii)* [Periphery and Symbolic Leap. (Reflections on Art History Theory and Cultural History)] (Bratislava: Kaligram, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> Stanislav Dragúň, “Nemecko-slovenská dohoda z roku 1942 o spolupráci na kultúrnom poli a jej realizácia v praxi” [German-Slovak Agreement from 1942 on Cooperation in Culture and Its Implementation in Practice], *Historický časopis* 55, no. 3 (2007): 559-76; Michal Schvarc and Eudovít Hallon, “Nemecká kultúrna politika na Slovensku v rokoch 1939-1945. Náčrt problematiky” [German Cultural Policy in Slovakia in 1939-1945. An Outline], in Peter Sokolovič, ed., *Život v Slovenskej republike – Slovenská republika 1939-1945 očami mladých historikov IX* [Life in the Slovak Republic – Slovak Republic 1939-1945 as Seen by Young Historians IX] (Bratislava: ÚPN, 2011), 259-84.

<sup>29</sup> Miroslav Palárik, “Divadelníctvo v Nitre v rokoch 1939-1945” [Theatre in Nitra in 1939-1945], *Studia historica Nitriensia* 21, no. 2 (2017): 366-430; Alena Mikulášová and Miroslav Palárik, “Nitrianske kiná v období druhej svetovej vojny” [Nitra Cinemas during the Second World War], *Historický časopis* 63, no. 2 (2015): 291-312; Petra Hanáková, “Udávať, dozerať a trestať. Slovenské kino 1939-1945 v policajných a iných archívoch” [Snitching, Supervising and Punishing. Slovak Cinema 1939-1945 in Police and Other Archives], in Martin Kaňuch, ed., *Film a kultúrna pamäť* [Film and Cultural Memory] (Bratislava: SFÚ, 2014), 114-27; Martin Ciel, *Film a politika. Ideológia a propaganda v slovenskom filme 1939-1989* [Film and Politics. Ideology and Propaganda in Slovak Film 1939-1989] (Bratislava: Vlna, 2017); Martin Hetényi, “Niektoré aspekty kultúrnej, umeleckej a osvetovej činnosti mesta Nitra v rokoch 1939-1945” [Some Aspects of Cultural, Artistic and Educational Activities of the City of Nitra in 1939-1945], *Konštantínove listy* 8, no. 2 (2015): 78-87; Miroslav Palárik and Alena Mikulášová, “Libri prohibiti. Zásahy politiky do knižnej produkcie a knižničných fondov počas druhej svetovej vojny na príklade mesta Nitra” [Libri prohibiti. Political Interventions in Book Production and Library Collections during the Second World War on the Example of the City of Nitra], *Muzeológia a*

activities and culture was not generally approved of by the professional public, however. Some believed that orientation towards several countries would allow art to flourish in all its richness.<sup>30</sup> However, these attitudes were perceived critically by the government authorities, who wanted to make sure that the ideas of German National Socialism were spread, including by the support of official proclamations from as many widely known figures from culture and art as possible. The so-called Lomnický Manifesto, released in 1940, was drawn up in this very spirit.<sup>31</sup> Representatives of the government strove to implant their own ideas about Slovak art by various appeals in magazines.

As for developments in museology in this period, it can be observed that representatives of the political power, along with staff of minor museums, got stuck in the notion of the museum as an institution and its role somewhere in the second half of the nineteenth century. They understood it as a collector of documents of the nation's past.<sup>32</sup> This notion of the museum was facilitated by the fact that there was no legislation defining the museum and the scope of its activities. Visual and written sources from this period indicate that the exhibition spaces of most of the smaller museums resembled warehouses of antiquities rather than institutes documenting the past.<sup>33</sup> Despite this, museums in the Slovak state were supposed to assist in boosting the national sentiment and become a means of education towards patriotism,<sup>34</sup> whereby they would become disseminators of the state party's ideology and various myths about the path leading to Slovak independence.<sup>35</sup> However, this emphasis on certain themes provoked controversy. For example, the Great Moravian tradition, emphasised by politicians and historians, which presented Great Moravia as the first state of the Slovaks,<sup>36</sup> was disapproved of by Germany, as it showed the Great Moravians' clash

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*kultúrne dedičstvo* 4, no. 2 (2016): 117-37; Vladimír Draxler, "Slovenský rozhlas 1938-1945" [Slovak Radio 1938-1945], *Acta Universitatis Carolinae – Studia territorialia*, no. 1-2 (2013): 141-75.

<sup>30</sup> JŠK, "Otázky nateraz bez odpovede" [Questions Unanswered Now], *Kultúra* 13, no. 7-8 (1941): 325-27.

<sup>31</sup> See more: Ivan Kamenec, "Zmietanie sa medzi politikou, kultúrnou tvorbou a vlastným svedomím" [Struggling Between Politics, Cultural Creation and Own Conscience], in Ivan Kamenec, ed., *Spoločnosť, politika, historiografia. Pokrivené (?) zrkadlo dejín slovenskej spoločnosti v dvadsiatom storočí a vlastným svedomím* [Society, Politics, Historiography. A Distorted (?) Mirror of the History of Slovak Society in the Twentieth Century by One's Own Conscience] (Bratislava: HiÚ SAV and Prodama, 2009), 135-36.

<sup>32</sup> See more: Anna Gregorová, *Múzeá a múzejníctvo* [Museums and Museology] (Martin: Matica slovenská, 1984), 56-57.

<sup>33</sup> Revízne správy o múzeách [Museum Review Reports], fund Zväz slovenských múzeí [Association of Slovak Museums] (hereafter: fund ASM), 1939-1959, box 2/1, Archive of the Slovak National Museum in Bratislava (hereafter: ASNM in BA).

<sup>34</sup> Cf.: "Vyhláška MŠANO zo dňa 30. apríla 1940, číslo 3277/40 – prez. O usporiadaní školských vychádzok a zájazdov," [National Education Ministry's Regulation of April 30, 1940, No 3277/40 – pres. On the Organisation of School Outings and Tours], *Zvesti Ministerstva školstva a národnej osvety* 3, no. 5 (1940): 89; "Učebné osnovy pre učiteľské akademie. Zásadné stanoviská" [Curriculum for Teacher Training Academies. Key Viewpoints], *Zvesti Ministerstva školstva a národnej osvety* 3, no. 5 (1940): 302-61.

<sup>35</sup> See more on victimisation: Vladimír Krivý and Elena Mannová, "Mýtus obete" [The Myth of Victim], in Eduard Krekovič, Elena Mannová, Eva Krekovičová et al., eds., *Mýty naše slovenské* [Our Slovak Myths] (Bratislava: AEP Press, 2005), 77-85; myths of the Slovak state are also dealt with by: Ivan Kamenec, "Slovenská republika 1939-1945 a jej mýty" [Slovak Republic 1939-1945 and Its Myths], in Krekovič, Mannová, Krekovičová et al., *Mýty naše slovenské*, 181-98.

<sup>36</sup> Slávka Otčenášová, "Cyrilo-metodská tradícia v československých a slovenských učebniciach dejepisu publikovaných po roku 1918" [Tradition of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Czechoslovak and Slovak History Textbooks Released after 1918], in Martin Hetényi, Peter Ivanič, Martin Husár et al., *Tradícia a prítomnosť misijného diela sv. Cyrila a Metoda* [Tradition and Presence of the Missionary Work of St Cyril and Methodius] (Nitra: UKF, 2013), 256-68; Slávka Otčenášová, "Svätopluk ako symbol národa a ideál občianskych cností (v učebniciach dejepisu pre základné a stredné školy vydávaných v rokoch 1918-1945)" [Svätopluk as a National Symbol and Ideal Citizen (in History Textbooks for Primary and Secondary Schools Published in 1918-1945)], *Studia Historica Nitriensia* 25, no. 1 (2021): 103.

with the Germanic Franks. This issue was therefore not particularly suitable for public presentation and it needed to be approached with care.

When it comes to the population composition by education in Slovakia in 1939-1945, the vast majority of the public had only attained primary education.<sup>37</sup> This indicates that attending memory institutions might not have been among the preferred forms of leisure activity for most of the public. The most frequent visitors to museums were schoolchildren,<sup>38</sup> with museum expositions to be gradually adapted to this fact, so that the message – in this case one of state ideology – would be conveyed as effectively as possible. German models were also to be applied in this area.<sup>39</sup> Prominent contemporary Slovak museologist and art historian Alžbeta Güntherová-Mayerová proposed to reinstall expositions in Slovak museums to respect the principles of pedagogy. In her reflections, she drew on the work of German professor Jacob-Friesen, who promoted the introduction of pedagogy into museum practice, thus using museums for propaganda purposes. Hlinka's Slovak People's Party's notion of museums as means for education towards patriotism clashed with the everyday reality in museums, as minor, regional museums in particular were struggling with lacks of staff, storage and exhibition spaces and any concept of exhibition activities. This resulted in many museums in Slovakia becoming stuck as antique shop windows, actually presenting everything possessed. Such "exhibitions" could hardly attract larger audiences – in any case diminished by the war anyway – and support more active dissemination of the state-party's philosophy.

Considering the current level of knowledge of developments in Slovak museology during the Second World War, it can be observed that minor, regional museums were not in the midst of attention from the state party when it came to the dissemination of state ideology and propaganda. Rather, it was more interested in the major bodies in Bratislava and Turčiansky Svätý Martin. Given the focus of their collection-building programmes, both institutions provided sufficient amounts of source materials for the creation of exhibitions conceptually fitting into the government's schemes. Compared to smaller museums, Bratislava-based museums had relatively more visitors. This was aided by the fact that the capital had relatively more people with higher education. The museum in Turčiansky Svätý Martin was presented as a showcase of the Slovak nation from its very foundation, and this made it into a sort of sanctuary of Slovaks' past in people's eyes. The Slovak Museum in Bratislava, after some early turbulence, organised several exhibitions that can be described as serving the state ideology, including exhibitions of the Deutsche Partei, but it also provided a wide scope to artists accentuating national themes.<sup>40</sup> The Slovak

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<sup>37</sup> Viera Pilinská, "Zmeny v štruktúre obyvateľstva podľa veku, rodinného stavu a vzdelania na Slovensku po vzniku Československa" [Changes in Population Structure by Age, Marital Status and Education in Slovakia after the Establishment of Czechoslovakia], *Slovenská štatistika a demografia* 18, no. 4 (2018): 29 and next.

<sup>38</sup> Annual reports of museums in Slovakia for 1942 sent to the Association of Slovak Museums, fund ASM, 1939-1959, box 2/2, ASNM in BA.

<sup>39</sup> Cf.: Alžbeta Güntherová-Mayerová, "O súčasnom muzejníctve" [On Contemporary Museology], *Časopis Muzeálnej slovenskej spoločnosti* 31, no. 2 (1940): 41-2. On museum pedagogy in the 1930s, see: Friedrich Waidacher, *Príručka všeobecnej muzeológie* [Handbook of General Museology] (Bratislava: SNM, 1999), 76-7; Thorsten Heese, "... ein eigenes Local für Kunst und Alterthum". *Die Institutionalisierung des Sammelns am Beispiel der Osnabrücker Museumsgeschichte* (Halle: Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg, Diss., 2002, accessed June 16, 2023, <http://digital.bibliothek.uni-halle.de/ulbhalhssun/content/titleinfo/2589814>).

<sup>40</sup> Elena Machajdíková (see: Elena Machajdíková, "Slovenské národné múzeum a jeho predchodcovia" [Slovak National Museum and Its Predecessors], in Gabriela Podušelová and Viera Majchrovičová, eds., *Múzeá vo vojne. Druhá svetová vojna a jej dôsledky*

National Museum in Turčiansky Svätý Martin was made a stop for foreign officials visiting Slovakia, with the national story of Slovaks being presented to them.

*Documentation of the Present in Slovakia's Two Largest Museums in 1939-1945*

Museums, as memory institutions, could have contributed by their documentary and exhibition activities to consolidating the national story constructed at that time, supposedly based on the perennial aspiration of Slovaks to set up their own state, as presented by President Jozef Tiso in March 1939.<sup>41</sup> This myth about the state's foundation was further promoted by official echelons, even though its members knew well that it did not entirely correspond to reality. As the new state was set up and became more established, Slovak museologists received an ideal space for documenting the rapid political and social changes and progress compared to in previous times, as pointed out by the government. Nevertheless, to do this job, they needed a perfect knowledge of museum issues. Reality showed that most museums in Slovakia had problems even with some basic activities, including instituting a well-thought-out concept of collection development, and the scientific processing of collections and their proper installation. The staffs were composed of educated locals – teachers, priests and other volunteers – who did not have the necessary experience or even basic museum skills. It can be assumed that they were not well versed in documenting the present, and their activity rather depended on their internal allegiance to the establishment of the Slovak state and its politics. Documentation of the present was a hotly discussed topic<sup>42</sup> in the twentieth century (as it is

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*na činnosť múzeí a ich zbierky* [Museums at War. The Second World War and Its Consequences on the Activities of Museums and Their Collections] (Banská Bystrica: SNM, 2015), 15-29) presents only exhibitions of the Deutsche Partei: *Exhibition of German Artists from Slovakia*; and *Die Volksgruppe plant und baut*. Exhibitions by artists such as Jozef Satina, Štefan Milovan Kraker, František Viktor Podolay and others (for a detailed list, see: Zuzana Falathová, “Múzejníctvo a výstavníctvo v Bratislave v rokoch 1939-1945” [Museums and Exhibitions in Bratislava in the Years 1939-1945], *Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo* 5, no. 2 (2017): 61-76) can be included among exhibitions that served the ideas of the government authorities about ideal art. The state also regularly presented art from satellites of Nazi Germany. These events included: *Exhibition of Croatian Visual Arts*; and *Exhibition of Contemporary Romanian Art*. When it comes to themes preferred by HSLS representatives, we can point to a state-ideology-laden exhibition entitled: *National Exhibition of Postage Stamps*. After the establishment of the Slovak Republic, new postage stamps were designed to present national themes, including idealised images of Great Moravian princes, air protection of Slovakia by German aircraft and a series of paintings with folk themes by Martin Benka. For more detail: Miroslav Palárik and Zuzana Hasarová, “Medzníky slovenských a československých dejín na známkach z filatelickej zbierky Slovenského národného múzea” [Milestones of Slovak and Czechoslovak History on Stamps from the Philatelic Collection of the Slovak National Museum], in Miroslav Palárik, Peter Kerestěš and Milan Belej, eds., *Míľniky 20. storočia v regióne Nitrianskeho kraja* [Milestones of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in the Nitra Region] (Nitra: State Archive in Nitra, 2018), 111-39.

<sup>41</sup> The entire speech of Jozef Tiso about the mythical origin of the Slovak state is available online: “Rundfunkrede von Jozef Tiso,” last modified June 16, 2023, [https://www.herder-institut.de/no\\_cache/digitale-angebote/dokumente-und-materialien/themenmodule/quelle/1841/details/2732.html](https://www.herder-institut.de/no_cache/digitale-angebote/dokumente-und-materialien/themenmodule/quelle/1841/details/2732.html) (February 24, 2020).

<sup>42</sup> More on this issue: Collective of authors, *Teorie a praxe – dokumentace současnosti. Sborník z odborného semináře* [Theory and Practice – Documentation of the Present. Almanac of a Professional Seminar] (Brno: TM, 2006); Marek Junek, “Problematika soudobé dokumentace v Československu před rokem 1989” [Problems of Contemporary Documentation in Czechoslovakia before 1989], *Muzeum: Muzejní a vlastivědná práce* 50, no. 1 (2012): 3-9; Marek Junek, “Soudobá dokumentace v České republice po roce 1989” [Contemporary Documentation in the Czech Republic after 1989], *Věstník Asociace muzeí a galerií České republiky* 13, no. 2 (2013): 17-8; Jan Dolák, “Dokumentace současnosti a nedávne historie. Domáci a zahraniční přístupy” [Documenting the Present and Recent History. Domestic and Foreign Approaches], *Věstník Asociace muzeí a galerií České republiky* 13, no. 2 (2013): 18; Jan Dolák, “Dokumentace současnosti a nedávne historie. Domáci a zahraniční přístupy” [Documenting the Present and Recent History. Domestic and Foreign Approaches], *Museologica Brunensia* 3, no. 4 (2014): 34-5; Michal Babík, “Raději na stokrúny s Gottwaldem než uctívat baroko” [Better Going for Hundred-crown Banknotes with Gottwald than Worshipping the Baroque], *Věstník Asociace muzeí a galerií České republiky* 13, no. 2 (2013): 19-20; Petr Nekuza and Pavla Stöhrová,

still today). In Czechoslovakia, this debate especially concerned the era after February 1948,<sup>43</sup> with leading representatives of museology at home and abroad commenting on it. One problem emerges with understanding the word “present”. What is the present and what is no longer part of it? In this paper, I understand temporal boundaries of the present as defined by Zbyněk Z. Stránský, i.e., a period when the musealised phenomenon is actually present in society.<sup>44</sup> I conducted my research in Slovakia's two largest museum institutes, which featured experts dealing with the latest trends in museology. This allows us to assume that the leading Slovak museologists of the era had sufficient information about active documentation. Based on the approach of staff from Slovakia's two largest museums at the time – the Slovak National Museum in Turčiansky Svätý Martin and the Slovak Museum in Bratislava – to active selection and documentation, it is, in my opinion, possible to reconstruct the state of museology in the republic during the Second World War and, at the same time, the attitude of its staff to the new state system. I conducted research of accession books from both institutes. Dutiful records were kept in the accession books concerning items received by museum staff during the period under review, i.e., in 1939–1945. Based on the description of individual items, or the year of their creation, it was possible to determine whether particular cases concerned contemporary items or items from earlier times. I also included in the total number those items that are currently part of the library collection, but they also serve as documents of the period in which they were made. In some cases, multiple items were listed under a single accession number, so I included the number of accession numbers in the charts below, apart from the number of items that correspond to the amount of accession numbers. These were mostly acquisitions of stamp issues.

#### *Slovak National Museum in Turčiansky Svätý Martin*

According to entries in the accession book, from the historiographical point of view, this era was documented mainly in book production. Nonetheless, this did not involve an active approach by the staff. In fact, museums received by law copies of some publications, such as those featuring leading representatives of Slovak political, scientific, cultural and social life, who either co-created the official

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“Dokumentace současnosti v oblasti technického dědictví – vlivu spolupráce muzejní instituce se současným výrobním sektorem na strategii její odborné činnosti” [Documentation of the Present in Technical Heritage – Influence of Cooperation of a Museum Institution with Current Manufacturing Sector on a Strategy for the Former's Professional Activity], *Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo* 7, no. 1 (2019): 225–233; Zdenka Letenayová and Eva Ševčíková, eds., *Múzejná dokumentácia druhej polovice 20. storočia na Slovensku. Problematika komplexnej múzejnej dokumentácie obdobia po roku 1989. Zborník príspevkov z konferencie* [Museum Documentation of the Second Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Slovakia. Issue of Comprehensive Museum Documentation after 1989. Almanac of Lectures from the Conference] (Bratislava: Artwell Creative, s.r.o., 2012).

<sup>43</sup> More on this issue: Collective of authors, *Problémy soudobé dokumentace. (Materiály z celostátního semináře v Brně, listopad 1966)* [Problems of Contemporary Documentation. (Materials from a National Seminar in Brno, November 1966)] (Prague: Cabinet of Museum and Ethnographic Work, 1968); Zbyněk Z. Stránský, “Metodologické otázky dokumentace současnosti” [Methodological Issues of Documenting the Present], *Muzeologické sešity* 12, no. 5 (1974): 13–27; Zbyněk Z. Stránský, “Československé i zahraniční zkušenosti a názory na dokumentaci současnosti. Teze muzeologického semináře” [Czechoslovak and Foreign Experience and Opinions on Documenting the Present. Theses from a Museology Seminar], *Muzeologické sešity* 12, no. 5 (1974): 5–11; Jiří Špět, “Jsme připraveni dokumentovat současnost?” [Are We Ready to Document the Present?], *Muzeologické sešity* 13, no. 2 (1975): 53–9; Jiří Špět, “Dokumentace současnosti a muzea” [Documentation of the Present and the Museum], *Muzejní a vlastivědná práce* 27, no. 2 (1989): 65–74; Jiřina Telcová, “K dokumentaci současnosti v muzeích uměnovědného typu” [About Documenting the Present in Museums of the Science of Art], *Muzeologické sešity* 14, no. 6 (1976): 21–23 and many others.

<sup>44</sup> Stránský, “Metodologické otázky,” 18.

state philosophy or at least did not interfere with it.<sup>45</sup> The life of Milan Rastislav Štefánik, a co-creator of Czechoslovakia, was documented in detail – which might come as a surprise, given the government’s negative attitude towards the interwar republic. In the period under review, however, the image of this figure was altered according to Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party’s needs. Hence a leading representative of the Czechoslovak foreign resistance, co-founder of Czechoslovakia and friend of first Czechoslovak President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk became a fighter for Slovaks’ rights.<sup>46</sup> Items acquired by the museums that related to the establishment of the new state, its political orientation and the authoritarian regime mainly concerned new issues of postage and revenue stamps and banknotes. Most of these items were donated by the institutions that released them. Interestingly, more items related to current events in Slovakia were not added even on anniversaries of the founding of the independent state, and not even to mark its fifth anniversary, when life in the state was looked back upon and its supposed progress was highlighted. Meanwhile, there is a complete absence of documentation concerning the anti-Jewish propaganda and the fate of the local Jews and Roma. The museum acquired almost no items related to everyday or economic life. Meanwhile, almost immediately after the end of the Second World War (on May 11, 1945) the museum began to collect items related to the Slovak National Uprising. This is understandable, given the importance of this event in national history. An interesting fact appears here, namely that this involved the documentation of resistance against the government and the state, the negative effects of which had not previously been documented in detail. This lack of documentation could have been caused either by a democratic mind-set of the staff, or its opportunism. However, in ideal conditions, this should not be a reason for not carrying out one of the museum’s key tasks.

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<sup>45</sup> Andrej Hlinka, *Vplyv družstiev na dobrobyt ľudu a prečo sa zakladajú družstvá* [Influence of Cooperatives on People’s Welfare and Why Cooperatives Are Set Up] (Bratislava: Družstevné vydavateľstvo, 1940); František Hrušovský, *Obrázkové slovenské dejiny* [Slovak History in Picture] (Turčiansky Svätý Martin, Matica slovenská, 1942); Vojtech Tuka, *Slovenský štát* [Slovak State] (Bratislava, 1944); Štefan Polakovič, *Warum eine freie Slowakei?* (Bratislava: Wiss. Ges. für das AuslandsSlowakentum, 1944); Štefan Polakovič, *Začiatky slovenskej národnej filozofie* [Beginnings of Slovak National Philosophy] (Bratislava: Andrej, 1944); Štefan Polakovič, *Slovenský národný socializmus. (Ideové poznámky)* [Slovak National Socialism. (Notes on Ideas)] (Bratislava: HSLS, 1941); Karol Sidor, *Slovenská politika na pôde pražského snemu (1918-1938)* [Slovak Politics in Prague Parliament (1918-1938)] (Bratislava: Andrej, 1944); Ján Balko, *Bryndziarsky priemysel na Slovensku* [Sheep’s-Milk Cheese Industry in Slovakia] (Turčiansky Svätý Martin: Družstvo pre predaj bryndze, 1940); Unknown author, *Útokom k víťazstvu. Obrázkový prehľad z dejinných chvíľ Slovákov 1938-1940* [By Attack to Victory. Review of Historical Moments of Slovaks in 1938-1940 in Pictures] (Bratislava: HSLS, 1940); Valentín Beniák and Martin Benka, *Strážcovia a ochrankyne Slovenska* [Guardians and Defenders of Slovakia] (Turčiansky Svätý Martin: Matica slovenská, 1942); Jozef Sivák, *Päť rokov slovenského školstva 1939-1943* [Five Years of Slovak Education 1939-1943] (Bratislava: MŠANO, 1944); Ladislav Jánsky, *Slovenská duchovná tvorba 1939-1944* [Slovak Spiritual Works 1939-1944] (Bratislava: HSLS, 1944); Unknown author, *Armáda v obrane a práci. Päť rokov budovateľskej činnosti slovenskej armády* [Military in Defence and Work. Five Years of Building the Slovak Military] (Bratislava: MNO, 1944).

<sup>46</sup> Peter Macho, *Milan Rastislav Štefánik v hlavách a srdciach. Fenoménn národného hrdinu v historickej pamäti* [Milan Rastislav Štefánik in Minds and Hearts. Phenomenon of the Nation’s Hero in Historical Memory] (Bratislava: HiÚ SAV, 2011); Peter Macho, “Pozostalost’ Milana Rastislava Štefánika v kontexte inštitucionálnych a rodinných záujmov v medzivojnovom období a vojnovom období” [Legacy of Milan Rastislav Štefánik in the Context of Institutional and Family Interests in the Interwar and War Periods], *Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo* 5, no. 1 (2017): 57-68; Alena Mikulášová and Miroslav Palárik, “Názvy ulíc a námestí v zajatí politiky. Zoznam slovenských dejateľov schválených na pomenovanie verejných priestranstiev v rokoch 1939-1945” [Street and Square Names in Captivity of Politics. List of Slovak Historical Figures Approved for Lending Names to Public Spaces in 1939-1945], *Studia historica Nitriensia* 20, no. 1 (2016): 178-211.

## Documentation of Present Time in Slovakia's Two Largest Museums During WWII

Year	Number of accession numbers	Number of accession numbers corresponding to the documentation of the present/number of items <sup>47</sup>
1939	227	12/14
1940	331	18/208
1941	297	20/162
1942	292	19/19
1943	376	20/20
1944	352	23/74

Table 1. Number of additions to the collection of the Slovak National Museum in Turčiansky Svätý Martin in 1939-1944 concerning the documentation of the present. Source: Archive of the Slovak National Museum – Ethnographic Museum in Martin, Accession Book of the Slovak National Museum.

### *Slovak Museum in Bratislava*

Slovakia's second largest museum – the Slovak Museum in Bratislava – was worse off in terms of the acquisition of items concerning the present. In 1940 and 1941, the museum expanded its collection by a mere 11 items that can be considered documents of the present. This situation was mainly due to the fact that the institution and its predecessors experienced very turbulent developments at the time. Apart from the actual setting up of the museum by a merger of three separate bodies, there were also disputes over its seat with other state institutions. The building was directly hit by bombs during air raids on Bratislava in 1944.<sup>48</sup> The documentation contains very few items that could be considered evidence of contemporary events in the country. It mostly contains items such as busts of state leaders – Andrej Hlinka (died on August 16, 1938, but his cult was actively being built up) and Jozef Tiso. The collection was also supplemented by the addition of books that were part of the legal deposit and gifts from representatives of the Deutsche Partei in Slovakia. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Transport and Public Works added some postage and revenue stamps and banknotes. The museum acquired a few dozen books (28 items in total) from confiscated Jewish property, but the accession book does not mention Jewish coins, which – as indicated by research – were also added to the museum's collections.<sup>49</sup>

Year	Number of accession numbers	Number of accession numbers corresponding to the documentation of the present/number of items <sup>50</sup>
1939	159	17/17
1940	205	6/6
1941	259	5/5
1942	244	12/12

<sup>47</sup> In the accession book, several items were registered under a single accession number, so the number of accession numbers and the number of individual items differed.

<sup>48</sup> More on the situation in the Slovak Museum in 1939-1945: Machajdíkova, *Slovenské národné múzeum a jeho predchodcovia*, 15-29; Jarmila Strelková, "Quo vadis, Slovenské národné múzeum?" [Quo vadis, Slovak National Museum?], *Múzeum* 43, no. 1 (1998): 14-20; Pavol Valachovič, "Slovenské múzeum v rokoch 1940-1948" [Slovak Museum in 1940-1948], *Múzeum* 34, no. 1 (1989): 38-47.

<sup>49</sup> Cf.: Miroslav Palárik, "Osudy pamiatok pochádzajúcich zo židovského majetku za druhej svetovej vojny" [Fate of Objects Originating from Jewish Property during the Second World War], *Historický časopis* 59, no. 3 (2011): 515-534.

<sup>50</sup> In the accession book, several items were registered under a single accession number, so the number of accession numbers and the number of individual items differed.

1943	391	25/46
1944	178	60/74

Table 2. Number of additions to the collection of the Slovak Museum in Bratislava (and its predecessors) in 1939-1944 concerning the documentation of the present. Source: Slovak National Museum in Bratislava, Accession Book of the Slovak Museum.

### *Conclusion*

Among the many cultural and educational institutions, museums were low in the Slovak government's interest during the Second World War. This was due to the fact that cultural institutions more frequented by visitors had more appeal to the state party when it came to the dissemination of state ideology and propaganda (e.g. cinemas, libraries and theatres). So there are only scarce references to museums in laws and decrees of individual ministries from this period, and the word museum itself appeared similarly rarely in the speeches of leading politicians. Museums were most frequently mentioned in connection with educational institutions, with the need of providing some supplementary demonstration to the school subjects of history and geography, and with the ban on exporting collections abroad. Individual items in museums were to boost schoolchildren's patriotism and encourage love and devotion to the state and the nation. It was problematic to use museums more widely for propaganda purposes in the period under review, given the low visual level of most minor regional museums and the lack of mastery concerning practical museum activities by their staff. Meanwhile, the two major museums in Bratislava and Turčiansky Svätý Martin proved their worth to HSLS, as they provided enough collection items suitable for illustrating the rebuilt national story. After the Slovak state was set up in March 1939, measures were taken to improve the quality of museums, but their implementation in practice frequently failed due to their staff. As part of the proposed measures, expositions in Slovak museums were to be reinstalled in the spirit of modern museological principles adopted from Germany. The German practice accentuated the education of the masses by exhibitions, emphasised achievements of the ruling regime when depicting social phenomena, and drew attention to differences between various ethnic groups. This contributed to the spread of ideology and propaganda. The German exhibition trends could have been applied in the Slovak environment only if the staff had also focused on documenting the present. This would have captured the turbulent developments in the country from 1938 onwards and thus applied active selection and documentation in practice. Based on research in the two largest Slovak museums, it can be observed that museum professionals only partially used this opportunity. Their actions – or rather inaction – could have been related to their disapproving attitudes towards the ruling undemocratic regime, but from the point of view of museology, this argument is insufficient, albeit understandable. In the case of the Slovak Museum in Bratislava, the acquisition of items documenting the present could have been significantly affected by the hectic events in its own history – including its establishment in 1940 by the merger of three bodies, the struggle for space with the state authorities, and damage sustained by its building during air raids. It is appropriate to raise the question of whether there was any clear concept of collection activities in the aforementioned institutes, or whether there was any state policy on documenting the establishment and further development of the state. The partial research so far indicates that the staff in museums did not create any concepts and if they did, for various reasons (lack of funds and/or experts, problems with space and personal disagreement with the regime) they did not implement them. In the vast majority of cases, collections were supplemented by items that were sent by the state authorities as

donations – which could indicate that the state was interested in documenting its activities in certain areas. As for the nature of these objects, they concerned art, culture and education. However, the aforementioned museums do not feature any documentation whatsoever regarding political, social and economic changes in the country or measures taken against the local Jews and Roma. It seems that neither the regime nor museums were interested in documenting these issues. On the contrary, immediately after the end of the Second World War, museums began documenting the resistance movement, especially the Slovak National Uprising, which, as one of the turning points in the national story of Slovaks, took an important place.

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