

## EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF SELECTED ASSOCIATIONS IN SLOVAKIA DURING THE FIRST CZECHOSLOVAK REUBLIC (1918 – 1938)

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**Abstract:** The new social and political situation after the establishment of the first Czechoslovak Republic and throughout its existence (1918 - 1938) created favourable conditions for the revival and development of adult education. Apart from the first legal measures and a state-designed network of the cultural-enlightenment institutions, a number of associations and societies actively participated in adult education were being created. Their goal was to increase the level of education among the population of all Slovak regions, to teach people the ways of spending their leisure time purposefully and get them engaged in public life.

**Keywords:** the Czechoslovak Republic (1918 – 1938), history of adult education, activity of associations.

### 1 Introduction

After the establishment of Czechoslovakia, the political and social situation was rather complicated. It was necessary to build and strengthen Czechoslovak statehood, educate, and enlighten the population in order to raise their awareness of their democratic citizenship (Kázmerová et al., 2016). The new historical circumstances in the first Czechoslovak Republic (1918 - 1938), created a space for investing into the sphere of adult education. Individual societies and associations of political parties greatly contributed to the increase of the educational level among adults as they satisfied the educational needs of large masses covering the various topic areas.

In the face of the movement that emerged from the bottom up efforts, the new state created an opportunity for a specific enlightenment educational system with specific educational goals to which the state assigned a certain political content and direction in its development (Bakoš, 1996). From the state's perspective, popular education had a character of civic education carried out mainly by different associations (political, religious, sport, theatre, art, music, etc.) (Šerák, 2005).

In 1925, *Masarykov ľudovýchovný ústav* [The Masaryk Institute for Popular Education] was established in Prague with an aim to study and design methods of popular education, organize the scientific study of popular education, foster foreign relations, train qualified popular educators and publish various periodicals etc. (Bakoš, 1996). It also served as advisory body for other associations. The core members of the Masarykov ľudovýchovný ústav were: "Svaz osvětový v Prahe [The Enlightenment Union in Prague], Ústřední škola dělnická v Prahe [The Central School for Labourers in Prague], Svobodné učení selské v Prahe [The School of Agriculture in Prague], Dělnická akademie v Prahe [Worker's Academy in Prague], Masarykova akademie práce v Prahe [Masaryk Academy of Work in Prague], Matica slovenská, Československá obec sokolská [Czechoslovak Sokol] etc." (Šerák, 2005, p. 87). There was no similar institution in Slovakia, though. Towards the end of the first decade of the independent Czechoslovakia, Slovak enlightenment activities revolved around the development of various independent associations (Bakoš, 1996). Educational organizations enjoying the patronage of political parties played an important role too.

*Referát ministerstva školstva a národnej osvety v Bratislave* [The Slovak Office of the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment in Bratislava] was in charge of the state enlightenment in Slovakia. *Osvetový zväz pre Slovensko* [The Slovak Enlightenment Association] was a central institution that had a dual function; it was both a methodical and coordinating

centre for institutions whose program contained enlightenment activities, such as *Československý červený kríž* [The Czechoslovak Red Cross], *Sokol* (an all-aged gymnastics education movement), *Robotnícka akadémia* [Workers Academy], *Slovenská liga* [The Slovak League] etc. The most influential institutions of that kind were *Matica slovenská*, *Ústredie slovenských ochotníckych divadiel* [The Central Office of Slovak Amateur Theatres] *Živena* [a women's association], *YMCA* [Young Men's Christian Association], *YWCA* [Young Women's Christian Association], *Spolok profesorov Slovákov* [Association of Slovak Professors] and *Učená spoločnosť Šafárikova* [Šafárik's Scholar Society]" (Bakoš, 1996).

### 2 Matica slovenská

In the years 1863 – 1875, *Matica slovenská* was the most important enlightenment institution of Slovaks in the Upper Hungary. Following the official policy, the Hungarian government was very adamant in their relationship towards non-Hungarian nationalities, especially after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, and did not allow a proper development of enlightenment activities in Slovakia. As a result, *Matica slovenská* terminated its activity in 1875. Its archive, museum, library, archaeological and numismatic collections, as well as other important documents were confiscated (Orosová, 2016).

In the larger process of restoration and re-organization of cultural life in Czechoslovakia, *Matica slovenská*, a symbol of Slovak statehood and culture, resumed its activities on the initiative of the Minister for the administration of Slovakia, Vavro Šrobár, on 1 January 1919. The character and a scope of its activities were determined by complicated political, economic, cultural, and social circumstances.

In the interwar period, *Matica slovenská* became a leading cultural, scientific, and publishing centre. After its restoration, *Matica slovenská* steadily picked up the thread of the original *Matica* in collecting books, prints, and manuscripts. The considerable amount of attention was given to Slovak expats. *Matica slovenská* established new research departments whose primary aim was to build and develop Slovak science. These departments substituted for the Academy of Sciences (which at the time was virtually non-existent) in terms of concepts, organization, or publishing. Their activities revolved around the research and publishing of unknown literary and historical texts, the research of Slovak dialects, and cultivation of Slovak language and orthography.

Extremely important was the publishing activity of *Matica slovenská*, and not only for its contribution to spreading knowledge and enlightenment. The economic aspect of the publishing activity was no less important either, since the revenues from the publishing were used to cover the cost of other *Matica slovenská*'s activities. In 1920 – 1925, *Matica slovenská* published 73 publications, a total of 11 315 pages and 214 500 printed copies. *Matica* also published several magazines and journals: *Slniečko* [Sun], *Slovensko* [Slovakia] with a supplement *Organizačné zvesti* [The Organization News] and *Slovenské pohľady* [The Slovak Views], which was restored in 1922. It was edited by Štefan Kréméry, and later by Andrej Mráz and Stanislav Mečiar. *Slovenské pohľady* was not only a literary but also a scientific journal covering the fields of visual arts, theatre, and music. Intensification of Slavic mutuality resulted in the creation of the Slavic department, which published *Slovanský sborník* [The Slavic Journal], and a series *Slovanská knižnica* [The Slavic Library] (Eliáš, 1999). Apart from the scientific journals and magazines, *Matica slovenská* also published popularizing magazines in the field of social and natural sciences. *Matica slovenská* published a broad scope of remarkable works of Slovak classics, for instance, J. Kollár, J. Matuška, K. Kuzmány, J. Král', M. Kukučín, L. Štúr, S. H. Vajanský, P. O. Hviezdoslav, etc. – from readers, reeditions of

Slovak classics, poetry, prose, and drama, to original works of fiction, translations and scholarly literature.

After the establishment of Czechoslovakia, the priority of *Matica slovenská* was to create an organizational and institutional platform for Slovak science. The first concrete information about the plans for the creation of the research and scientific departments can be found in the minutes taken at the committee's meeting held on 11 January 1920. Their formal establishment as the bodies of scientific work, however, was discussed at the later committee's meeting on 24 – 25 August 1920 (Winkler, Eliáš et al., 2003, p. 206). Gradually, the individual research departments were created to focus on literature and literary history, linguistics, ethnography, art and music, history and education. *Matica slovenská* devoted special attention to the department of ethnography, especially to saving and scientific processing of ethnographic material. Besides the publications dedicated to ethnography, very important was the work of Karol Plicka who collected and recorded over 25 000 pieces of lyrics and melodies of Slovak folk songs. He also accumulated the vast amount of photographic material that he later transformed into films *Po horách po dolách* [Through the Mountains and Valleys] and *Zem spieva* [The Earth Sings]. The films were not just ethnographic documentaries; they had a great artistic value, too. An equally important was the art department of *Matica slovenská*, which included the sections of literature, fine art, and music. This department concentrated almost all prominent figures of the Slovak art world and substituted the non-existent art associations.

The *Matica slovenská*'s department of education placed emphasis on education in Slovak schools. In cooperation with respective research departments, a committee was appointed to design textbooks and distribute them to folk, public, and secondary schools. Another activity related to education and schooling involved publishing of two editions – *Čítanie pre meštianske školy* [Reading for Public Schools] and *Čítanie študujúcej mládeže* [Reading for the Youth]. Following the authorization of the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment, *Matica slovenská* published volumes of the prescribed list of authors that were further edited and supplemented with explanatory notes. The individual volumes were compiled by the renowned literary scientists Jaroslav Vilček, dr. Štefan Krčméry, dr. Ján Menšík, Jur Polívka, František Heřmanský and others. They also wrote introductions and notes. Some of the volumes were also used in secondary schools in Bohemia and Moravia.

The scientific and research activities of the individual departments fully developed in the 1930s, when each of the departments had its own publishing body and a publication series: *Literárno-historický zborník*, *Historický zborník*, *Pedagogický zborník*, *Filozofický zborník*, *Národopisný zborník*, *Prírodovedný zborník*, *Sociologický zborník*, *Psychologický zborník* and *Jazykovedný zborník*. The development of the research activities was determined by the current conditions. Institutions and the climate of opinion should not limit autonomy and freedom of science and research (Winkler, Eliáš et al., 2003).

In its research activities, *Matica slovenská* focused on the acquisition, preservation and making a vast number of remarkable works accessible to public, while creating a rich and well-stocked library available to researchers. The library itself contained over 150 thousand volumes and a wealth of archival material. It was built up from the collections that were kept in the Nitra county archive after the confiscation of the original *Matica slovenská*, the library collection of *Muzeálna slovenská spoločnosť* [The Slovak Museum Society] and from donations of many family, school, and church libraries (Mráz, 1936, pp. 59 – 60).

The cultural activities of *Matica slovenská* in the interwar period were initially carried out by associations especially in cooperation with the *Osvetový zväz pre Slovensko* [The Slovak Enlightenment Association]. *Matica slovenská* managed the cultural-enlightenment work through the local boards and in line

with the activities of district enlightenment boards under the supervision of *Osvetový zväz pre Slovensko*. Although, *Osvetový zväz pre Slovensko* was established on 15 September 1919, "the enlightenment activities began to develop earlier in accordance with the acts governing enlightenment activities, namely *The Act No. 67 Coll. on the Organization of Popular Courses* adopted on 7 February 1919 and *The Act No. 430/1919 Coll. on Public Communal Libraries*, and through the establishment of state institutions that were in charge of development of enlightenment work" (Winkler, Eliáš, 2003, p. 277).

*Matica slovenská* was connected to the general public and other cultural workers through organizing and mobilizing local branches, holding competitions, exhibitions (community theatre, signing) and other activities. Local branches of *Matica slovenská* were being established in towns and villages in different Slovak counties (Bratislavská, Nitrianska, Považská, Zvolenská, Podtatranská and Košická counties) and fostered development of cultural and social life. At the same time, they were involved in organization of popular education through enlightenment work. They organized lectures, courses (e.g. Slovak language courses); contributed to a development of Slovak literature, started libraries, organized amateur theatres, choir singing, etc.

*Matica slovenská* played an important role in the development of librarianship in Slovakia. *Ministerstvo školstva a národnej osvety* [The Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment]<sup>1</sup> (MŠaNO) commissioned *Matica slovenská* to build a network of libraries in line with The Act on Public Libraries adopted on 22 June 1922 (*Príručka pre verejné knižnice na Slovensku*, 1929, p. 5. In: Mráz, 1936, p. 58). The year 1925 was a significant milestone in the history of Slovak librarianship. On 21 April 1925, the MŠaNO issued a Decree No. 46.608 authorising *Matica slovenská* to establish *Výpravňa kníh* [The Books Dispatch Office]. The duties of the Books Dispatch Office were: to carefully prepare the selection of books; to distribute professionally processed books, or collections of books among the public libraries in towns, villages and municipalities; to issue blank forms that were needed for a proper administration of libraries; to process orders; to systematically replenish the stock with quality literature published by *Matica slovenská* and distribute subsidies from the MŠaNO. The Books Dispatch Office contributed to the improvement of library services in Slovakia (Winkler, 2013; Chaloupka, Rambousek, Trnka, 1926).

*Matica slovenská* organized many cultural events, for instance, *Augustové slávnosti* [August Festivities], a traditional festival held since *Matica*'s establishment in 1863. In the 1920s, *Živena* and *Československý červený kríž* co-organized the event. During the festivities, people could take part in various social events, theatre groups and folk ensemble performances, laying wreath ceremonies at the graves of prominent national figures, organized trips, etc. In order to encourage young people, *Matica slovenská* planned to start a tradition of *Matičné študentské dni* [Matica slovenská Days for Students]. The event was held for the first time in Turčiansky Sv. Martin on 18-19 May 1929. After that, the students met on 24-25 May 1930 and then in 1938. *Matičné dni*, held for the first time in 1935 was a promotional event in its nature. The organizers wanted to inform the general public about the founders of *Matica slovenská*, their programme, and about *Matica*'s current and past activities and hoped to boost the membership. Many sporting events had the same promotional character (e.g. Football tournament in July 1936). In addition to sport, cultural and promotional aspect was emphasised too (Winkler, 2003).

Besides the cultural-enlightenment, publishing, and research activities, *Matica slovenská* participated in heritage preservation, contributed to building statues, memorials and commemorative plaques in memory of prominent Slovak figures. In 1933, *Matica*

<sup>1</sup> MŠaNO – *Ministerstvo školstva a Národnej osvety* [The Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment] established in 1918 was a supreme governing body responsible for education and culture with its seat in Prague. *Referát Ministerstva školstva a Národnej osvety* [The Slovak Office of the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment] with its seat in Bratislava governed educational and cultural enlightenment activities in Slovakia.

also contributed to the establishment of *Galéria slovenského výtvarného umenia* [Slovak Gallery of Fine Arts], the predecessor of *Slovenská národná galéria* [Slovak National Gallery] (1948). In terms of its post-1918 cultural-enlightenment activities, *Matica slovenská* played a dominant role in the development of amateur theatre, radio, and film production.

*Matica slovenská* remained active even after the establishment of the Slovak State (14 March 1939). *Matica* took over the property of closed enlightenment boards and committees and had a monopoly on organizing enlightenment activities of the Slovak State. They were, however, built on completely different ideological grounds (Orosová, 2016).

### 3 Ústredie slovenských ochotníckych divadiel - The Central Office of Slovak Amateur Theatres

*Ústredie slovenských ochotníckych divadiel (ÚSOD)* [The Central Office of Slovak Amateur Theatres] has its rightful place in the history of Slovak enlightenment. It was one of the most active popular education sections of *Matica slovenská*. The *ÚSOD* began its activity in 1922 in Turčiansky Sv. Martin. On behalf of *Matica committee*, Štefan Krčméry authorized Pavol Socháň to manage all Slovak amateur theatre groups and associations. "It a short time, around 800 active theatre associations and groups, working under the auspices of local *Matica slovenská* branches, the sections of *Živena*, worker's associations, enlightenment boards and committees, firefighter's *Jednota* [club, union] and other organizations joined the *ÚSOD*" (Pasiar, 1975, p. 227).

The *ÚSOD* promoted the creation of new amateur theatre groups, offered support in improving the quality of the amateur theatre groups, and contributed to the development of the dramatic arts and Slovak theatres in general (Škoda, Paška, 1977, p. 59). The *ÚSOD* organized different practical courses for directors, make-up artists, designers, stage managers, etc. Summer schools were very popular among amateur actors and directors from the villages and the other people who showed the interest in theatre. In an effort to help amateur theatre companies, the *ÚSOD* created costume (so-called *šatnica*) and stage prop rentals in Martin. The number of amateur theatre groups rose rapidly. While in 1922, there were around 20 theatre companies in Slovakia, in the following three years their number rose to 208 in Bratislava County and 308 in Považie. Other counties too saw the increase in numbers of theatre companies, for instance, Zvolen County (90), Košice (76) and Nitra (60). The number of theatrical performances increased too, from 47 in 1920 to 1 227 in 1923. In 1924 theatre companies put on 1 401 performances (Pasiar, 1975; Škoda, Paška, 1977).

From the time of its establishment, the *ÚSOD* organized theatre competitions - *Divadelné závody* [Theatre Contest], first on a nationwide level in Martin, and then on the district and local level co-organized by the respective departments of *Matica slovenská* and enlightenment committees. Decentralization proved to be a success since it contributed to the improvement of amateur theatres, especially in villages where plays of higher value were being performed. The nationwide contest held in Martin was open only to the winning theatre companies from the local competitions. Ivan Stodola, a chairman of the *ÚSOD*, proposed that the winners of the nationwide competition got a chance to perform on a stage of *Slovenské národné divadlo (SND)* [Slovak National Theatre] in Bratislava. The first such performance (*Čestný veniec víťazov* [Honorary Wreath of Victory]) took place in January 1936 and later these performances on a stage of SND became a tradition. The theatrical performances were judged by the panels of judges consisting of actors, directors, representatives of the Czech amateur theatres who worked in Slovakia as teachers, and popular educators from Slovakia. The *ÚSOD* played a crucial role in introducing a positive and progressive aspect into the dramaturgy of amateur theatres, which became evident in putting together more challenging and progressive performances. The competitions along with the exhibitions and festivals ranked

among the most impressive activities that the *ÚSOD* conducted (Pasiar, 1975; Škoda, Paška, 1977).

The *ÚSOD* also published magazines that contributed to the development of performing art in Slovakia, namely *Slovenský ochotník* [Slovak Amateur Performer] (1925 - 1927) and *Naše divadlo* [Our Theatre]. *Slovenský ochotník*, edited by Štefan Krčméry and Zdeněk Novák, was more of a practical than theoretical nature and focused on methodology and training in amateur theatrics. The magazine *Naše divadlo* was more elaborate and contained articles of great importance as well as methodological advice and play analyses and reviews (Pasiar, 1975, p. 230).

In 1935, the *ÚSOD* organized 12 courses for directors and theatre competitions (Mráz, 1936).

### 4 Živena – Slovak Women's Association

*Živena* played a vital role in the life of the Slovak nation and in the emancipation process of Slovak women. *Živena* was formed as a nationwide association uniting women, regardless of their political or religious affiliation. Women's emancipation in Slovakia had educational character. Elena Maróthy-Šoltéssová, a chairwoman of *Živena*, pushed for its activities to remain apolitical. *Živena* focused on publishing and supporting activities. "Throughout its existence, *Živena* has strived: to defend the right of girls to secondary education; to support the publishing of books, calendars and magazines for women; to unite Slovak women and motivate them to become more involved in public life; to educate adult women" (Tokárová, 2003, p. 98).

*Živena's* activities revolved around the magazine of the same name. The association had its seat in Turčiansky Svätý Martin. *Živena* closely cooperated with its many branches, local branches of *Matica slovenská* and other cultural associations and societies and focused on popularization of literary endeavours of Slovak women and exposing women to various forms of art. Women in *Živena* also devoted their time to everyday matters such as sewing, cooking, clothing, social education, child rearing, reading comprehension, etc. (Škoda, Paška, 1977).

After a half century-long struggle, the interwar period created the favourable conditions for *Živena* to establish schools for girls and women. The association's structure had undergone some changes; local branches and schools for girls were created in many Slovak towns. In 1921, there were 30 local branches and 10 schools for girls. In 1927, a school for female professions was established in Prešov. The greater emphasis was placed on social work; female instructors were trained to teach courses for women. Surely, there were problems related to the organization of such courses (instructors and lecturers were hard to find, a choice of appropriate topics, etc.). On 7 May 1928, the Central office of *Živena* sent out a letter to the *MŠANO* asking for their support. One of *Živena's* activities was to establish nurseries for the children of working women. The first nursery was opened on 28 October 1922 in Martin and for a while, it was the only nursery in Slovakia. In 1919, *Živena* founded its own school for female occupations in Turčiansky sv. Martin and a family school in Kremnica. From 1921, both schools were under the state administration (Koncošová, 2014). In 1926, Elena Maróthy-Šoltéssová and Alica Masaryková played a crucial role in founding *Ústav Milana Rastislava Štefánika* [The Institute of Milan Rastislav Štefánik], known as *Štefánikov ústav* [Štefánik's Institute] – a school training female teachers for women's schools in Turčiansky sv. Martin. The school consisted of two departments: *Župný ústav pre vzdelávanie učiteliek gazdinského odboru ženských odborných škôl* [The County Institute for Education of Female Teachers for Housewives] and *Župná dvojročná škola pre sociálno-zdravotnú starostlivosť* [Two-year County School for Social and Health Care] (Tokárová, 2003, p. 120).

The most prominent figures of *Živena*, both female and male, were Anna Pivková, Elena Maróthy-Šoltéssová, Anna Halašová,

Žofia Nováková, Jozefína Sabľáková, Margita Paulíny-Tóthová, Tatiana Štefanovičová, Ema Gildpergerová, Anna Mudroňová, Ambro Pietor, Svetozár Hurban-Vajanský, František Mareš, etc. (Tokárová, 2003).

## 5 YMCA and YWCA

After the establishment of Czechoslovakia, youth associations, such as the YMCA<sup>2</sup> and YWCA<sup>3</sup> carried out cultural and educational activities too. They organized courses, lectures, theatrical performances, social and sporting events.

The YMCA in Czechoslovakia was established in 1920. In Slovakia, the YMCA was active mainly in Bratislava, Banská Bystrica, and Lučenec where the institution had its own buildings or in places where they held summer camps (Červený kameň, Oravský Podzámok, Lučatín). In 1923 – 1933, The YMCA in Bratislava organized 298 language courses (Slovak, Czech, German, Hungarian, English, French, Spanish, Russian and Finnish) attended by 4 067 students.

A large numbers of Slovak language courses contributed to the improvement of language skills among administration staff who attended these courses because of their insufficient knowledge of Slovak grammar and spelling. The YMCA organized other professional courses too – for secondary school entry exam preparation, Maturita preparation courses, driving courses, bookbinding and art courses, courses for chemists or bricklayers, swimming courses including first aid courses, etc. They also organized one-year or two-year business courses, courses of typing, stenography, and bookkeeping.

The YMCA and YWCA organized various lectures. The most popular were travelogues that were often accompanied by projections of slide transparencies or films. They also held lectures of ideological nature that were followed by discussions. The lectures covered topics of history or promoted physical education and sport.

Theatre performances organized by the YMCA had a considerable educational impact too. The greatest number of theatre shows was put on in the first years of the YMCA activity. Later the number was dropping. The theatre performances were sometimes complemented by *academies* with short theatrical scenes, singing, music and even gymnastics displays. Very popular were puppet shows (since 1929) and story reading afternoons with a projection of slide transparencies (since 1933) for children.

The YMCA has a long tradition of organizing various theme evenings, such as St. Nicolas Day (6.12), *Deň matiek* [Mother's Day] (since 1920), *Večer otcov a synov* [Father-Son Evening] (intergenerational understanding, since 1925), events commemorating the birth of T. G. Masaryk, or international *Day of Goodwill* (since 1925). Gymnastics and other sporting activities were popular promoting harmonization of physical and intellectual education (Perútko, 1993).

The rich and diverse cultural and educational activity of the YMCA and YWCA in all of their centres contributes significantly to improving levels of educational attainment among the youth.

## 6 Spolok profesorov Slovákov – The Association of Slovak Professors

Teachers began to organize themselves around teacher's associations not long after the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic with the goal to protect their interests and have an opportunity to positively influence school policy. Secondary school professors created *Ústredný spolok československých profesorov (ÚSČSP)* [The Central Association of Czechoslovak Professors]. An independent *Spolok profesorov Slovákov (SPS)*

[The Association of Slovak Professors] was established in 1921. The SPS was created for practical reasons, both professional and national. Slovak professors (a professor was a term that was also used to refer to secondary education teachers) rejected the ideology of "Czechoslovakism" adopted and promoted by the *ÚSČSP*. They also disagreed with inequality between Slovak and Czech professors. Slovak professors were disadvantaged, for instance, in the way their contracts of employment were concluded. They were employed on a temporary basis as professors on "*zmluvný pomer*" [contractual temporary employment].<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Czech professors employed in Slovakia had so called "Slovak advantage". The article "Equality in the practice" published in *Sborník SPS* [Journal of the SPS] pointed to the composition ratio of professors at Slovak secondary schools (Kratochvílová, 1975, p. 151).

The same holds true for appointments of the Slovak school's principals, where the Czech professors took preference at the expense of the Slovak professors, who were often more suitable candidates for the said offices. The delayed publication of the regulation stipulating the date for taking a language exam meant that Slovak professors did not have time to register for the exam and missed their opportunity to apply for vacant teaching positions in Slovak secondary schools. Therefore, they could only be employed on "*zmluvný pomer*" basis. Slovak professors also experienced injustice in terms of suppressing the Slovak language and undermining their scientific education. All this only intensified the feeling of wrongdoing among the Slovak professors and led them to the establishment of their own independent association. The idea for creating an organization of Slovak professors was proposed for the first time during the informative course for professors held in Prague in 1921. On 4 August 1921, the preliminary meeting was held in Ľubochňa. The general assembly approved the establishment of *Spolok profesorov Slovákov* [The Association of Slovak Professors] on 5 August 1921.

In the interwar period, Karol Murgaš, Anton Mišík, Ján Beniač, Jozef Martinka, Štefan Bezák, and Pavol Florek headed the SPS. The *SPS Regulations* were approved on 2 December 1921 with the Decree No. 24691/1921 issued by the *MSaNO*.

The *Regulations* clearly defined the programme and goals of the SPS: to defend general national, material and moral professional interests of Slovak professors; to promote and popularize science and art in Slovak language in magazines and books under the auspices of *Matica slovenská*; to publish scholarly journals and design Slovak textbooks and handbooks.

In 1922, the SPS started to publish a periodical of education *Sborník spolku profesorov Slovákov* [Journal of the Association of Slovak Professors] in Košice. It provided a space for professors in the field of pedagogy, philosophy, linguistics, anthropology, geology, and other fields to publish their papers. The journal promoted new books and published their reviews, brought news from the educational theory and practice both home and abroad, fostered contacts among professors and informed the general public about the activities of the SPS. (Kratochvílová, 1975).

Apart from the above-mentioned problems related to their profession, the SPS members had to face other pressing issues too: elimination of the "*zmluvný pomer*", ensuring permanent contracts of employment for the SPS members, filling the vacancies of school principals, professors and janitors by the Slovak applicants, improvement of the financial status of professors, granting scholarships to poor students and fighting against laying off women from school services.

<sup>2</sup> YMCA – Young Men's Christian Association founded in 1844 in London.

<sup>3</sup> YWCA – Young Women's Christian Association

<sup>4</sup> "Zmluvný pomer" – a decree appointing a professor that read: "I appoint you a temporary professor for a school year .... on *zmluvný pomer* without being entitled for any pension ... the Ministry reserves the right to another appointment after a successful one-year performance". Kratochvílová, E.: *Dejiny Spolku profesorov Slovákov*. In *Jednotná škola*, No. 2, p. 150, 1975.

Their tireless activity bore fruit and the *SPS* succeeded in, for instance, obtaining a special status for secondary school professors in Slovakia, eliminating constant movement of some professors from one place of work to another, re-employing substitute teachers [referred to as “*suplents*”] who had been dismissed from their services, maintaining contacts with university students and in opening a dormitory in Košice.

Slovak professors organized around the *SPS* directed their attention to cultural, scientific, as well as publishing and editing activities. They were involved in various cultural and humanistic associations, published scholarly and scientific articles, handbooks, books and dictionaries, provided secondary school professors with all sorts of publications, and conducted translation activities. In 1923, the *SPS* started the collaboration with all professional sector associations in Slovakia to create one united organization called *Sdruženie slovenských odborových organizácií* [The Association of Slovak Trade Organizations].

Apart from the *Spolok profesorov Slovákov*, other teachers' associations were established in Slovakia too. They were: *Zemský učiteľský spolok* [Land Teachers Association], *Zväz slovenských učiteľov* [Association of Slovak Teachers], *Spolok evanjelických učiteľov* [Association of Evangelical Teachers], *Spolok ukrajinských a ruských učiteľov* [Association of Ukrainian and Russian Teachers], *Spolok maďarských učiteľov* [Association of Hungarian Teachers], *Spolok židovských učiteľov* [Association of Jewish Teachers] and *Spolok učiteľov penzistov* [Association of Retired Teachers].

### 7 Učená spoločnosť Šafárikova - Šafárik's Scholar Society

Establishing a research and scientific institution in the academia was an important achievement in the professionalization of Slovak science. The preliminary talks about the establishment of the Czechoslovak university in Bratislava commenced already in 1919.

In accordance with the Act on Abolition of the Hungarian Elisabeth University issued on 11 July 1919, the Czechoslovak State University was established in Bratislava. It was later renamed to the Comenius University. The University was divided into three faculties: the Faculty of Medicine – first professors were appointed on 31 July 1919, the Faculty of Law – the president appointed first professors on 20 May 1920, the Faculty of Arts – first professors appointed on 14 September 1919. The education at the University began on 9 December 1919. Having established the Comenius University in Bratislava, the professional circles started to ponder the idea of a scientific society that would become a centre for all scientific workers living in Slovakia whose research expertise revolved around Slovakia and the pressing problems our country had faced. Professor Albert Pražák, the man behind this idea, proposed it at a meeting of the Academic Senate of the Comenius University held on 28 April 1925.

The Academic Senate and all faculties of the Comenius University unanimously accepted Pražák's proposal. On 29 November 1926, the Ministry of Interior issued a Decree No. 77.673 establishing *Učená spoločnosť Šafárikova (USŠ)* [Šafárik's Scholar Society]. Rector of the Comenius University, Dr. Otakar Somr opened the formal founding meeting that was held on 2 December 1926 in the Great Auditorium of the University. Members of the government, representatives of several scientific and public corporations, different offices, and students attended the meeting.

*Učená spoločnosť Šafárikova (the USŠ)* was a professionally managed scientific society in Slovakia, which closely collaborated with other associations both at home and abroad, whenever it was in the public interest. The aim of *Učená spoločnosť Šafárikova* was: to systematically organize scientific research into Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia, to establish and maintain scientific contacts with the rest of the Slavic world, to share knowledge about Slovakia with foreign countries, to support the efforts of young Slovak scientists, to inform about

scientific research findings and discoveries at home and abroad through lectures and publications, and to cooperate with *Matica slovenská* (Anonym, 1926). The first members of the *USŠ* were professors and associate professors who worked at the Comenius University in Bratislava, other scientists and researchers from among the future Intelligentsia educated at Czechoslovak institutions of higher educations joined soon after. Through the gradual development of research activities and achieved scientific success, the *USŠ* attracted many prominent researchers and scientist from foreign countries in and outside Europe.

The *USŠ* was divided into two sections: humanities encompassing the study fields taught at the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Arts and natural sciences covering the study fields provided by the Faculty of Medicine and the future Faculty of Natural Sciences and Technical Faculty. Prof. dr. August Ráth was elected the first chairman of *USŠ*, prof. dr. Albert Pražák was the general secretary. After Pražák's appointment as a professor at the Charles University in Prague, prof. dr. Vladimír Klecanda was named his successor. The Humanities section was headed by prof. dr. Jozef Hanuš. After his retirement, this position was held by prof. dr. Václav Chaloupecký. The first head of the Natural sciences section was prof. dr. Kristián Hynek who was replaced by prof. dr. Stanislav Kostlivý.

One of the *USŠ*'s tasks was to create professional committees that would address any specified scientific questions. These were:

1. The Committee for Limes Romanus researching issues pertaining to Limes Romanus in Slovakia and the former Hungarian Kingdom;
2. Department of Linguistics with working committees of orthography, dialectology and a committee responsible for compiling dictionaries;
3. Department of Literary History with a committee for literary research of Slovakia;
4. Department of Law.

From 1927, *Učená spoločnosť Šafárikova* published a magazine *Bratislava* dedicated to a research of Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia. They also published three editions of individual publications: *Práca USŠ* [USŠ's Activities], *Prameny USŠ* [USŠ's Sources], and *Prednášky USŠ* [USŠ's Lectures]. In order to inform the foreign scientific circles, the *USŠ* published the *Bulletin international de la Société Savante Šafárik* (Horna, 1967). The *USŠ* planned to publish a new series of publications entitled *Slovenský archív* [The Slovak Archive] in which they intended to publish important archival documents related to the history of Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia.

*Učená spoločnosť Šafárikova* also published a vast array of scientific works of different nature (archaeology, linguistics, literary history, legal history and many works from the fields of natural and medical sciences that were well received far beyond the borders of Slovakia). The *USŠ* also established an academic library, which, in addition to their own publications, held plenty of significant books published by foreign scientific associations. Since the foundation of *Učená spoločnosť Šafárikova*, the members included regular and adjunct professors, *suplents* from Charles and Masaryk Universities, associate professors and lecturers. From 1933, the *USŠ* had also honorary and foreign members.

*Učená spoločnosť Šafárikova* ceased to exist in 1939. Its successor, *Slovenská učená spoločnosť* [Slovak Scholarly Association] was established in 1949 and became known for publishing *Slovenská vlastiveda* [Slovak Natural History and Geography] and other scientific periodicals. It was this association that was behind the initiative to establish *Slovenská akadémia vied a umení* [The Slovak Academy of Sciences and Arts] in 1942. It was a direct predecessor of the present-day *Slovenská akadémia vied* [The Slovak Academy of Sciences] that built on a long tradition and the complicated history of science and research in Slovakia as well as on the work of leading figures of Slovak history and science.

## 8 Conclusion

The establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic created an opportunity for restoration of the activities of some associations and for the establishment of the new ones. Their goals were closely linked with the historical context and social and political situation. It was necessary to strengthen statehood, democracy and a principle of equality. Thus, the different associations took on a task of educating and spreading knowledge among the public. At the same time, they promoted the scientific development as well as created and maintained contacts with foreign institutions.

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