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Finance & Photography

2021

eabh (The European Association for
Banking and Financial History e.V.)



The photograph collection of the Archives of Národná banka Slovenska

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Photographs as archival documents bring a unique, vivid image of the past—a moment of time captured in a tangible form. The Archives of Národná banka Slovenska (NBS Archives) hold several thousand photographs in their Photograph Collection, established in 1996.

Originally, the photographs were mostly part of individual files; they were attached to texts in the files and did not form separate collections. Now, however, under the legislation governing archives in Slovakia, it is required to store photographic materials separately in order to protect them against acidic degradation products.

The records of the Photograph Collection are maintained in electronic form in the eArchive information system. For each archival fond and collection, they provide the main data on origin, scope, primary scheme (classifying documents into groups), physical condition, composition, and so on. The system makes it possible to create finding aids for registered fonds and collections. For the Photograph Collection, two catalogues have been created. Recorded in each finding aid are inventory units and individual items for each inventory unit (which is where individual photographs can be found). A scan of the document can be attached to each item, which in this case, would be a scan of a photograph with its description.

The eArchive information system is connected to NBS's Research Archive Portal, which is available to the public via the NBS website (<https://archiv.nbs.sk>). So anyone interested can view the available finding aids for the

NBS Archives' fonds and collections. At present, however, finding aids can only be viewed via a search of inventory units. As part of the system's development, it is planned to expand this option in order to enable, among other things, the viewing of individual items and their stored scans.

The conservation of photographs in archive depots requires special packaging material: archive boxes and polyester bags for photographs, and archive paper envelopes for film and negatives. The boxes are made of a material called Prolux, which is produced in an alkaline environment, has an alkaline reserve, is colour-fast and less absorbent, and allows archiving for at least 50 years. The envelopes are made of 90g/m² photo paper, which has a composition of 50% cellulose

and 50% cotton, and a pH of 7.5–9.5.

The Photograph Collection consists of two parts: a historical part containing photographs, films and slides made before 1993, and a modern part with photographs from after 1 January 1993, when Národná banka Slovenska was established. Each part has its own catalogue, whose structure is determined by the contents of the preserved materials; one catalogue is entitled 'The collection of historical photographs' and the other is entitled 'The collection of photographs related to NBS activities'.

Historical section of the Photograph Collection

The historical part holds materials obtained from the archives of NBS's legal predecessors and other donations, especially items donated by employees of Štátna banka

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1. The building of Bratislavská všeobecná banka/Bratislava General Bank on Michalská Street in Bratislava

československá (State Bank of Czechoslovakia), the immediate predecessor of NBS. Through the gradual processing of archival fonds, as well as the revision of fonds that were processed over the past 50 years, additional items are added to the historical collection. The photographs are mostly black and white, but vary in size and their state of preservation. In the 1950s and 1960s, the archival fonds were stored in unsuitable premises, where the photographic materials suffered from moisture and light damage.

The catalogue for the historical part is divided into four main groups: Banks' buildings and group photographs of banks' employees; Personages; Real estate of banks' clients, and Uncategorised. Created within the groups are inventory units arranged mainly on the basis of legal or natural persons, or thematically. Each inventory unit includes registered items: specifically photographs, negatives, films, postcards.

The historical part of the collection currently contains 1,092 photographs (dating 1917–1992), four slides (1978), one negative (1943) and a postcard (1977).

The most used photographs are those of buildings of former central banks operating in what is now Slovakia, including photographs of the following: the headquarters of Slovenská národná banka (the Slovak National Bank) on Štúrova Street in Bratislava; branches of Rakúsko-uhorská banka (the Austro-Hungarian Bank), later becoming branches of Národná banka Československá (the National Bank of Czechoslovakia); the construction of the new building of Slovenská národná banka (the Slovak National Bank) during World War II. Also popular are photographs of former commercial banks (Photographs 1 and 2) and people's financial institutions. For example, there is a photo of one of the first exchange offices to open in Bratislava after the 1989 Velvet

Revolution (Photograph 3) and photos of the first ATMs in Slovakia (Photograph 4). The communist era (1948–1989) is captured mainly by photographs from the inventory unit of Štátna banka československá (the State Bank of Czechoslovakia (1950–1989) which includes photographs of the following: openings of new bank branches; meetings and conferences of bank management; workplaces; bank employees attending May Day parades (Photograph 5); sporting events organised for bank employees (Photographs 6 and 7).

Of interest are photographs of industrial enterprises and farmsteads which received various types of loans largely from commercial banks that were legal predecessors of Národná banka Slovenska, and photographs of properties included in loan files. There are also photographs of buildings (Photograph 8), large farms, sawmills, distilleries (Photograph 9), mills, firms and shops, homes of people from different parts of Slovakia (Photograph 10), guesthouses and health resorts in the High Tatras (Photograph 11), and also small houses belonging to ordinary loan applicants.

The collection also includes photos by Rudolf Návrat, an employee of Slovenská banka, taken in 1945 after the bombing of Bratislava (Photographs 12 and 13). Photographs by Alexander Dubček (a leading figure of the 1968 Prague Spring) who visited Čierna nad Tisou were probably donated to the collection by an employee (Photograph 14). Of particular interest is an album of photographs documenting the bomb damage inflicted during World War II on the towns of Komárno, Nové Zámky (whose historic centres were destroyed in 1945) and Levice.

The group entitled Personages features portrait photographs of leading figures in the Slovak financial sector, and these are used as to illustrate their profiles on the Research Archive Portal.

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2. The interior of Tatra banka in Martin
3. The exchange office on Špitálska Street in Bratislava
4. The first ATM of Všeobecná úverová banka/General Credit Bank in Bratislava, 1991
5. May Day parade, employees of Štátna banka československá in front of its buildings on Štúrova Street in Bratislava



6. Shooting competition for employees of Štátna banka československá, Bratislava Petržalka, 1953



7. Morning exercises of employees of Štátna banka československá, Bratislava-vidiek branch, 1960



8. Construction of Stavebné družstvo Legiodomy on Račišdorfská Street in Bratislava, 1923
9. Liehovar Spišské Tomášovce, 1919



10. House with pub in Lučenec, 1942



- 11. Pension Boda, Nová Lesná, 1935
- 12. Bombing of Bratislava, 1945
- 13. Bombing of Bratislava, 1945
- 14. Alexander Dubček with delegation at Čierna nad Tisou, August 1968



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15. Juraj Spusta, member of the management board of Malacká ľudová banka in Malacky
16. Back of the photo of Juraj Spusta



- 17. Appointment of the first Governor of Národná banka Slovenska, Vladimír Masár, by the Slovak President, Michal Kováč, 1993
- 18. Participants of the *eabh* conference in Bratislava, 2003
- 19. New Year's Eve celebrations in Bratislava marking also the changeover to the euro, 2008
- 20. Laying of the foundation stone of the NBS's headquarters on 16 June 1997
- 21. State of construction of the NBS's headquarters in April 1998
- 22. State of construction of the NBS's headquarters in September 2000

The oldest photograph in the Photograph Collection is a 1917 photograph of Juraj Spusta, a member of the administrative body of Malacká ľudová banka (Malacky People's Bank) (Photograph 15 and Photograph 16), which was taken in Bratislava at the studio of Körper Károly at 31 Špitálská Street (Korház utca) and at 8 Mariánska Street (Maria utca). Historical photographs were also made by several other once prestigious photo studios in Bratislava, for example the Mindszenty studio on Ružová Street and the Marguerite studio on Laurinská Street.

Contemporary section of the Photograph Collection

The second part of the Photograph Collection is dedicated to NBS activities. It is constantly being added to both with the files that the NBS Registry Centre gradually processes and submits to the NBS Archives, as well as with donations from NBS employees. It currently contains 1,806 inventory units and approximately 20,000 photographs.

The catalogue for this part captures the history of Slovakia's central bank from 1993, when the bank and the independent Slovak Republic were established, and runs up to 2016. The photos are divided into groups chronologically, according to their years of origin, and then on a thematic basis. They were taken at major events in the bank's life (Photograph 17) and at meetings of the bank's bodies; they feature representatives of the bank, foreign visits, conferences (Photograph 18), working life, staff social activities, and sports activities. One particularly significant event was the changeover from the Slovak koruna to the euro in 2009 (Photograph 19).

A large share of the photographs show different stages in the construction of the bank's headquarters—including the laying of the foundation stone and the opening ceremony in 2002 (Photographs 20–22). Some of these photos were used to decorate the room on the 30th floor of the headquarters building, where the NBS Bank Board meets.

The photographs covering activities in the history of NBS's are in colour. The overwhelming majority of films of these events are also preserved, as individual items in the collection. The collection also includes CDs and DVDs; the photographs dating from 2007 are solely digital.

Over the past few years, the bank has been adding photographs to its collection through acquisitions. Most of them are pictures of buildings that belong (or belonged) to the bank, taken by renowned Slovak photographers.

Usage of the Photograph Collection

The Photograph Collection belongs to the Slovak archival heritage under the management of NBS Archives and, along with the Securities Collection, it is the part of the collection that sees most use. It is primarily used for the internal needs of the NBS (especially the Archives and Registry Section), when organising thematic exhibitions, NBS Open Days, conferences, and publishing activities. However, the photographs are also requested for public use by television and radio media, print media, municipalities, interest groups and associations, and private individuals. A number of photographs were used for the web presentation of the NBS Archives on the Research Archive Portal.

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All photographs: @ Národná banka Slovenska, Bratislava

Author's profile

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