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# The Influence of Slovak Nationalism on the Musical Activities of Matica Slovenská (1919–1945)

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## Abstract

This article analyzes the influence of advocates of the distinctiveness of the Slovak culture (Slovak nationalists) on the musical activities of the Matica slovenská (hereafter MS) during the years of 1919 to 1945, primarily focusing in particular on the collection, processing, and promotion of folk songs. During the period of the First Czechoslovak Republic, MS was initially dominated by the proponents of the Czecho-Slovak cultural rapprochement, who were gradually replaced by advocates of the distinctiveness of Slovak culture. The study examines how these changes were reflected in the activities of the Artistic and Music Departments of MS, including interventions in the editing of folk song collections. Case studies illustrate ideological preferences affecting the repertoire selection, linguistic modifications, and the cooperation with Czechoslovak institutions. The study reveals how political and national tensions undermined scientific objectivity and hindered the publication of valuable works.

## Key words

distinctiveness, Slovak culture, folk song, Matica slovenská, musical activities

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The wide-ranging activities of Matica slovenská (hereafter MS)<sup>1</sup> during the interwar period also extended into the field of music. This primarily involved the collection of folk songs, their research and promotion among professionals and the general public. Since these musical activities of the MS have so far received only minimal attention in historiography, this article analyzes them through a representative set of case studies.

MS underwent a turbulent development. Due to Magyarization policies, it existed briefly between 1863 and 1875. It was subsequently re-established in 1919, during the period of the democratic First Czechoslovak Republic (hereafter CSR). During the pro-Hitler regime of the Slovak State, several active politicians were involved in MS; the institution received subsidies from the state and from local self-governments, which naturally led to a transformation of its internal conditions from democratic to authoritarian.

However, the onset of these changes was not directly connected with the dissolution of the CSR. The process was gradual: while between 1919 and 1932 the leadership of MS was dominated by proponents of the Czecho-Slovak cultural rapprochement. In the following period (until April 1945) it gradually came into the hands of advocates of Slovak culture.<sup>2</sup> In this context, differences of opinion arose among the officials of MS during the listed stages. As advocates of the distinctiveness of Slovak culture gradually prevailed in key positions over the proponents of the Czecho-Slovak cultural rapprochement, it becomes relevant to observe their influence on the research and promotion of folk songs within MS.

On August 3, 1921, Umelecký odbor MS (The Artistic Department of MS; hereafter UO MS) was established, consisting of literary, visual, and musical sections. On May 4, 1944, the Music Section was transformed into Hudobný odbor MS (The Music Department of MS; hereafter HO MS).<sup>3</sup> The influence of the advocates of the distinctiveness of Slovak culture on the research and promotion of folk songs in MS between 1919 and 1945 will thus be examined in the context of these musical bodies.

1 Matica slovenská (est. 1863) is a scientific, cultural, and educational institution in Slovakia. Its governing bodies are located in the town of Martin, while its local sections operate in several other Slovak towns. Whereas a hundred years ago it focused primarily on linguistic research of the Slovak language, today it publishes scientific articles and organizes public events devoted to Slovak history and literature. WINKLER, Tomáš. *Matica Slovenská – Dejiny a prítomnosť*. Martin: Matica slovenská, 2003, pp. 203–216.

2 The term Czecho-Slovak cultural rapprochement refers to the efforts of proponents of Czechoslovak unity (Czechoslovakists) to promote linguistic, literary, musical, artistic, theatrical, and scientific integration of both entities. KOPEČEK, Michal. *Čechoslovakizmus: zastrené dejiny jednoho pojmu*. In HUDEK, Adam – KOPEČEK, Michal – MERVART, Jan (eds.). *Čečo/slovakizmus*. Praha: NLN, s. r. o; Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, v. v. i., 2019, pp. 15–16. By supporters of the distinctiveness of Slovak culture (Slovak nationalists) we understand the opponents of the preceding tendencies, i.e. cultural efforts aimed at merging Slovaks with another entity. They regarded linguistic, literary, musical, artistic, theatrical, and scientific specificities as key aspects in defining the Slovak nation. SMITH, Anthony D. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986, pp. 30, 136, 141–142.

3 For a list of officials, members and subjects of work of the Music Section of UO MS and HO MS: BANÁRY, Boris. *Účasť Matice slovenskej na rozvoji hudobného života na Slovensku*. Martin: Matica slovenská, 1982, pp. 35–49.

## Efforts toward Broader Czech–Slovak Cooperation

As early as the 1920s, differing opinions began to emerge concerning the research and promotion of musical activities within MS. Prior to the Augustové slávnosti (August Festivities) held in Martin in 1924, MS secretary Štefan Krčméry considered omitting certain Slovak folk songs from the program due to their hateful content. However, Slovak nationalist Miloš Ruppeldt,<sup>4</sup> who was involved in organizing the event, regarded these songs as an integral component of Slovak culture.<sup>5</sup>

A similar issue arose during the preparation of the 1926 festivities program. Ruppeldt suggested to Krčméry that instead of mentioning Šafárik in a particular composition, they should refer to Svetozár Hurban Vajanský, who was to be honored with a statue in front of the MS building. Ruppeldt likely aimed to replace the popular Czechoslovakist figure Pavol Jozef Šafárik with a Slovak nationalist icon. He also wanted the Czech choir to sing Slovak songs in Slovak, which, he claimed, would be welcomed by the majority of the audience.<sup>6</sup> His insistence was successful – according to the program, the Czech musicians did not perform at the event.<sup>7</sup>

Ideological disagreements also surfaced concerning the efforts of MS members of Czech and Moravian origin – František Volf from Dohňany and Jozef Pospíšil from Trenčianska Teplá – to publish Slovak folk songs. They were inclined toward Czechoslovakism<sup>8</sup> and became MS members during Krčméry's tenure as secretary. They quickly integrated into the Slovak cultural sphere, including MS.<sup>9</sup>

Their cooperation with Karel Plicka and Volf's relationship with Krčméry – the two co-edited the children's magazine *Včelka* (*The Little Bee*), which promoted folk song demonstrating their shared musical initiatives.<sup>10</sup> Both also contributed to the journals *Slovenská otčina* (*Slovak Homeland*) and *Československé ráno* (*Czechoslovak Morning*), which reported on Matica-related activities in folk music collection.

However, their musicological work met with resistance from Ruppeldt, who disparaged them in his correspondence with Krčméry, accusing them, for instance, of bypassing

4 Miloš Ruppeldt (1881–1943) – composer, conductor, translator, and politician. After 1919, he became a director of Hudobná škola pre Slovensko (The Music School for Slovakia). In 1921, he initiated the establishment of Spevácky zbor slovenských učiteľov (The Slovak Teachers' Choir). From 1939, he served as director of Slovenský rozhlas (Slovak Radio).

5 Archív Matice slovenskej (Archive of Matica slovenská; hereinafter AMS), fond (hereafter f.) HO MS, 1928–1949, letter from M. Ruppeldt to Š. Krčméry, August 6, 1924.

6 AMS, f. HO MS, 1928–1949, letter of M. Ruppeldt to Š. Krčméry, July 13, 1926.

7 Mohutná slávnosť slovenského národa. *Národné noviny*, vol. LVII, no. 182, August 31, 1926, p. 4 KRČMÉRY, Štefan (ed.). *Tri roky Matice slovenskej 1924–1926*. Turčiansky sv. Martin: Matica slovenský, 1926, pp. 30–31.

8 POSPÍŠIL, Jozef – VOLF, František. *Obrazy zo života nášho prezidenta osvoboditeľa*. Žilina: O. Trávníček, 1924, p. 44.

9 František Volf (1897–1983) – Czech teacher, painter, writer, and ethnographer. Jozef Pospíšil (1890–1953) – Moravian teacher, publicist, and cultural worker. Volf and Pospíšil worked as a teachers in Slovakia. Together, they published several educational, pedagogical, and literary works.

10 Z Matice slovenskej. *Včelka*, vol. I, no. 1, 1925, p. 18.

Plicka in the publication of a folk song collection.<sup>11</sup> Ruppeldt claimed that politicians and members of MS also expressed complaints about their activities. Krčméry, however did not accept Ruppeldt's objections as he shared similar values with Volf and Pospíšil and maintained close cooperation with them.<sup>12</sup> Consequently no changes were made and Volf, together with Plicka, went on to publish *300 piesní dohňanských (300 Songs from Dohňany)*.<sup>13</sup>

## Complications with the Publication of the Bartók Collection

Slovak nationalists within MS took a more assertive stance toward the folk song collection of musician Béla Bartók, which he had offered to MS for editorial processing and publication in the early 1920s. Bartók, born into a mixed Slovak-Hungarian family, conducted research of Slovak, Hungarian and Romanian folk songs, analysing their forms and mutual influences. During the interwar period, he delivered lectures on these topics in both Hungarian and Slovak contexts, thereby disseminating his liberal views on folk music within the Slovak musical community.<sup>14</sup>

In this context, it is necessary to mention the influential members of the Music Section of UO MS, Miloš Ruppeldt and Viliam Figuš-Bystrý.<sup>15</sup> The two musicians were related by family ties, collaborated within musical associations, and engaged in folk song collection. They also ran as candidates for the nationally conservative Slovenská národná strana (Slovak National Party) in the Czechoslovak Parliament, where they found ideological affinity and understanding in their Slovak national sentiment – a stance that at times bordered on Czechophobia.

An incident occurred during the opening of the Chata pod Ďumbierom (Mountain Chalet under Ďumbier), when Figuš-Bystrý and Igor, brother of Miloš Ruppeldt, forcefully objected to the Czech-language memorial book supplied by the Prague headquarters of the Klub československých turistov (Czechoslovak Tourist Club). Although Figuš-Bystrý later expressed regret, on November 22, 1929, he was sentenced without judgment taking legal effect – to five days in prison for defaming a nationality.<sup>16</sup> This radical manifestation of Slovak national sentiment subsequently influenced his musical activities.

11 AMS, f. Zbierka korešpondencie osobností a inštitúcií vyčlenená z archívneho fondu MS (Collection of Correspondence of Individuals and Institutions, separated from the archival fond of MS; hereinafter ZK MS), 1919–1954, letters from M. Ruppeldt to Š. Krčméry, December 16, 1926, January 16, 1927.

12 AMS, f. ZK MS, letter from M. Ruppeldt to Š. Krčméry, February 21, 1927.

13 BRUCKNER, Jozef – KONEČNÝ, Dušan. *František Volf*. Praha: Odeon, 1983, p. 8.

14 Hereinafter referred to as the “Bartók Collection.” BARTÓK, Béla – ELSCEKOVÁ, Alica, eds. *Slovenské ľudové piesne: súborné vydanie*. Bratislava: Hudobné centrum, 2019, Vol. I, 754 pp.

15 Viliam Figuš-Bystrý (1875–1937) – composer, pedagogue, and conductor. Since 1925, chairman of the Spolok slovenských umelcov (Association of Slovak Artists) and author of the opera *Detvan*. After 1918, he achieved several professional successes, yet was also subject to criticism from the Czechoslovak musical scene in Bratislava. MUNTÁG, Emanuel. *Viliam Figuš-Bystrý. Život a dielo (1875–1973)*. Martin: Matica slovenská, 1973, pp. 13–18.

16 Figuš-Bystrý na Ďumbieri. *Slovenský denník*, vol. XI, no. 221, 26. 9., 1928, p. 2; Päť dní uzamknutia za „exces na Ďumbieri“. *Slovenský denník*, vol. XII, no. 272, 26. 11., 1929, p. 4.

In the early 1920s, Miloš Ruppeldt collaborated with Bartók to make his collection available to MS for editorial and publication purposes. The agreement for its acquisition was concluded on March 29, 1921, and Figuš-Bystrý was entrusted with transporting it from Budapest to Turčiansky Svätý Martin.

From 1928 onwards, the collection was primarily overseen by Ján Valaštan-Dolinský, while Ruppeldt and Figuš-Bystrý offered advice and remarks to the secretary of MS Krčméry. For example, on February 17, 1929, Ruppeldt emphasized the need to involve a linguist who would work on it in the spirit of the “*Slovak national character*.”

Ruppeldt’s views on Bartók’s approach to folk songs were unscientific and nationally motivated: he claimed that some of them “*were not Slovak*” and should be “*excluded from the collection*.” He regarded the songs collected by Bartók in southern Slovakia – where Slovaks came into contact with Hungarians – as undesirable. He suggested that “*overly foreign songs*” should either be omitted or placed at the end of the work.<sup>17</sup> Ruppeldt was even disturbed by the fact that “*he is a Hungarian!!*,” and consequently suggested that the motives behind his collecting activity should be investigated.

Similar views were expressed by Figuš-Bystrý, who wrote in a letter to Krčméry dated August 11, 1930, that “*songs of foreign origin*” should be excluded from the collection. He described them as “*rubbish*” and expressed disappointment that Bartók and Plicka had not sufficiently consider “*the Slovak character*” of songs. He too evaluated the work of folk song collectors according to their nationality: labelling Bartók as a Hungarian and Plicka as a Czech.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile, officials of the Slovak section of Štátny ústav pre ľudovú pieseň (The State Institute for Folk Song; hereafter ŠÚLP) showed interest in publishing Bartók’s collection.<sup>19</sup> In a letter dated March 23, 1930, the chairman Dobroslav Orel<sup>20</sup> invited MS to cooperate, as he regarded Bartók’s collection as part of a nationwide series of works on folk song.<sup>21</sup> However, this cooperation did not materialize due to the resistance of Ruppeldt and Figuš-Bystrý, who opposed giving the collection a “*nationwide character*.”

17 Slovenská národná knižnica – Literárny archív (Slovak national library – Literary archive; hereinafter SNK – LA), f. Anton Augustín Baník (hereinafter Baník), signature (hereinafter sig.) A XC/4-408, Poznámky ku Smluve o odovzdaní slov. piesní, February 17, 1929.

18 AMS, f. HO MS, 1928–1949, letter from Figuš-Bystrý to MS secretary Š. Krčméry, August 11, 1930.

19 ŠÚLP was established by Ministerstvo školstva a národnej osvety (The Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment) to collect, analyse, and publish folk songs. The Slovak section of ŠÚLP intended to cooperate with the MS, but this did not materialize after Cíger-Hronský assumed the position of the secretary of MS. SOPKO, Július. *Štátny ústav pre ľudovú pieseň v ČSR – slovenský odbor*. Bratislava: Štátny slovenský ústredný archív v Bratislave, 1963, pp. 1–3.

20 Dobroslav Orel (1870–1942) – Czech musicologist and university professor. Beginning in 1921, he served as professor of music history at Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave (Comenius University in Bratislava), where he founded Ústav pre dejiny hudby (The Institute for the History of Music). From 1928, he was chairman of ŠÚLP. In the same year, together with Karel Plicka, he was responsible for recording Slovak folk songs. JANEK, Marián. *Dobroslav Orel. Muzikológ, hudobný pedagóg, osvetový pracovník*. Banská Bystrica: Univerzita Mateja Bela v Banskej Bystrici, 2007, pp. 18–25.

21 SNK – LA, f. Baník, sig. A XC/4-247, letter o ŠÚLP to administration of MS, May 23, 1930.

Orel advocated a territorial understanding of “music from Slovakia,” instead of a nationality (ethnically) conceived “Slovak music.”<sup>22</sup> As a Czech and an employee of a Czechoslovak music institution, he aroused suspicion among the Slovak nationalist members of MS, who believed he leaned toward the ideology of Czechoslovakism. Ruppeldt later recalled how he had to “*rescue Bartók’s collection from Dr. Orel’s hands.*”<sup>23</sup>

Direct cooperation with Orel was out of the question. However, the editorial work was not continued by the Slovak nationalists Ruppeldt and Figuš-Bystrý, but by the young musicologist Ivan Ballo. He described his role as a “*friendly service*” to the ideologically kindred Krčméry.<sup>24</sup> Ballo, however, belonged to the Bratislava musicological school of Professor Orel, which made the Slovak nationalists distrust him. Ruppeldt complained, that “*the Czech people have completely spoiled our Ivanko Ballo.*”<sup>25</sup> Krčméry, on the other hand, considered Ballo a “*serious music critic.*”<sup>26</sup> Krčméry, Ballo, and perhaps also Orel thus stood in opposition to Ruppeldt and Figuš-Bystrý.

The editing of Bartók’s collection progressed slowly, a circumstance that Bartók himself criticized in a letter dated February 22, 1931. He complained about the indifference of MS staff and the minimal progress achieved during the previous two years.<sup>27</sup> Although the work could not be completed by the agreed deadline (June 1932), he did not request its return, as he was facing financial difficulties and received renewed assurances from MS.

Ruppeldt and Figuš-Bystrý sought to take advantage of the situation. In the summer of 1932, Ruppeldt asked MS to dismiss “*the still immature youth*” Ballo from the editorial duties and to appoint a trio of Ruppeldt, Figuš-Bystrý, and Valaštan-Dolinský instead. Yet in October and November 1932, MS administrator Jozef Škultéty and secretary Krčméry

22 JANEK, Marián. Podiel Dobroslava Orla na zmenách hudobného života na Slovensku po vzniku Československej republiky. *Slovenská hudba*, vol. XXV, no. 4, 1999, p. 439; ASM, f. Matica slovenská II, 1919–1948 (hereinafter MS II 1919–1948), inventory number (hereinafter i. n.) 482/15, letter from D. Orel to MS, October 16, 1922.

23 JANEK, Marián. Podiel Dobroslava Orla na zmenách hudobného života na Slovensku po vzniku Československej republiky. *Slovenská hudba*, vol. 25, no. 4, 1999, p. 438; SNK – LA, f. Baník, sig. A XC/4-120, letter from M. Ruppeldt to J. Škultéty, July 25, 1932.

24 Slovenské národné múzeum – Hudobné múzeum (Slovak National Museum – Musical museum; hereinafter SNM – HM), f. I. Ballo, sig. MUS CXXIII 282–475, [Memoirs on editing the Bartók Collection].

25 SNK – LA, f. Baník, sig. A XC/4-118, letter from M. Ruppeldt to Š. Krčméry, December 29, 1930.

26 Ivan Ballo (1909–1977) – music critic, publicist, and editor. He studied musicology, Slavic and Romance philology at at Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave. He contributed to Krčméry’s *Slovenské pohľady* (Slovak Views) as well as to *Slovenská politika* (Slovak politics) and *Slovenský denník* (*Slovak Daily*), newspapers of the agrarian political movement. Krčméry supported him publicly. AMS, f. MS II, 1919–1948, i. n. 573/75, letter from MS secretary to directorate of Slovenské národné divadlo (The Slovak National Theatre), December 6, 1927; AMS, f. MS II, 1919–1948, sig. 574/1927/75, letter from MS secretary to leadership of Osvetový zväz pre Slovensko (The Educational Union for Slovakia) in Bratislava, October 20, 1927, November 22, 1927. Thanks to Krčméry’s support, Ballo “*held a significant position*” in *Slovenské pohľady* and was given “*unlimited space.*” MUNTÁG, Emanuel. Bratislavská hudobná kritika a dielo V. Figuša-Bystrého. In *Viliam Figuš-Bystrý (1875–1937)*. POTŮČEK, Juraj (ed.). Bratislava: self-published, 1994, p. 95.

27 SNK – LA, f. Baník, sig. A XC/4-119, letter from M. Ruppeldt to Š. Krčméry, March 3, 1931; sig. A XC/1-93, Dostalík, Fraňo: Dva rozhovory: Slovenská Matica a piesne Bélu Bartóka.

defended Ballo as indispensable to the MS.<sup>28</sup> Krčméry made sure that Ballo could continue his work before a forthcoming period of professional indisposition.

However, Ballo encountered other difficulties. In a letter to Jozef Cíger-Hronský dated June 18, 1933, he requested professional materials on folk song research and dialectological studies. According to the agreement with Bartók, Ballo was to consult a qualified linguist during the editing process. He chose Václav Vážný,<sup>29</sup> who had contributed to the compilation of a Slovak orthographic handbook published by MS. However, this handbook was criticized for the presence of Bohemisms, which were intended to bring the Slovak language closer to Czech, in line with the ambitions of the Czechoslovakists.

Cíger-Hronský did not respond to Ballo's request at first. Only on July 10 did Cíger-Hronský promising to send Vážný's dialectological materials, but not the handbook, explaining that "*Matica cannot cooperate with Dr. Vážný.*"<sup>30</sup> On 14 July, Ballo turned to Samuel Štarke with a request for Vážný's Slovak orthographic handbook "*as an aid for proofreading.*" He also wrote again to Cíger-Hronský, noting that the handbook "*is indispensable for my proofreading!*"<sup>31</sup> Cíger-Hronský, however, sent it to him so late that according to Ballo, the entire editing process became complicated.

Ruppeldt and Fíguš-Bystrý maintained their interest in editing the collection. On September 20, 1933, Ruppeldt wrote to Cíger-Hronský, requesting permission to take over the editorial responsibility, arguing that he himself had secured the collection from Bartók for MS. His appeal to personal merit rather than professional expertise, however, had no effect on him, and retained Ballo as editor.<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile, Ballo informed MS of his plan to apply a comparative methodology, based on Czech and Moravian folk song collections and accompanying dialectological studies. On September 29, 1933, administration of the MS responded, stating that it would supervise the Slovak text of the songs.

The years 1933–1934 were characterized by protracted disputes and culminated in Ballo's removal from the editorial process. When he refused to hand over the collection to MS representatives, the institution resolved to recover it through legal action – ultimately with success.

The causes of the protracted editing process and the subsequent revocation of Ballo's role were complex. Delays resulted partly from his academic and professional commitments, health problems, and later from his demand for higher remuneration. Nevertheless, ideological and political factors must also be taken into account.

Ballo had ideological, axiological, and personal disputes with Ruppeldt and Fíguš-Bystrý. He publicly criticized Fíguš-Bystrý's opera *Detvan*, appealing to both musicological and

28 SNK – LA, f. Baník, sig. A XC/4-120, letter from M. Ruppeldt to J. Škultéty, July 25, 1932; sig. A XC/4-122, 123, letter from SM administration to M. Ruppeldt, October 25, November 7, 1932.

29 SNK – LA, f. Baník, sig. A XC/4-69, letter from I. Ballo to Cíger-Hronský, June 18, 1933.

30 SNK – LA, f. Baník, sig. A XC/4-72, letter from I. Ballo to Cíger-Hronský, July 2, 1933; sig. A XC/4-188, letter from SM administration to I. Ballo, July 10, 1933.

31 SNK – LA, f. Baník, sig. A XC/4-74, letter from I. Ballo to unidentified recipient, July 14, 1933; sig. A XC/4-75, letter from I. Ballo to Cíger-Hronský, July 18, 1933.

32 SNK – LA, f. Baník, sig. A XC/4-125, letter from M. Ruppeldt to Cíger-Hronský, September 20, 1933.

ideological arguments. He also recalled Figuš-Bystrý's nationalist misconduct at Chata pod Ďumbierom and his allegedly "Magyarised" family background.<sup>33</sup> The ensuing polemics, gradually shifting from professional to personal domains, further deepened their mutual animosity.<sup>34</sup> At the end of 1930, Ballo also criticized *Spevácky zbor slovenských učiteľov*, which, under Ruppeltdt's leadership, was said to have introduced anti-Czech sentiment into Bratislava's musical milieu.<sup>35</sup>

During the same period, Ballo collaborated with editorial offices of Slovak agrarian newspapers, whose representatives were often pillars of Czechoslovak government coalitions and outspoken advocates of Czechoslovakism. As long as Krčméry held the post of secretary of MS, Ballo's pro-Czechoslovak orientation and journalistic affiliations did not harm his standing. Krčméry actively supported the participation of Czech and Moravian intellectuals, including Czechoslovakists, in the musicological undertakings of MS. Consequently, he never considered assigning the editorial role to Ruppeltdt or Figuš-Bystrý, who not only opposed Bartók's collection but also harbored nationalist prejudice against Bartók himself.

On May 12, 1932, however, the general assembly of MS convened, resulting in the replacement of several members of its board. A number of Czechoslovakists were replaced by advocates of Slovak nationalism. Due to Krčméry's deteriorating health, his temporary suspension from office was eventually approved.

With the appointment of the Slovak nationalist Cíger-Hronský as secretary, Ballo lost his key supporter. Although there was initially little inclination to transfer the editorial work to another person, Ballo's polemics with Figuš-Bystrý and Ruppeltdt, his cooperation with agrarian newspapers, his attempt to involve the Czechoslovakist-oriented linguist Vážný, and his intention to draw upon Czech and Moravian folk songs—all contributed to increasing mistrust and the perception of Ballo as a Czechoslovakist.

The leadership of MS eventually decided to remove Ballo from the editorial work on Bartók's collection and to assign the linguistic proofreading to Ľudovít Novák, the newly appointed officer of *Jazykový odbor* (The Language Department) of MS. In contrast to Vážný, Novák was a proponent of Slovak nationalism and an advocate of so-called purity of the Slovak language.<sup>36</sup>

Nevertheless, progress on Bartók's collection came to a halt. In October and November 1937, the delay became a matter of public discussion in the press. František Dostalík, Gustáv Koričánsky, and Bartók himself requested an explanation from MS representa-

33 BALLO, Ivan. Viliam Figuš-Bystrý, Detvan. *Slovenské pohľady*, vol. XL, no. 4, 1. 4. 1928, pp. 241–257; BALLO, Ivan. Teda predsa „Detvan“? *Robotnícke noviny*, vol. XXV, no. 216, 21. 9. 1928, p. 8; BALLO, Ivan. „Skladateľ Viliam Figuš-Bystrý sa vyznamenal“ *Hlas*, vol. VII, no. 18, 1928, pp. 290–294.

34 FIGUŠ-BYSTRÝ, Viliam. Otvorený list na Ivana Ballu. *Národné noviny*, vol. LIX, no. 116, 5. 10. 1928, p. 2; BALLO, Ivan. Otvorená odpoveď pánu V. Figušovi-Bystrému. *Robotnícke noviny*, vol. XXV, no. 229, 7. 10. 1928, pp. 2–3.

35 BALLO, Ivan. Koncert Speváckeho sboru slov. učiteľov. *Slovenská politika*, vol. XI, no. 295, 24. 12. 1930, pp. 3–4; BALLO, Ivan. O koncert „Speváckeho sboru slov. učiteľov“. *Slovenská politika*, vol. XII, no. 10, 14. 1. 1931 p. 2.

36 AMS, f. MS II 1919–1948, sig. 546/1935/116, letter from J. Cincík to Figuš-Bystrý, 1 February, 1933.

tives.<sup>37</sup> MS remained silent; however, an anonymous article appeared, asserting that since the general assembly of May 12, 1932 and the departure of Czech intellectuals, MS had lacked the expertise to complete the linguistic revision of Bartók's collection.<sup>38</sup>

Outwardly, MS remained silent, yet in private correspondence Ruppeldt expressed panic.<sup>39</sup> He feared that criticism from Hungarian newspapers and agrarian journals – their main opponents – might bring about a return to the “old ways” existing before May 1932. Průmyslova tiskárna v Praze (The Industrial Printing Press in Prague), which was to print the collection, failed to meet the schedule, and Bartók even contemplated filing a criminal complaint against MS.

The situation remained unresolved, as major political shifts in CSR in the autumn of 1938 further reinforced nationalist tendencies within Slovak politics. In February 1939, MS leadership demanded the return of Bartók's collection from Průmyslova tiskárna v Praze. Only a small part of the work had reached the printing stage.<sup>40</sup> For MS leadership, it was unacceptable that a Czech firm should be responsible for its publication—an opinion later confirmed by Ballo himself.<sup>41</sup>

By that time, Bartók had emigrated to the United States, fallen gravely ill, and lost interest in the collection. During the pro-Hitler Slovak Republic, MS staff prioritized the publication of Slovak works with a “national” orientation. As Soviet forces advanced toward MS in the spring of 1945, the pro-fascist leadership led by Cíger-Hronský, fled abroad, taking with them an archive of approximately 60,000 folk songs, including Bartók's collection.

Dezider Nágel,<sup>42</sup> an officer of the HO MS and a member of the refugee group, decided to return to the restored CSR, bringing with him crates of musical materials that he handed over to the Czechoslovak Embassy in Rome.<sup>43</sup> Although Bartók's collection eventually made its way back to MS, it remained unpublished. The MS leadership later transferred it to Slovenská akadémia vied (The Slovak Academy of Sciences), which ultimately issued it.<sup>44</sup>

37 DOSTALÍK, František. O treňčiansko-teplických komorno-hudobných festivaloch. *Pero*, vol. VI, no. 2, 1937, p. 10; KORIČÁNSKY, Gustáv. Matica slovenská – Béla Bartók. *Slovenský denník*, vol. XX, no. 260, 14. 11. 1937, p. 6; MANGA, Janos. Bartók Béla szakit a Maticával, mert őt év óta hiába várja töle szlovák dalgyűjteményének kiadását. *Prágai Magyar Hírlap*, vol. XVI, no. 254, 7. 11. 1937, p. 7.

38 Bartókova sbierka slovenských ľudových piesní. *Slovenský denník*, vol. XX, no. 256, 10. 11. 1937, p. 5.

39 SNK – LA, f. Baník, sig. A XC/4-149, letter from M. Ruppeldt to MS committee, November 25, 1937.

40 AMS, f. MS II 1919–1948, sig. 525/1939/127, letter from Průmyslova tiskárna v Praze to MS, January 30, 1939, letter from MS to Průmyslova tiskárna v Praze, February 22, 1939.

41 SNM – HM, f. I. Ballo, sig. MUS CXXIII 282–475, [Memoirs on editing the Bartók Collection].

42 Dezider Nágel (1913–1981) – educator, composer, and conductor. He served as an officer of HO MS in 1944–1945 and again in 1947–1952.

43 AMS, f. MS II, 1919–1948, sig. I./10-1946, Zpráva zo zasadnutia valného zhromaždenia Hudobného odb. MS, konaného dňa 24. októbra 1946; Zpráva o činnosti umeleckých a vedeckých odborov MS od val. zhrom. do 23. sept. 1946.

44 AMS, f. HO MS, 1928–1949, Zapisnica zo zasadnutia Hudobného odboru Matice slovenskej, ktoré bolo 12. januára 1949; SNK – LA, f. Baník, sig. A XC/4-44, Zapisnica o prevzatí rukopisu Bartókovej sbierky ľudových piesní slovenských dňa 27. januára 1950.

The national and political controversies surrounding Bartók's collection persisted throughout the wartime and postwar periods. During the Slovak Republic, the collection attracted no attention, as it was considered politically undesirable to promote the publication of folk songs originating from the ethnically mixed Slovak-Hungarian regions. After the war, Slovak nationalists within MS likely sought to prevent the collection from "falling" into Czechoslovakist hands and therefore attempted to have it transferred abroad.

Ballo had already identified several problems related to Bartók's collection within MS, both in its content and in its scholarly integrity.<sup>45</sup> In 1960, MS librarian Anton A. Baník, who had personally known Bartók, referred to the "*unhealthy nationalist-power atmosphere*" and observed that "*serious misunderstandings arose concerning the dialectical aspects of the song texts*," since Bartók had sought to achieve "*a compositional synthesis of Hungarian–Slovak–Romanian folk music elements*."<sup>46</sup> These factors ultimately contributed to the failure of Bartók's efforts to publish the collection through MS.<sup>47</sup>

## Complicated Cooperation with Other Figures and Institutions

The challenges of establishing cooperation between MS and ŠÚLP were also evident in the communication, concerning research and promotion of other folk songs. In a letter, dated December 10, 1934, Fiuš-Bystrý warned that any potential cooperation with ŠÚLP should be approached with caution, as "*Mr. Orel, Wollman, and Vážný*" were allegedly bypassing MS in the publication of Slovak folk songs. His criticism was not purely professional; what particularly troubled him were the Czech representatives of the institute—most notably Vážný, who had already been a target of criticism by MS members. Fiuš-Bystrý said: "*Since he failed to spoil the Slovak language in orthographic handbook*," he is trying to do it with Slovak folk songs.<sup>48</sup>

A similar position was expressed by Jozef Cincík, an officer of the UO MS. In his letter to Ruppeldt (December 1934), he urged ŠÚLP to publish works in Slovak and ensure "*genuinely Slovak representation across the board*."<sup>49</sup> His criticism was directed toward the leadership and members of Slovak section of this institution, headed by Orel, with whom nationalists in MS had both personal and ideological disputes.

The cooperation failed to advance in the subsequent years. In January 1938, Cíger-Hronský once again made MS's participation in the publication of collections conditional upon all texts being "*in the Slovak language*" and upon final editorial authority remaining with MS. The new and "*approved rules of Slovak orthography*" were to be strictly

45 SNM – HM, f. I. Ballo, sig. MUS CXXIII 282–475, [Memoirs on editing the Bartók Collection].

46 BANÍK, Augustín. Niekoľko spomienok, dokumentov a úvah o Bélovi Bartókov. *Hudobnovedné štúdie*, vol. 4, 1960, pp. 138–139, 165.

47 AMS, f. HO MS, 1928–1949, *Pamiatke Bela Bartóka* (A. A. Baník).

48 AMS, f. HO MS, 1928–1949, letter from M. Ruppeldt to Cíger-Hronský, December 10, 1934.

49 SNK – LA, f. Baník, sig. A XC/4-142, letter from J. Cincík to M. Ruppeldt, December 20, 1934.

binding.<sup>50</sup> This continuing reluctance stemmed largely from persistent mistrust toward Vážný and unresolved older disputes.<sup>51</sup>

Naturally, MS could not enforce changes in the leadership of ŠÚLP, yet its efforts revealed the strength of Slovak nationalist conviction among its representatives—a conviction, that profoundly influenced their musicological activities. According to MS leadership, the establishment of the Slovak State created “*new conditions where there is no need to fear*,” opening the way for musicological cooperation with the reorganized Ústav pre slovenskú ľudovú pieseň (The Institute for Slovak Folk Song)<sup>52</sup> — now led by Slovak figures who are nationally oriented.

Similar tendencies became evident in the early 1930s, when MS sought to publish a collection of “Slovak folk marching songs” for the Czechoslovak army and gymnastic associations. MS maintained that “*folk creation, the most authentic national art*,” possessed greater cultural value than “*artificial*” compositions. Ministerstvo národnej obrany (The Ministry of National Defense; hereafter MNO) expressed appreciation but refrained from procurement, as it had not officially approved such collections and many of the songs were already included in existing military songbooks.<sup>53</sup> Fíguš-Bystrý, the author of the collection, wrote indignantly to MS secretary Krčméry: “*Shouldn't we be concerned with the song needs of our youth?*” He maintained that it was essential for Slovak songs to be used within the so-called Slovak army units.<sup>54</sup>

In 1931, MS one again appealed to the MNO, but the reply was evasive: the MNO stated that the collection could be cited or recommended in its own publications, providing that the songs were of suitable length and had undergone content review. It did not intend to purchase any copies from MS.<sup>55</sup>

Although the conditions may have appeared excessive, Fíguš-Bystrý agreed to certain modifications. In 1934, MS published the collection under the subtitle *Pre potrebu vojka a telocvičných jednôt* (For purpose of the Soldier and Gymnastic Associations). Distribution, however, proved problematic: in 1935, MS's attempts to promote the collection at Zemské vojenské veliteľstvo v Bratislave (The Regional Military Command in Bratislava) were unsuccessful. Although the collection was regarded as historically valuable, it was considered unsuitable for military use.<sup>56</sup>

50 AMS, f. HO MS, 1928–1949, letter from J. C. Hronský to ŠÚLP, February 1, 1938.

51 Vážný accused MS of promoting a “*Hungarian cultural and state ideology*,” despite its declared mission to cultivate the Slovak language. AMS, f. HO MS, 1928–1949, Václav Vážný. Vyhlásenie, november 1938.

52 AMS, f. HO MS, 1928–1949, letter from MS administration to Ústav pre slovenskú ľudovú pieseň, February 14, 1941.

53 AMS, f. MS II 1919–1948, sig. 636/1930/126, letter from assistant secretary of MNO to MS administration, March 31, 1930, letter from MS administration to secretary of MNO, January 29, 1930.

54 AMS, f. HO MS, 1928–1949, letter from Fíguš-Bystrý to MS Secretary Š. Krčméry, August 26, 1930.

55 AMS, f. HO MS, 1928–1949, letter from SM administration to MNO, July 10, 1931, letter from MNO to MS administration, August 26, 1931.

56 AMS, f. HO MS, 1928–1949, letter from MS Secretary Š. Krčméry to Fíguš-Bystrý, November 25, 1931; letter from Zemské vojenské veliteľstvo v Bratislave (The Territorial Military Command in Bratislava) to MS administration, October 16, 1935.

In January 1937, Cíger-Hronský appealed to Member of parliament Štefan Haššík to facilitate the introduction of the marching song collection in military libraries.<sup>57</sup> The prospects of success were minimal – Haššík, a former member of the banned paramilitary Rodobrana (Nation’s Defense) and later a member of Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana (Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party), wielded little influence in governmental or military circles. His involvement could even have been interpreted as an attempt to infuse the army with Slovak nationalist and militarist sentiment through music.

Cíger-Hronský claimed that the MNO rejected the collection because it contained “*Slovak-nationalist*” songs, although according to MS, the songs were intended for training within Slovak garrisons. Yet the MNO’s objective was to build a Czechoslovak army that would represent the state as a whole. There were no Slovak military units per se, as garrisons in Slovakia also included Czechs and national minorities. Moreover, the definition of what constituted a “Slovak” song was subjective and depended on the compiler.

In the autumn of 1938 and spring of 1939, the situation underwent a significant change. Secretary MS Cíger-Hronský, a proponent of the pro-Hitler Slovak Republic, rejoiced, that “*our army is now cleansed of non-Slovak entities,*” which, in his view, finally created space for MS’s marching songs to be put to use. The publication of additional songs was even anticipated. In 1943, HO MS main officer Jozef Kresánek, positively responded to a request from the commander of Pracovný zbor národnej obrany (The National Defense Labor Corps), to compose a special marching song.<sup>58</sup>

Collections prepared for the “Slovak” military units and the “Jewish” labor battalions mirrored the nationalist and antisemitic attitudes of some collectors and theorists associated with MS. Cíger-Hronský did not oppose these tendencies—indeed, he supported them—thereby further discrediting MS in the eyes of the non-fascist public.

In July 1941, during the period of Slovak republic, Slovak Prime Minister Vojtech Tuka called upon MS to conduct the “*collection of scientific evidence proving the Slovakness of territories ceded to Hungary,*” even offering exemptions from military service as an incentive. The government further required, that folk songs demonstrate “*a genetic link to folk art in other parts of Slovakia.*”<sup>59</sup> These initiatives were grounded in racial ideology, as might be expected from Tuka, an ardent advocate of Nazism.

The nationalist orientation of MS officials also shaped their reception of *Dejiny slovenskej hudby od najstarších čias až do reformácie* (History of Slovak Music from the Earliest Times to the Reformation) by František Zagiba. Like Bartók, Zagiba explored both religious and folk song traditions and faced the same dilemma—whether to interpret folk

57 AMS, f. HO MS, 1928–1949, letter from Cíger-Hronský to Š. Haššík, January 13, 1937.

58 AMS, f. MS II 1919–1948, sig. 525/1939/127, letter from SM administration to MNO, April 6, 1939; letter from L. Bodický to J. Kresánek, April 19, 1943. Pracovný zbor národnej obrany were work battalions composed of Slovaks who were either medically unfit for regular military service, or subject to disciplinary action, as well as Jews and Roma. Their purpose was to carry out transport and construction work in support of the army. ČORDÁŠOVÁ, Silvia. *Pracovný zbor národnej obrany 1940–1945*. Trnava: Vojenský historický archív Trnava, 2005, pp. 6–12.

59 AMS, f. ZK MS, letter from J. C-Hronský and J. Marták to M. S.Trnavský, June 5, 1941; f. HO MS, 1928–1949, letter from administrator of Slovak government to MS scientific secretary, July 21, 1941.

music in territorial or ethnic terms.<sup>60</sup> His preference for the former provoked strong criticism from the Slovak nationalists within MS.

In 1942, when Úrad propagandy (The Office of Propaganda) in Bratislava considered publishing Zagiba's book for an international readership, it consulted Jozef Kresánek of the UO MS. Kresánek advised against publication, arguing that his book "*does not clearly illustrate the Slovak national and social subjugation.*"<sup>61</sup> The decision reflected MS's commitment to supporting only those works consistent with the ideology of the clerical-fascist regime and Slovak nationalism.

Of particular note is the case of Jozef Alojz Vronč, a pro-clerical-fascist teacher, who was commissioned by Ministerstvo školstva a národnej osvety to prepare music curricula for public schools. In keeping with Slovak nationalist ideals, he called upon MS to "*bring clarity, joy, and genuine Slovak sentiment into schools [...] so that the fire of national awareness and refinement contained in folk songs may continue to burn and serve the common good.*"<sup>62</sup>

The aforementioned cases of folk song research and promotion associated with MS were shaped not only by experts in music and folklore, but also by advocates of Slovak nationalism. Their growing influence during the interwar and wartime years negatively affected a number of projects—from the early criticism of folk song publications (notably the activities of teachers Volf and Pospíšil), to the postponement or obstruction of cooperation (for example, with the ŠÚPL or the editing of Bartók's collection), to outright refusals to collaborate (as in the case of Zagiba's book on the history of religious and folk songs).

A common thread among all these cases was the criticism of what was perceived as an insufficient or entirely lacking "Slovak" approach to cooperation, research, and the editorial treatment of folk songs. While the influence of Slovak nationalism on MS is well known, these examples reveal how profoundly it penetrated the institution's scholarly and promotional work—including the field of music.

60 František Zagiba (1912–1977) – musicologist and music historian. From 1942, he served as director of Oddelenie muzikológie Slovenskej akadémie vied a umení (The Department of Musicology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and Arts). After the war, he was dismissed from this institution and subsequently left to continue his work in musicology in Vienna. LENGOVÁ, Jana. Príspevok k životu a dielu Františka Zagibu. *Musicologica Slovaca*, vol. III, 2012, no. 2, p. 271.

61 AMS, f. HO MS, 1928–1949, letter from deputy head of Úrad propagandy in Bratislava to J. Kresánek, April 17, 1942; letter from J. Kresánek to deputy head of Úrad propagandy in Bratislava, May 28, 1942.

62 Jozef Alojz Vronč (1906–1989) – educator, publicist and author of methodological manuals; contributor to the pro-regime newspaper *Slovák*. BIZOŇOVÁ, Monika – OLEJNÍK, Vladimír. *Duchovné a kultúrne dedičstvo Spišskej kapituly II*. Ružomberok: Verbum, 2019, p. 168; AMS, f. HO MS, 1928–1949, letter from A. Vronč to MS administration, June 24, 1943.

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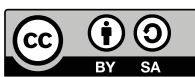
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## List of Abbreviations

Umelecký odbor MS	UO MS
Czechoslovak Republic	CSR
Matica slovenská	MS
Ministerstvo národnej obrany	MNO
Hudobný odbor MS	HO MS
Štátny ústav pre ľudovú pieseň	ŠÚLP
Slovenské národné múzeum – Hudobné múzeum	SNM – HM
Slovenská národná knižnica – Literárny archív	SNK – LA
Archív Matice slovenskej	AMS



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