

One hundred years of nature conservancy in Slovakia

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“One Hundred Years of Nature Conservancy in Slovakia”, was the topic of a recent national conference with international attendance organised by The State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic (SNC SR) and the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic (ME SR). The conference took place in Tale, Slovakia on October 5-16, 2019. Its aim was to commemorate the history of state nature conservancy in Slovakia, and to evaluate current developments, as well as the current state of, and the future vision for nature and landscape protection in Slovakia.

Nature conservation in Slovakia has deep social and cultural roots. Initially, utilitarian and world-view motives prevailed, however, thanks to the Hungarian nature conservationist Karol Kaán (1867 - 1940), and framed by the Hungarian Law Act 39/1881 of monuments and the Hungarian Law Act 31/1879 of forestry, the foundations for current nature conservation practices were laid. We consider 1919 (following establishment of the First Czechoslovak Republic) to be the year that institutionalized nature conservancy was established in Slovakia and it marks the beginning of efforts toward systematic protection of nature throughout Central Europe.

On October 20, 1919, Vavro Šrobár, the Minister of the Government of the Czechoslovak Republic, signed a document entitled “Order of the Minister - Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Czechoslovak Republic for the Administration of Slovakia no. 155/1919 on the competence of the Government Commissioner for the Monuments Conservation in Slovakia” (Nariadenie ministra – plnomocníka vlády Československej republiky pre správu Slovenska č. 155/1919 o právomoci Vládneho komisariátu na ochranu pamiatok na Slovensku). As a result, a Government Commission was established in Bratislava as a part of the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment in Prague, and named the “State Office for Monuments Conservation in Slovakia” (Štátny referát na ochranu pamiatok na Slovensku). This meant that state nature conservation became inherently linked to the conservation of monuments in Slovakia, until 1981 when the state nature conservancy became independent. Over this period of

62 years, conservation developed in parallel with the conservation of monuments, before eventually becoming an independent professional organization - the State Centre of Nature Conservation (Ústredie štátnej ochrany prírody) in Liptovský Mikuláš.

The development of nature conservancy had several important milestones. The most important of these was adoption of the Act No. 1/1955 on State Nature Protection. The foundation of the Slovak Heritage Institute (Slovenský pamiatkový ústav) occurred in 1951, and subsequently became the “Slovak Institute of Monument Preservation and Nature Conservation” in 1958 (Slovenský ústav pamiatkovej starostlivosti a ochrany prírody). Under these institutions, the same level of protection was implemented to safeguard nature as those legislated for species and territorial protection in Slovakia.

The conference was divided into five blocks and two sections, including excursions. In the first block Martin Lakanda (general director of SNC SR), Boris Susko (State Secretary of the ME SR), Ladislav Miko (Head of the Representation of the European Commission in the SR) and Vladimír Dolejský (Deputy for Management of the Nature Protection Department of the Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic) spoke to the guests, where they all emphasized not only historical milestones in the area of state nature protection in Slovakia, resp. in Czechoslovakia, but also presented goals and plans for the future. In the first section, “Historical Consequences of Nature Conservancy in Slovakia”, Viliam Stockmann (Slovak Museum of Nature protection and Speleology - SMNPS) presented on the origins and development of state nature conservancy during the 1st Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1938) and the 1st Slovak state (1939-1945). Next, Eva Greschová (SMNPS) spoke to the audience regarding the development of nature conservancy in Slovakia between 1945 to 1989, and at the end of this section, László Miklós (Institute of Landscape Ecology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences) focused on modern history of nature protection (since 1989). The second section was focused on “The State of Nature Protection in Slovakia, Forecasts and Visions”. Marta Mútnanová (Section Director of the Nature and Landscape Protection of SNC SR), spoke about State nature conservancy at present. Peter Baláž (Deputy Director General for SNC SR) presented, “Steps for future: Envirostrategy, the Conception of Nature Protection and legislative changes”. Milan Chrenko (ME SR), Radoslav Považan, (Slovak Environment Agency – SEA) and Richard Filčák (Institute for Forecasting - Centre of

Social and Psychological Sciences) presented "The Scenarios for Nature of Slovakia until 2050". After professional lectures, an interesting and stimulating discussion was moderated by Zuzana Gabrižová (Euractiv), in which the representatives of interested groups spoke about nature and landscape protection. During the third block, which ran in parallel with the first and second blocks, the conference participants had access to: poster presentations; films on nature and landscape conservation; Exhibition Ecoposters (selection of the winning works of Exhibition "Ekoplágát" - organised by SNC SR); and the exhibition 100 Years of State Nature Protection in Slovakia (SMNPS).

The fourth block was organised as a gala evening including award presentation to personalities and organizations in the field of nature and landscape protection in Slovakia. The prizes were presented by the Minister of the Environment László Solymós together with the General Director of SNC SR, Martin Lakanda. Juraj Galvánek, László Miklós, Dušan Slávik, Viliam Stockmann, Ján Terray, Miroslav Fulín, Rudolf Soltés, Jozef Klinda, Jaroslav Halaš, Milan Janík, Anna Jusková, Jozef Kramárik and Štefan Mihálik were awarded honorable mentions. Representatives of the following organiza-

tions or associations received honorary awards: National Zoo Bojnice, Slovak Union of Nature and Landscape Conservationists, Carpathian Protectionist Association of Altruists (KOZA Trenčín) and Civic Association - For Nature (OZ Pre prírodu). Thank you letters in memoriam were presented to relatives of the following personalities: Ján Futák, Jozef Šteffek, Dezider Magic, Peter Straka and Ludovít Dostál. Commemorative letters and commemorative medals of the General Director of SNC SR were given to all departmental organizations of the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic, as well as other organizations that significantly influence and help the development of nature protection in Slovakia.

During the second day of the conference, excursions were planned for the fifth block. Members had the opportunity to visit the Demänovská cave of Freedom, Dobročský prales (primeval fir-beech forest) and the Čierny Váh forestry railway (Čiernohorská železnica) or the Primeval forest of Bystrá valley (development after natural disturbances).

The expert guarantors of the conference were Prof. László Miklos from Technical University Zvolen, Katarína Butkiovská from the ME SR and Martin Lakanda from SNC SR.