
EDITORIAL

This volume of *Ethnologia Slovaca et Slavica* is dedicated to two main themes. The first of these is volunteering and voluntary activities, which are becoming more popular in our society and a significant part of social life. This is why it has been examined in a research project entitled *Dobrovoľnícke aktivity a združovanie sa na Slovensku v 21. storočí (Voluntary Activity and Associating in Slovakia in the 21st Century)* (VEGA 1/0943/14). The Department of Ethnology and Museology, based at the Faculty of Arts at Comenius University in Bratislava, was the main investigator of this project from 2014 to 2016. One of the project's major outputs was a conference in June 2016, and three papers given at the conference are presented in this volume.

The second core theme is the ninetieth birthday of Ján Podolák, who was a major figure in Slovak ethnology, the founder of *Ethnologia Slavica*, and the founder of our department. His birthday was celebrated on 17 May 2016. Even though there have been a number of texts which have already assessed Podolák's work – for instance, in volume 28-29 (1999) of this publication – it is simply not possible to ignore his impact, especially given the fact that he remained active as a researcher and teacher almost until his death on 15 February 2017.

The presented works deal with the core themes of this volume. The first presented work, by Pavol Tišliar, is entitled “The National Firefighters' Union in Slovakia between 1900 and 1950”; this is a historiographical study outlining volunteer firefighters in Slovakia. The following study, written by Ján Semrád, is entitled “Associational Life in the Lesná Housing Estate in Brno”; it presents several civic initiatives aimed at improving Lesná as a residential area. In “Contemporary Art Practice in the Middle East – the Case of the Cairo Townhouse Gallery”, Alexandra Kollárová deals with activist art as a form of cultural resistance. The work by Jiří Woitsch, entitled “A Comparative Study of Harnessing Cattle – An Important Chapter in the History of European Ethnology”, looks at the organization of research in the field of agrarian ethnology. This part of the discipline was central to Podolák's work, which left a great impact.

The work by Magdaléna Paríková, entitled “Ján Podolák and the Establishment of International Activities at the Department of Ethnography and Folkloristics”,

focuses on Podolák's significant impact on the formation of activities in our department. We conclude the volume with our best wishes to Ján Podolák, our treasured colleague, from Juraj Janto and with a book review by Hana Hlôšková. Dear friends, we wish you rewarding reading of this collection.

Juraj Janto
editor