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Maks Samec and His Adapting to Academic Standards After World War II

IZVLEČEK

MAKS SAMEC IN NJEGOVO PRILAGAJANJE AKADEMSKIM STANDARDOM PO DRUGI SVETOVNI VOJNI

Prispevek obravnava akademsko kariero Maksa Samca (1881–1964) po drugi svetovni vojni. Čeprav je Samec po »čistki« na Univerzi v Ljubljani avgusta 1945 izgubil habilitacijo, so mu kot nenadomestljivemu znanstveniku ponudili drugo priložnost – postal je ustanovitelj novoustanovljenega Kemijskega inštituta pri Slovenski akademiji znanosti in umetnosti (SAZU). Za svoje delo si je prislužil številna priznanja in državna odlikovanja. Na inštitutu si je prizadeval za uporabo svojih akademskih standardov, vendar pri tem ni bil povsem uspešen, kar je bila tudi posledica upravnih reform in sprememb v raziskovalni politiki v petdesetih letih 20. stoletja.

Ključne besede: Maks Samec, Inštitut za kemijo, akademska svoboda, Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, Univerza v Ljubljani

ABSTRACT

The paper at hand deals with the academic career of Maks Samec (1881–1964) after World War II. Samec lost his habilitation upon the “purge” at the University of Ljubljana in August of 1945, but was offered a second chance as an irreplaceable scientist – he became the founder of the newly established Institute of Chemistry at the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA). He has earned numerous recognitions and state decorations for

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his work. At the institute, he strived to apply his academic standards, but was not entirely successful, which was also a consequence of administrative reforms and changes to research policy in the 1950s.

Keywords: Maks Samec, Institute of Chemistry, academic freedom, Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, University of Ljubljana

Transformation of Slovenian Academic Community After World War II

The academic community in Slovenia changed essentially after World War II, mainly due to a stronger state role and an altered status of science. The state assumed the role of society modernizer, and science – especially technical – was perceived as an important tool of modernization. Therefore, the new authority allocated more funds for science and the number of research positions rose, both in the frame of University of Ljubljana as well as SASA.¹ Proportionally to stronger state role, the autonomy of institutions decreased. Despite all the changes and reforms, senior scientists preserved their influence and advocated autonomy, becoming a disturbing element in the political authority's hold on scientific institutions. After completing their mission, i.e. the education of scientific offspring, a group of senior scientists was retired in the years from 1957 to 1959. These have contributed decisively in the institutionalization of Slovenian science, as well as set an example of scientific conduct that was not fully followed by younger scientists. A conflict between the senior and the ambitious younger scientists was deliberately constructed or at least instigated, where the younger scientists have as a rule enjoyed political support.²

By focusing on pure research before World War II, Slovenian scientists have contributed in the treasury of world knowledge, thus working for the good of humankind.³ After World War II, however, their focus was redirected towards the benefit of people's

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- 1 Aleš Gabrič, "Znanstvena politika v Sloveniji po drugi svetovni vojni in vloga Antona Peterlina," in: *Anton Peterlin 1908 – 1993: življenje in delo*, eds. Vili Bukošek et al. (Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti and Institut Jožef Stefan, 2008), 300–05. France Kidrič, "V novi Jugoslaviji," in: *Letopis Akademije znanosti in umetnosti v Ljubljani: druga knjiga: 1943–1947* (Ljubljana: Akademija znanosti in umetnosti v Ljubljani, 1947), 5–7. David Movrin, "The Anatomy of a Revolution: Classics at the University of Ljubljana after 1945," in: *Classics and Communism: Greek and Latin behind the Iron Curtain*, eds. György Karsai et al. (Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani; Budapest: Collegium Budapest Institute for Advanced Study; Warsaw: The Faculty of 'Artes Liberales,' University of Warsaw, 2013.), 141–68.
 - 2 Aleš Gabrič, "Reforma visokega šolstva 1954–1961 ali kako uničiti ljubljansko Univerzo," in: *Nova revija*, 1994, No. 149, 115–20. Željko Oset, *Zgodovina Slovenske akademije znanosti in umetnosti: razvoj najvišje znanstvene in umetniške ustanove, 1945–1992* (Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, 2017), 57–83.
 - 3 See also Florian Bieber and Harald Heppner, eds., *Universities and Elite Formation in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe* (Wien, Zürich, Münster: LIT, 2015), 1–10.

community and with the local participators.⁴ In the West, a rise in cooperation of research sphere with the industry has been also present, both in producing technology for dual (military, civil) or an entirely military purpose, but a commitment to fundamental research work and free choice of research questions is preserved.⁵ In Slovenia – at least in the building of two institutes: the SASA Institute of Physics/Jožef Stefan Institute and Institute of Chemistry Boris Kidrič – the authority “determined” a priority research field which it was ready to finance substantially, a novelty at the time.⁶

The new era was marked by getting used to scientists being more dependent on authority, new rules of decision-making, lesser autonomy in determining research questions, and limitations in collaboration abroad. Scientists had to accept their loss of status as opinion leaders who publicly and quite freely discussed socially important political issues. These were still discussed in private meetings and expert gatherings, but their views were not made public.⁷

Because of this, senior scientists criticized the authority’s measures in private parties, ridiculed the rulers, complained about the changes and warned about too small investments in science.⁸ But they were still proud of their reputation, so they wanted to remain perceived in Slovenian science as self-dependent, independent from authority.⁹ At the same time, they also wanted to preserve the influence in their research groups.¹⁰

Slovenian Academic Community’s Transformation as a Research Question

Problems of transforming the Slovenian academic community after World War II were discussed in the beginning of 1990s within the scope of an in-depth research of the takeover of power and its subsystems by the Communist Party after World War II. On one hand, researching was encouraged importantly through democratization and the related procedure of rectification of the wrongs committed during communism, especially in the early stage, and on the other hand, it is part of a broader researching

4 Prim. Gabrič, “Znanstvena politika,” 300–05.

5 John Krige, *American Hegemony and the Postwar Reconstruction of Science in Europe* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2014), 30–39.

6 Gabrič, “Znanstvena politika,” 300–05. Željko Oset, “Kemični inštitut (Borisa Kidriča) v letih med 1946 in 1959,” in: *Maks Samec (1881–1964): življenje in delo: zbornik ob 50-letnici smrti*, eds. Branko Stanovnik et al. (Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti and Slovensko kemijsko društvo, 2015), 183–88.

7 SIAS 1931, II, 26, 50279.

8 Ibid., 50248.

9 France Kidrič emphasized, in the elections of Josip Broz for honorary member in August 1948, that SASA had decided by its own inclination for the election, and that it is not a Party or Party-dependent institution. Similar warnings were given by the president France Kidrič in October 1949 before the elections of new members. It was then that the legal provision on the authority confirming an academician’s election was applied for the first time. The president warned that this must not arouse an appearance of SASA’s subordination in public, so SASA asked the Slovenian authority’s opinion on the candidates before the elections. – Oset, *Zgodovina Slovenske akademije*, 201–03.

10 SI AS 223, b. 498, Uradna zabeležka o odstopu dr. Franceta Avčina kot predsednika sveta Inštituta za elektriško gospodarstvo.

of the historical period upon setting the historical distance and using comparative approach, which, after entering European Union, is in part encouraged through EU priority research goals.

Important work was done by the commission of Slovenian historians that prepared, upon request by the Slovenian parliament, the Elaborate on key characteristics of Slovenian politics between 1929–1955 (*Ključne značilnosti slovenske politike v letih 1929–1955, znanstveno poročilo* – written only in Slovenian language), published in 1995. Its focal point is in reviewing the political development and lines of force, i.e. “breaking points that are crucial to understanding and explaining the reasons for the ‘schism’ in Slovenian society”.¹¹ The University of Ljubljana and the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts have subsequently founded their own commissions, wanting to research their history in the first years after the communist takeover of power. The goal was essentially a rectification of wrongs and rehabilitation of professors, collaborators and academicians who were wronged, while a more wholesome valorization of the historical period has established itself simultaneously.¹²

New researches, a new research approach and documentation of material collections have contributed to partial rectification of wrongs, a better understanding of the historical period, and a new scholarship has formed. Important consequence of the discussion is a profound interest in selected scientists, resulting in the recent period in a large number of monographs and articles on scientists and cultural workers who have importantly marked Slovenian science, but too little was known about them.¹³ Maks Samec, a chemist, university professor at University of Ljubljana and the manager of Institute of Chemistry Boris Kidrič, can be qualified among such scientists who have marked the institutionalization of Slovenian science.

Academic Career of Maks Samec Until 1945

Samec made a successful academic career before World War II (articles, books, patents), became the dean of Technical faculty twice and head of University of Ljubljana (1935–1937). However, the focus of his work was the university chemistry institute. He received numerous recognitions and decorations, was named a regular member of SASA, the Yugoslavian Academy of Sciences and Arts, and the Academy of Sciences Leopoldina.¹⁴ He was, in short, one of the most respected professors of the Ljubljana

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- 11 Zdenko Čepič et al., *Ključne značilnosti slovenske politike v letih 1929–1955: znanstveno poročilo* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 1995).
 - 12 Aleš Gabrič and Peter Vodopivec, eds., *Politični pritiski in izključevanja učiteljev in sodelavcev z Univerze v Ljubljani: poročilo Komisije za rehabilitacijo univerzitetnih učiteljev in sodelavcev* (Ljubljana: Univerza v Ljubljani, 2000). France Bernik, “Iz zgodovine SAZU,” in: *Letopis Slovenske akademije znanosti in umetnosti: 46. knjiga: 1995* (Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, 1996), 147–50. Oset, *Zgodovina Slovenske akademije*, 215, 216.
 - 13 Bukošek et al., *Anton Peterlin 1908–1993*. Anton Suhadolc, *Profesor Rihard Zupančič* (Ljubljana: A. Suhadolc, 2011). Stanovnik et al., *Maks Samec (1881–1964)*. Alenka Puhar, *Izidor Cankar, Mojster dobro zasukanih stavkov: življenje in delo Izidorja Cankarja, 1886–1958* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2016).
 - 14 Tatjana Peterlin Neumaier, “Življenjepis Maksa Samca,” in: Stanovnik et al., *Maks Samec (1881–1964)*, 39–51.

University, but obtained some powerful opponents when running for its head position in February 1935.¹⁵ Because of defending strict academic standards and insisting on an outdated code of behavior, as well as modest job opportunities for young graduates, he fell out of favor with some of his younger colleagues, among them such who would become decision-makers after World War II.¹⁶

Maks Samec kept good relations with German scientists, particularly during 1930s, when the results of his research on food persistence were published. Due to successful research, good acquaintanceships among scientists, as well as support of the German consul in Ljubljana, he was elected for the correspondent member of Academy of Sciences Leopoldina in 1940, and also received a high Third Reich national award (an order of the German Eagle, 1st grade). He was highly recommended for both German decorations by the German consul in Ljubljana, who wrote in February 1940 in a report to German embassy in Belgrade that Samec, through “his research work, conducted in close collaboration with the German scientists, is one of Germany’s best friends”. In lobbying for the state recognition, he even characterized Samec as “unserer Mensch an der Universität”. Therefore, it is no surprise that Samec received an offer in autumn of 1941 to move together with “volksdeutschers” from Ljubljana province to Germany. Samec did not decide for this step, but wanted to preserve good relations with the German authorities. He also declined the position of Mayor of Ljubljana, offered by the German occupying authorities.¹⁷

The Post-war Purge and Irreplaceable Experts

At the post-war purge at the Ljubljana University, he was detached, removing his habilitation, but received a pay and a liability on support of his research. Samec obtained the status of irreplaceable scientist who can contribute to the realization of planned measures of the new people’s power and educate an adequately qualified generation of younger experts.¹⁸

Removal of Maks Samec’s habilitation – and the wider purge at the Ljubljana University – achieved its goal of intimidating scientists who thus became aware of their dependence on the authority, especially in the breaking period. It is the period which Anton Peterlin characterized as the period of partisan freedom.¹⁹ In this time, obtaining support and protection from visible representatives of the new authority

15 Željko Oset, “Gradnja kemičnega inštituta Univerze kralja Aleksandra I.,” in: Stanovnik et al., *Maks Samec (1881–1964)*, 138–40.

16 Peterlin Neumaier, “Življenjepis Maksa Samca,” 52, 53.

17 SI AS 1931, VIII, 5, 7680–7686.

18 Oset, “Kemični inštitut (Borisa Kidriča),” 183–86.

19 Archives of family Peterlin, Notes of Anton Peterlin; Library of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, R 46/III-138. David Movrin, Fran Bradač, Anton Sovre, Milan Grošelj, Jože Košar and Fran Petre, “Latinščina in grščina na ljubljanski univerzi v prvem desetletju po vojni,” in: *Keria: studia Latina et Graeca* 15, No. 2 (2013): 147–79. Puhar, *Izidor Cankar*, 88–105.

was required for deciding on guerilla collecting of apparatuses in the field,²⁰ valorizing one's inter-war activity, or continuing a scientific career.²¹

In the summer of 1945, Samec experienced a feeling of isolation and endangerment; information circulated about his ejection to Austria as part of deportation of the German minority from Slovenia. His younger colleagues spread rumors about his favor for Germans, a strong Germany and his displaying of the German high state decoration during World War II. He was also accused of a life of comfort before and during the war, but acknowledged at the same time his scientific excellence. By gaining support of the president of Slovenian government, he was personally "protected", so his adversaries retaliated against his supporting members at the University's chemistry institute: doc. dr. Marta Blinc²² and prof. dr. Marius Rebek.²³

New Research Policy and Irreplaceable "Cadres"

The new Slovenian authority's research policy was vaguely defined – perhaps the most thoughtful was the field of human resources, but the authority had to consider the scarcity of Slovenian academic community and a somewhat modest influence of younger scientists who were ideologically in its favor. Due to this scarcity, a group of irreplaceable scientists was formed, among which we can undoubtedly place the founders of big natural institutes at SASA (Maks Samec: Institute of Chemistry/Boris Kidrič/; Milan Vidmar: Institute for electrical economy; Anton Kuhelj: Institute for turbine machines; Anton Peterlin: Institute of Physics/Institute Jožef Stefan). Their interests varied: some wanted to connect the research work with the pedagogy process at the university (Peterlin),²⁴ others to found their institute anywhere in Slovenia, if provided with sufficient state support (Vidmar, Kuhelj),²⁵ and Samec simply wanted to continue his research work after his habilitation was removed.²⁶

In the post-war period, it held good for Samec, in the words of Slovenian government's president Boris Kidrič, spoken at SASA's request for the employment of Jakob Šolar, "for pedagogical work, no, for scientific work, do make use of him".²⁷

His younger colleagues presented him as an ideological opponent, and his

20 Gabrič, "Znanstvena politika," 303–05.

21 Milan Vidmar, *Spomini. II.* (Maribor: Založba Obzorja, 1964), 238, 239.

22 Marta Blinc, seen as Samec's protegee and a personal friend, lost her habilitation in the purge, her assets were nationalized, and she as a German was exiled from Ljubljana to Austria. She was only allowed to return in autumn 1947, when SASA arranged for her return on Samec's demand. – SIAS 1931, Lm, 105, 208927.

23 Rebek was exiled from Yugoslavia together with his wife on the pretext that she, as a German, was a hostile element, even though they had both collaborated with partisans during the war. Rebek claimed in his letters to colleagues, and also to the president of government, that Samec was irreplaceable, even more so in the new times, when development of technical branches was planned. – Anton Peterlin, "O slovenskem kemiku dr. Mariusu Rebeku," in: *Ameriška domovina/American home* (Cleveland, Ohio), 25. 2. 1983.

24 Gabrič, "Znanstvena politika," 309.

25 Oset, "Zgodovina Slovenske akademije," 81–83.

26 Peterlin Neumaier, "Življenjepis Maksa Samca," 52–55.

27 Archives of SASA, Predsedstvo 1938–1952, folder 14, Zapisnik seje predsedstva SAZU (11. 10. 1952).

disorderly attendance in the people's-front-organs only hardened the suspicions. Of course, regular visiting of all people's-front-sessions would in no way essentially change his position. Later, as Samec was working intensely in the field of enriching coal, for entire days and also during weekends, his rare visits of people's-front-sessions were no longer paid particular attention. Even more, his absence was proof that he is devoted to solving an important research problem, the solution of which was expected much of by the authority.²⁸

Maks Samec was, first of all, a researcher-workaholic who wanted to "do" as much as possible. Yet he was constantly accompanied by a sense of lost time from his Vienna period and the period of Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia, when he had to struggle to ensure appropriate working conditions.²⁹

Samec pointed out several times in 1945 and 1946 that he only wanted to continue his scientific work, and the Slovenian authority (particularly Boris Kidrič) wanted an important scientific center to be formed in Slovenia. In early 1946, Boris Kidrič invited Samec to a meeting and suggested him to think about founding a large chemistry institute at SASA that would be home to chemists of Yugoslavia. The purpose of the institute would be to solve the fundamental problems of Yugoslavian economy in the field of chemistry, as well as educating the young generation, and international collaboration would be enabled.³⁰

Maks Samec, who remained in the field of colloid chemistry (food persistence), a less interesting economic question for a predominantly agricultural country, accepted the proposal by the president of Slovenian government. Despite this, he pointed out the research of food persistence as the central research question in his first work program in February 1946, whereas in the future, he intended to research the possibility for raising a culture to produce penicillin.³¹ His proposal did not appease the expectations of the Slovenian authority, so he sent another proposal of the new institute's research plan two months later. Samec suggested as the central research question the studying of the process of making metallurgical coke from domestic coals. In this, he pointed out that he had already conducted his preliminary research in the years 1928–1931 for Trbovlje coal mining company. He made it clear that the research results were encouraging in laboratory phase, however, the client then did not decide for test production due to it being unrewarding, since such coke was 25 per cent more expensive than imported one.³²

Samec's research of enriching coals was a research field the authority was willing to financially support. SASA passed the new research program proposal to the Ministry of industry and mining that positively evaluated the proposal,

28 Oset, "Kemični inštitut (Borisa Kidriča)," 168–72.

29 Peterlin Neumaier, "Življenjepis Maksa Samca," 45, 46, 64–66.

30 "Pot do moderne znanstvene ustanove," in: *Slovenski poročevalec* 15, 1954, No. 140.

31 Archives of SASA, Razna pošta, b. 7 (1946), No. 33/46.

32 *Ibid.*, No. 141/46.

since it was exceptionally important in the concept of Yugoslavian key economy development.³³

The proposal was officially endorsed in October 1946, therefore the head secretary of SASA prepared a statute, and SASA officially employed Samec, whereas the statute of the Institute of Chemistry was passed in December 1947 at SASA assembly. This changed Samec's position which he used to set up a laboratory, but he also managed to have his former close colleague Marta Blinc repatriated.³⁴

With successful running of the institute and encouraging research results, political scruples ceased to obstruct his re-election as SASA member; he was re-elected in December 1949 as member of SASA,³⁵ and three years later again as correspondent member of the Yugoslavian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Zagreb.³⁶

But he was also publicly promoted as a top home scientist. This strengthened patriotism and most of all the view that the authority was able by domestic knowledge to carry out industrialization, or broader, a transition to a socialist society. An important aspect for the Slovenian authority was the fact that Samec managed to do this as a Slovenian scientist who was more successful than the Serbian scientist Božo Popović, a former student of Samec, who was conducting coal enrichment for the Serbian academy of sciences. Therefore, it is no surprise that Samec was even awarded two Prešeren awards in 1949 and 1950. First one was for scientific results, important for reaching the five-year plan, while next year, the award was for successful work to produce metallurgic coke from domestic coal.³⁷

Maks Samec Under Surveillance

The main research project by the Institute of Chemistry was extremely important, the key cause for UDBA's³⁸ operative supervision of Samec in summer of 1948. Before, UDBA mostly gathered rumors about Samec, circulating among university professors, and extracts from documents, especially the German consulate in Ljubljana. But since Samec was very retained in public, while his social network was narrow, UDBA failed to obtain quality information on him.³⁹ Decision for his methodical supervision was made after the so-called Dachau trials, a mock political trial against former internees in German concentration camps, where much of technical intelligence was interrogated

33 Ibid., No. 184/46. Jože Prinčič, "Razvoj gospodarstva do sredine petdesetih let," in: *Slovenska novejša zgodovina: od programa Zedinjene Slovenije do mednarodnega priznanja Republike Slovenije: 2*, eds. Jasna Fischer et al. (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino; Mladinska knjiga, 2005), 965–68.

34 SI AS 1931, VIII, 28, 7832, 7833.

35 Željko Oset, "Samec vnovič postane član Slovenske akademije znanosti in umetnosti," in: Stanovnik et al., *Maks Samec (1881–1964)*, 168–72.

36 Samec belongs in a group of pre-war members of Yugoslavian academy of sciences and arts whose memberships were not returned on academy's revival in autumn 1947. – Ibid., 166.

37 Ibid., 167, 168. Peterlin Neumaier, "Življenjepis Maksa Samca," 59, 60.

38 The State Security Administration (Uprava Državne Bezbednosti) was the secret police organization of Yugoslavia, and it was best known at all times simply by the acronym UDBA.

39 SI AS 1931, VIII, 5, 7611.

and eventually sentenced, even pre-war communists. Interesting to UDBA regarding Samec were the interrogations of Boris Fakin and Boris Krajnc, a graduate and doctorate candidate of Samec. UDBA was mainly interested in his relation toward German scientists and his international contacts.⁴⁰

Even though the mentioned two made critical remarks about Samec, the reason of supervision was in the mere importance of the project for economic development. Samec was also aware of this, writing in a letter to the president of SASA in May 1948 how he was aware that he was under “a very strict supervision, like everyone who worked in an industrial facility”.⁴¹ Interrogation of Fakin and Kranjc thus “merely” sped up the procedure of establishing operative supervision over Samec, beginning in summer of 1948, when the Slovenian authority assigned a Ford automobile to the Institute of Chemistry, with a chauffeur who, under the alias “Ford Jože”, became the first UDBA collaborator and watched Samec.⁴²

UDBA began with detailed supervision in October 1948, after Samec became the chief of the group for chemistry in the Federal commission for the progress of production, and the federal ministry of economy called Samec and Božo Popović, head of competitive group in the Serbian academy of sciences, to an advocacy in order to clear up a (supposed) sabotage. Namely, the ministry did not appropriately evidence the memos that the scientists were sending. Even though an obvious miscommunication had taken place, UDBA decided to supervise Samec more closely.⁴³

Even concealing research results was sabotage. Samec faced a grave danger in the decision-makers’ incomprehension of the problem. This, that is, incomprehension, was not supposed to happen in Ljubljana, since the surveillance was coordinated by Milan Osredkar, also head of Ljubljana branch of the Federal commission for progress of production. Osredkar thus controlled Samec during work and in his free time.⁴⁴

Samec, too, was very afraid of sabotage, and called all collaborators of the Institute of Chemistry to discretion in using research results, also in contacts with journalists, who he suspected to be UDBA agents. Samec feared UDBA would send a “provoker” to obtain information on the research, only to use it in a process against him. But Samec already suspected in summer 1949 that UDBA managed to “thrash” one of the employees at the Institute of Chemistry, which he was very offended with.⁴⁵

What worried UDBA was mainly Samec’s poor family situation – health issues of his wife. Her condition, already bad before the war, deteriorated further after the war. Unbearable family situation also effected Samec’s health and, as a consequence, success of his scientific work. In summer of 1949, after the construction of the new building of the Institute of Chemistry started, Samec believed he would not live to see

40 Ibid., 7610, 7611.

41 Archives of SASA, Kemijski inštitut, 1948, Maks Samec’s letter to France Kidrič (17. 5. 1948).

42 SIAS 1931, LM, 105, 208930.

43 SIAS 1931, VIII, 5, 7619, 8075, 8076.

44 Ibid., 7753, 7754.

45 Ibid., 7730, 8013–15.

it built.⁴⁶ Osredkar and France Kidrič first convinced Samec into hospital treatment of his wife, but then a decision was made for her to “move” to Austria. Because of reduced stress in his private life, Samec functioned as if reborn, the early 1950s thus being among his most successful research years.⁴⁷

“Fight” with Reforms

Due to the success of the parade research project – the research of producing metallurgical coke – other research groups were able to form at the institute, among them for studying colloid chemistry. In 1950s, the institute’s financial dependence on a single project has proven to be an exceptional challenge for long-term stability. First serious blow was the abolishment of the Federal commission for the progress of production – the main financer of the institute – in autumn 1952 – and employment of the commission’s collaborators at the institute. An even graver blow was introducing a new funding model to the institute: self-maintenance. Until then, the institute received almost all its funds from the state, but now, it had to acquire the resources for its function on the market. By this, the authority wanted to strengthen collaboration of research institutes with the economy, but there was little demand for research favors of the institute. And when projects were acquired, these were tied to performing a specific task. Protests by manager Samec that such a model makes the pure research impossible had no effect. Not even renaming the institute after deceased Boris Kidrič helped.⁴⁸

Because of the new funding model and slow firing of excess workers, Chemistry Institute found itself in serious financial trouble. First crisis arose in summer 1955, solved by Slovenian government with allocating a research project to the institute. In the next crisis in spring of 1957, Samec suggested introducing social management of his own initiative. He expected that by proposing a management model to authority’s liking, he would gain support of Slovenian authority and additional funds for the institute’s function. To him, it was about finishing begun research before old age debilitation would appear. The government rejected the proposed change due to upcoming passing of legislation on scientific institutions, allocated the institute bridging funds and procured economic orders.⁴⁹

In autumn 1957, the republic Act on scientific institutions was passed, and in December 1958 a new decree stating that SASA, University of Ljubljana and Executive council of People’s Republic of Slovenia were cofounders of the Institute of Chemistry Boris Kidrič. The status change provided that the manager becomes advisor to the new institute leadership. Furthermore, it was provided that the institute maintain Samec’s research group after reorganization.⁵⁰

46 SI AS 1931, Lm, 105, 208930, 208931, 208933–38.

47 Peterlin Neumaier, “Življenjepis Maksa Samca,” 57–59.

48 Archives of SASA, Predsedstvo 1953–1963, folder 3, Zapisnik seje predsedstva SAZU (2. 12. 1955).

49 Oset, “Kemični inštitut (Borisa Kidriča),” 188–92.

50 Ibid.

Samec accepted the changes as executed fact and did not want to overly upset himself, well aware of futility of such action. He accepted the cabinet he was offered at the Institute of Chemistry, which enabled him access to laboratories. He later denoted the reform in a letter to SASA head secretary Milko Kos as “demolition of the institute”, blaming an undefined group of younger colleagues.⁵¹ He connected the reform with ambition of chemistry professors to conduct postgraduate studies at the Institute of Chemistry, which Samec firmly opposed.⁵²

Samec took very personally the breaking of the agreement on funding his research group – he first had to obtain research projects for its function, then, since 1960, he obtained funds from Foundation Boris Kidrič and SASA. In 1962, he gained a large research project (Modifying cereal starches by physical procedures in goal of spreading the use of these starches), supported by the US Ministry of Agriculture.

In line with his academic standards, Samec wanted to designate his successor in the fund as head of project. He chose Marta Blinc. After his death, the research group was joined to the Institute of Chemistry, determined as the project executant, while Marta Blinc decided to retire due to poor atmosphere.⁵³

To Samec, founding of the cabinet was a last major life break, enabling him to focus on his preferred research field (colloid chemistry), a chance to participate in conferences abroad, and foremost, relief from bureaucracy and fighting for funds. Research was a key part of his identity, therefore he experienced organizational changes personally. In October 1963, he wrote in a letter to SASA head secretary Milko Kos that the chance affected him personally. He even called it the “demolition of the institute”.⁵⁴ In some manner, he relived the trauma from summer of 1945. He estimated that his efforts in founding the Institute of Chemistry, even by researching a field less fond to him, was not adequately valorized. Despite adapting to post-war system of leading a research institute and science funding, he remained true to academic ideals conquered in his Viennese *alma matris*, and was therefore disappointed by actions of his younger colleagues who have in striving to prove themselves, in his view, violated those academic standards. In this way, his academic standards were violated in autumn 1963 at proposing candidates for new members. In the candidacy procedure, an awkward embarrassment occurred in who to suggest a candidate: academician (Samec), who was a scientific authority for the field, or someone outside SASA.⁵⁵ Candidates for the field of chemistry were Dušan Hadži, proposed by Samec, and Roman Modic, proposed by the “made side”.⁵⁶ Already after Samec’s death, Dušan Hadži, the first doctorand of Samec at SASA and collaborator at the Institute of Chemistry Boris Kidrič, won this “battle”.⁵⁷

51 Archives of SASA, Predsedstvo 1953–1963, folder 11, Zapisnik seje predsedstva SAZU (18. 6. 1963).

52 Archives of SASA, Predsedstvo 1953–1963, folder 5, Zapisnik seje predsedstva SAZU (6. 2. 1957).

53 Oset, “Samec postane vnovič član,” 175, 176.

54 Archives of SASA, Predsedstvo 1953–1963, folder 11, Zapisnik seje predsedstva SAZU (18. 6. 1963).

55 Archives of SASA, Skupščina 1962–1972, Zapisnik skupščine SAZU (3. 7. 1964).

56 Archives of SASA, Seje predsedstva 1953–1963, folder 11, Zapisnik seje predsedstva SAZU (18. 6. 1963).

57 “Members of the SASA,” SAZU, accessed September 10, 2018, <http://www.sazu.si/o-sazu/clani/umrli.html>.

Conclusion

Maks Samec was formed as *homo academicus* at the University of Vienna. Because of defending strict academic standards and insisting on an outdated code of behavior, favoring some members at his institute, as well as modest job opportunities for young graduates, he fell out of favor with some of his younger colleagues, among them such who would become decision-makers after World War II.

At the post-war purge at the Ljubljana University, he was detached, removing his habilitation, but as an irreplaceable scientist, he was awarded opportunity to restart his career. Samec had two main goals: perform research and educate young generation of chemists. His was granted substantial amount of funds upon presentation of politically desirable research – i.e. the research of the process of making metallurgical coke from domestic coals. He was still allowed to proceed with his research of colloid chemistry but due to the extent of organizational work, tutoring and health issues as well, to a lesser extent.

Samec successful running of the Institute and encouraging research results gained him public acclaim as a top home scientist and several important awards as well. However, due to the importance of the Institute core research, he was under UDBA surveillance. Samec has suspected surveillance, which was disappointed realization of wariness in his academic honor. Even more, he was disappointed in mid-1950's upon introducing the new funding model, so-called self-maintenance. Until then, the institute received almost all its funds from the state, but now, it had to acquire the resources for its function on the market. Protests by Samec that such a model makes the essential scientific work impossible had no effect. Not even renaming the institute after deceased Boris Kidrič helped.

The final blow to his academic standard was his retirement from the institute in 1959, which was for him the demolition of the institute. Samec adapted to the post-war system in Slovenian academic community (e.g. in terms of selecting research, preferred organization solutions and funding of research), and was aware of political cliffs and issues that could have been perceived as “sabotage”. Even though his academic standards were out-dated, he tried to live by them, therefore his biggest disappointment of the period after WWII was fumbled collegiality among scientists especially younger one.

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Željko Oset

MAKS SAMEC AND HIS ADAPTING TO ACADEMIC STANDARDS AFTER WORLD WAR II

SUMMARY

In August 1945, Maks Samec lost his *venia docendi* during the post-war purge at the University of Ljubljana but retained a position as researcher till further notice. Thus, he was able to conduct research at the dislocated unit of the university's chemical institute. Samec and his wife were under threat to be expelled from Yugoslavia to Austria in a group of so-called "Volksdeutschers". Upon intervention from the Slovenian communist government, Samec (and his wife) was allowed to stay in Ljubljana as an irreplaceable scientist.

The Slovenian Prime Minister, Boris Kirdič, offered Samec to establish a new chemical institute within the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. New institute should research (primarily the production of metallurgical coal from Yugoslavian coals) and at the same time trained new, younger generation of researchers. Samec accepted the challenge in the new era that was marked by more assertive role of the state in academia, new rules of decision-making, lesser autonomy in determine research questions, and limitations and collaboration abroad. Even though Samec acknowledge new rules, he was still trying to enforce his personal academic standards. Due to his success, he was awarded public awards and honors as early as in 1949, moreover, he was promoted as role model for excellence and patriotism.

In 1959, he was retired during a reform in the academia thus a special chemical cabinet was established for him within the framework of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. He did not take it lightly, but he was aware about futility of protests.

Željko Oset

MAKS SAMEC IN NJEGOVO PRILAGAJANJE AKADEMSKIM STANDARDOM PO DRUGI SVETOVNI VOJNI

POVZETEK

Maks Samec je izgubil *venia docendi* na Univerzi v Ljubljani med povojno čistko profesorskega kadra; postavljen je bil na razpoložnje, kar pomeni, da je lahko nadaljeval z raziskovalnim delom v dislocirani enoti univerzitetnega kemijskega inštituta. Samcu in njegovi ženi je grozila izselitev iz Jugoslavije v Avstrijo v skupini Volskdeutscherjev, vendar sta bila umaknjena s seznama po intervenciji slovenske vlade. Samec je bil namreč opredeljen kot nenadomestljiv znanstvenik.

Predsednik slovenske vlade Boris Kidrič je Samca povabil, da ustanovi kemijski inštitut pri Slovenski akademiji znanosti in umetnosti, ki bo utemeljen na dveh stebrih: raziskovalno delo (v prvi vrsti gre za raziskovalno vprašanje izdelave metalurškega kokska iz jugoslovanskih premogov) in vzgoja znanstvenega naraščaja. Samec je sprejel izziv v dobi, ki jo je zaznamoval večji vpliv države v akademski skupnosti; nove oblike odločanja, manjša avtonomija pri izbiri raziskovalnih vprašanj in omejitve pri mednarodnem sodelovanju. Navkljub spremenjenim pogojem je na inštitutu uvedel stroge akademske standarde. Zaradi svojega uspešnega raziskovalnega dela in vodenja inštituta je že v nekaj letih po drugi svetovni vojni pridobil javna priznanja in nagrade. Še več; bil je promoviran kot zgled znanstvene odličnosti in patriotizma.

Samec je inštitut zapustil leta 1959 po izvedeni reformi, raziskovalno delo pa je nadaljeval v zanj ustanovljenem kabinetu na Slovenski akademiji znanosti in umetnosti. Spremembo je sprejel kot izvršeno dejstvo, zato se ni pritoževal, čeprav ga je odstranitev z inštituta osebno prizadela.