

From Tyršův Sad to Mniší Hora

The predecessor of the Brno Zoological Gardens, which have been open to the public since 1953, used to be a somewhat humble Zoo Corner which, these days, has already been forgotten. It existed from June 1937 until January 1941 in Tyršův Sad, a park which was founded in 1907 at the location of the former town cemetery, between the streets of Kounicova and Botanická. The Zoo Foundation Association in Brno, which was the creator of this Zoo Corner, considered it to be a provisional measure. They were hoping with it to convince the public of the need for a larger zoo in Brno, typical of others elsewhere.

The decline of the Zoo Corner came about mainly because of opponents from the Society for the Protection of Animals. After the war, the Zoo Foundation Association resumed its activities and focused on the search for a place which would be suitable for the construction of the gardens. However, this initiative was taken over by a regional national committee which founded the zoo in 1950 and established a collective to work on its construction. In the following year, when the activity of societies was prohibited on state territory, the association was transformed into a zoological club associated with the zoo. The members of the club co-operated with the zoo for many years in the fields of promotion, education, and practical activities involving the protection of domestic avifauna, as well as giving voluntary help for the creation of new enclosures. Antonín Bujnoch, the former executive director and cashier, wrote of his experiences with the association and the Zoo Corner. A fifteen-page-long typed document named "The Creation and Development of Brno Zoological Gardens up to 1952" is stored in the archives of the Young Nature Scientists' Station, the successor organisation to the zoological club. The text, despite being highly subjective, is a unique and authentic record of the first zoo in Brno. The following lines come mainly from this document. (The texts in quotation marks are slightly adapted from Bujnoch's manuscript.)



A view of Tyršův sad Park from the 1930s

Photo Brno Zoo archive

First available report on the effort to found a zoo in Brno goes back to the year 1929, when important Brno personalities from the natural sciences – university professors, representatives of the ornithological society, and other enthusiasts and specialists – met, apparently for the first time, to discuss the options for the establishment of such an institution. In the Czech Republic, there were already public zoological gardens in Liberec, Ústí nad Labem, Pilsen, and Zlin, and ongoing construction work was taking place in Prague to produce a zoo that was supposed to open in two years. However, the aforementioned meeting only took the form of an academic discussion and had no practical consequences. One individual who was debating this issue opted that they "couldn't find enough workers among themselves who would be willing to overcome all the obstacles standing in the way of such an expensive project, and thus the idea vanished as soon as the question of finance came up."

However, the idea wasn't forgotten. A graduate from Vienna's University of Veterinary Sciences, Antonín Hrůza, who was the chancellor of Brno's University of Veterinary Sciences as well as being a professor there in the feed industry department, started to promote the need for the establishment of a zoo at meetings of the local Society for the Protection of Animals.

Fans and opponents

He demonstrated the positive attitude of local citizens and their interest in this matter by citing the groups of curious people that assemble in front of the windows of pet shops, sometimes even obstructing the streets. Hrůza emphasized that without a zoo in the city, there could be no education of the public as regards nature protection. The gardens would also provide a suitable environment for scientific research and ed-



A row of aviaries stood by the wall separating Tyršův sad Park from the municipal botanical gardens

Photo Brno Zoo archive

education of young people, as well as being a sophisticated form of entertainment. In his speeches on the society's premises, Hrůza exactly expressed the mission of the zoo, which remains the same even today. However, his words didn't fall on fertile ground. The society was an association of people involved in worthy activities concerning the protection of wild animals, and they were very wary of almost any situation in which such animals would be handled. According to the society, people usually do not care about the needs of animals, and only use them for their own needs. They considered zoos to be a place where animals suffer maltreatment. With regards to his authority as a recognized scientist, Hrůza didn't meet direct resistance. However, his arguments met with silence.

Media and sponsors

However, some time later, a lady from the animal protection society opposed the professor, claiming that there wouldn't be enough material support for such a venture as a zoo in Brno. Bujnoch, who also attended the meetings of the society, immediately tried to refute this allegation: "There are enough means for a public matter like this amongst the public itself. It is only necessary to grasp the matter well and carry out purposeful promotion." This remark fuelled resentment among the members of the society and raised a challenge to follow this statement with action. Bujnoch took the challenge. His strategy was to make an effort to convince the public about this matter via the media and to get other enthusiasts, even if they would not be able to work for the zoo

directly, to contribute through their positions as scientific authorities or their positions in society.

It was difficult to find suitable premises for the establishment of a zoo. The advocates knew that there was no point in striving for a real zoo, as the only source of finance at first would be public contributions. They considered a smaller facility in the centre of the city, where sufficient visitor numbers could guarantee an adequate income for the zoo. Lužánky, a relatively large park under the administration of the local authorities, was given theoretical consideration.

A fight for a small zoo

Bujnoch thus went to the office of the local authorities, where he first saw Councillor Hejný. Councillor supported the establishment of a Zoo Corner in Lužánky, pointing out that such a facility would also contribute to the education of schoolchildren. Other negotiations took place between Bujnoch and Councillor Dr. Heusler, who was an officer in charge of park issues at that same office. Heusler warned that the local authorities would not allow any significant construction at that location because they wanted to maintain the natural character of Lužánky Park. He asked why part of the area of the exhibition grounds couldn't be used for the zoo. It was explained to him that a small Zoo Corner in the vicinity of the large pavilions would not attract attention; and that the society probably wouldn't be able to obtain enough money for a large zoo, which would cost about two to three million. Another strong counterargument was the opinion of zoologists, for example the founder of Prague Zoo, Jiří

Janda, that the shady Svratka Valley, which part of the exhibition grounds lies in and where the zoological gardens were supposed to be established, would provide an unsuitably humid Zoo Corner in Lužánky Park.

Prof. Ing. Emil Bayer, the director of the Zoological Department at the Agricultural University, also supported Bujnoch. He recommended that Jaroslav V. Stejskal, who was the editor of the monthly periodical *Příroda* (Nature), should join in the current activities along with all university professors who specialized in the natural sciences. The efforts to get Stejskal on the side of the zoo enthusiasts were successful in the end. Ing. Antonín Dyk, a professor from the Department of Forest Protection and Wildlife Management, joined the advocacy as well.

During a visit to the mayor of Brno, Karel Tomeš, Bujnoch again had to give reasons for the unsuitability of the exhibition grounds for the construction of a Zoo Corner. The mayor was then mainly interested in knowing what people were involved in this matter, and said that he himself had considered the option of founding a zoo several times. He supported the current efforts but repeated that he wouldn't be able to take part in the expected negotiations and meetings in person.

The founding of an association

After the discussion with Brno's mayor, Bujnoch decided to convene the first meeting of a newly established association on 13th September 1935, when a preparatory committee was elected, headed by Chairman Prof. Hrůza and Executive Manager Antonín Bujnoch. At the constitutive meeting, which took place on 14th October 1935 at the Agricultural Museum at No. 11 Švehlova street (today's Moravské Square), the name Brno Zoo Foundation Association ("Spolek pro zřízení zoologické zahrady v Brně") was accepted. In the manner stipulated by the approved rules, Prof. Antonín Hrůza was elected the chairman of the society. The ten-member committee also included, for instance, the architect Oskar Poříška, two councillors (Hejný and Kuchyňka), and the aforementioned Prof. Dyk. There was one woman on the committee as well – the wife of entrepreneur Pavel Kohn, one of the richest citizens in Brno.

The active Bujnoch wasn't overly excited by the performance of his colleagues on the committee, summing up the situation as follows: "The committee meetings were frequent; however, they didn't bring anything substantial to speed up implementation of the idea to establish the intended Zoo Corner. The meetings weren't attended by particularly prominent personalities." Also, personal ill feelings appeared. Bujnoch became disillusioned with the chairman of the society, considering Hrůza to be a person who placed too much trust in people regardless of their character traits. He was also bothered by the chairman's petty gift of one badger, which the

society had no place for and which therefore was given to the University of Veterinary Sciences to be looked after until the efforts to build the Zoo Corner were successful. "However, the expenses involved in looking after the badger soon emptied the association's cashbox, and neither local firms nor private persons reacted to the call for help. The badger had to be released secretly into the surrounding forests to look after and feed itself."

The opening of the Zoo Corner

Thanks to Mayor Tomeš, the city council decided that the association could put several exhibits into Tyršův Sad Park, in the area along the wall which separates the park from the city botanical gardens. Architect Poříšek created a plan for bird cages. A mining and metallurgical company donated two wagonloads of iron and netting, the cement factory in Maloměřice promised the necessary amount of cement, and three ironwork companies (Horny & Zauner, Till, and Vichr) promised something from their warehouses. However, the money needed for the construction work was still lacking. The lengthy speeches made by individuals at the committee meetings brought no results. In those days, Bujnoch often walked sadly around the area where the Zoo Corner was supposed to be created, but where there was nothing more to be seen than the donated material lying on the ground. He had to face biting remarks from the park employees, as everybody could read his enthusiastic articles about the intended zoo in the newspaper, accompanied by positive reader responses – but could also read the views of the zoo's detractors. Something must happen, Bujnoch thought to himself, and he decided to take action independently. Without notifying the committee, he approached Kroboth, a company at Rumiště 6, Brno, where he personally guaranteed the settlement of an agreed bill for



Invitation to the official opening of the Zoo Corner in Tyršův sad Park in Brno



A cutting from the Moravská orlice newspaper from 27. 3. 1937; even several months before the official opening of the Zoo Corner the Brno press gave detailed information about it

8,800 CZK for the delivery of cages and fences. The animals for the Zoo Corner had already been prepared: The gamekeeper's society donated a pair of fallow deer, and Cajpl, a restaurateur, provided five species of beautifully coloured thoroughbred pheasants free of charge along with a pair of well-fed roe deer which he kept on his farm outside Brno. The project started to prosper. First, a row of bird cages was put up and, on the day of their installation, "a magpie, a white jackdaw (albino), and several other birds appeared from somewhere and were given homes there immediately." Within a short time, runs for ungulates had been created and the promised pair of fallow deer arrived. The park started to fill up with children and young people, and their laughter, shouting, and gaiety attracted more visitors.

The official opening of the Zoo Corner in the Tyršův Sad Park took place on 19th June 1937. The celebration was humble, with about a dozen people assembled in the central area of the park. The chairman of the Zoo Foundation Association emphasized that the Zoo Corner was mainly a test of whether there was "a mood for the building of real zoological gardens" in Brno. He also said that the animals hadn't come to Tyršův Sad Park from the wild, but from captivity, where they often suffered, adding that entire schools were coming to see the Zoo Corner and that, on some Sundays or holidays, over one thousand people per day were visiting. There was a message from the representatives of the city as well as from the land administration: Brno and Moravia will not forget to help keep things going.

The first disputes

A present from a Slovak citizen appeared in the enclosure intended for roe deer – a white stork which couldn't fly because its wing was injured. It attracted the attention of visitors with its noble posture and the snapping of its beak,

as well as the appetite with which it swallowed large quantities of intestines and other meat refuse donated by visitors and the city abattoir. Prof. Hruža's idea was to provide a high place for the stork to rest. A column was supposed to be erected in the middle of the run, with a farmer's cartwheel hosting a nest made of twigs attached to the top. A ladder leading to the nest was planned so that the stork could hop up and down. This idea proved a headache for many people from the association. As no one among them was willing to make a ladder, the wish of the professor remained unfulfilled.

Another of Hruža's initiatives also caused distress. Allegedly, the professor had a peculiar liking for the Cuvac dog breed. He brought a domesticated one, both to expand the collection of species and to guard the Zoo Corner. Hruža's opponents claimed that "the character of the animal just obtained didn't seem favourable for the situation in the Zoo Corner". They were happy to hear that the Cuvac ran away from Tyršův Sad Park several times before eventually disappearing completely. Hruža's idea of providing two puppies to replace it was postponed until the spring of the following year. However, by that time the professor was no longer a member of the society.

Hruža in the opponents' camp

Professor Hruža became embroiled in more and more disputes, mainly with the vice chairman of the association, Stejskal. The professor left the Zoo Foundation Association in October 1937 and started to attend the meetings of the Society for the Protection of Animals again, there criticizing the operation of the zoo club. A supporter of Hruža, Miroslav Lazar, who had been the cashier of the Zoo Foundation Association, was expelled by Stejskal, who had succeeded Hruža as chairman. Lazar also joined the opponents' camp. Bu-

jnoch considered the expulsion an overly harsh punishment; but he didn't approve of Lazar's activities in the Zoo Corner, either. He considered him a stubborn individual who never took anyone's advice, and whose eager actions always resulted in failure. He criticized his account keeping, saying that it didn't have the necessary documentation; but, above all, it seems he had a personal problem with him. Cashier Lazar was originally in charge of animal feeding. He did this job very well, but Bujnoch didn't like Lazar's image, which he described with a strong degree of irony: "He prepared the food with his white-starched cuffs pulled onto his hands, his long hair reminding one of the self-confidence of an unrecognized artist."

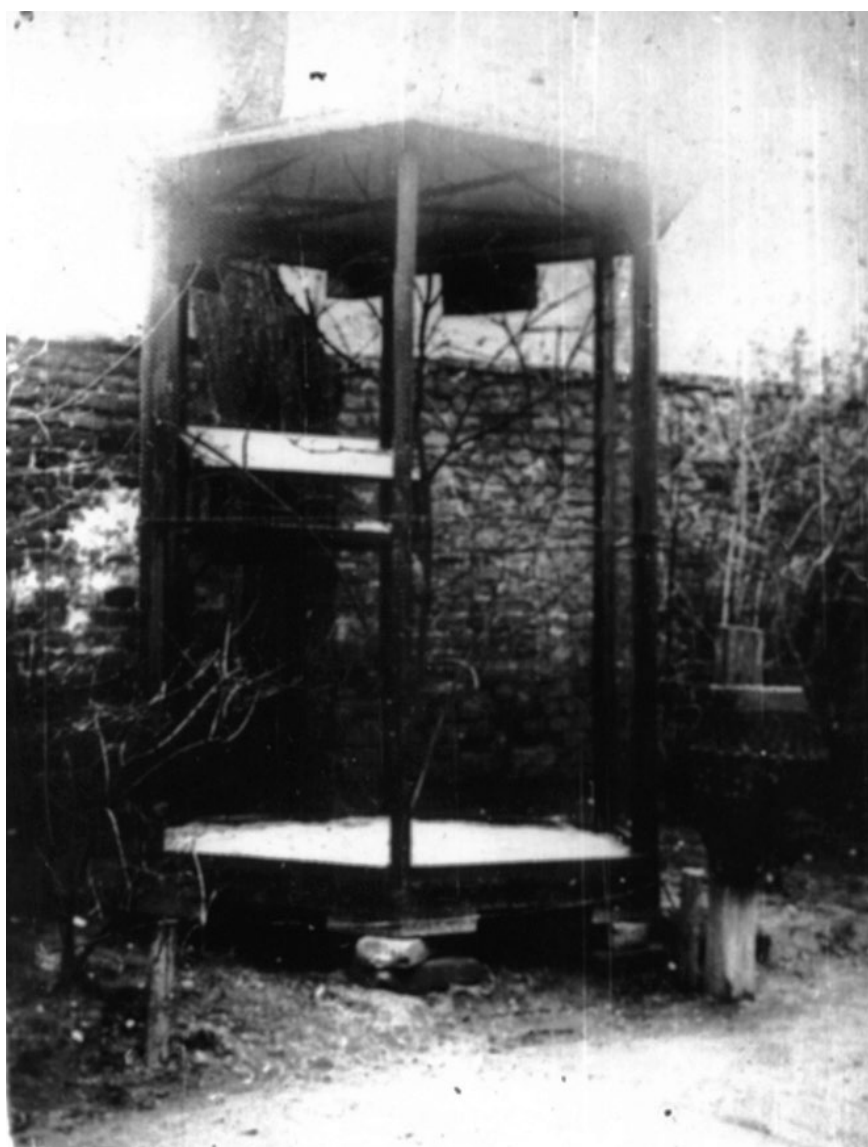
The entrance fee didn't put people off

The association's income was negligible, and only gifts from the public, mainly food, and voluntary work by the members of the association, enabled the operation of the Zoo Corner. The former chairman of the society, Hrůza, was allegedly against the introduction of an entrance fee, as he reportedly claimed that visitor numbers would drop. However, his successor Stejskal, together with a new cashier, Bujnoch, introduced an entrance fee, and visitor numbers actually increased during the first month. The ticket cost only 1 CZK, but visitors were told that they could contribute a higher amount if they wished. The voluntary entrance fee brought in 4,000 CZK in a month.

Fricěk spreads happiness

As the Zoo Corner was successfully developing, the need to exhibit a more attractive animal, preferably a monkey, increased. Because the members of the Zoo Foundation Association knew that the director of the city gas plant, Bukovanský, who was also a member of the association, kept a wolf and a green monkey in the courtyard of the administrative building, they pressurized him into donating the monkey to the Zoo Corner. Bukovanský was reluctant; but one day, a present in the form of Fricěk (as the monkey was called) appeared at Tyršův Sad Park along with his cage, which was put on a temporary brick base. Fricěk soon became the main attraction at the Zoo Corner.

However, as Fricěk's cage was small, the association decided that they would provide a new one so that the monkey could have more space to move around. Bujnoch recommended that the cage be built by Krobeth, who were decent and reliable, and would charge – unlike other entrepreneurs – only the real costs. However, the chairman of the society, Stejskal, didn't agree with this, and he took charge of the matter. "Mr. Stejskal showed off a cage with a simple wooden structure, which he had probably put together himself, which appeared in the zoo on a raised base, perhaps a metre above the ground. When I entered the Zoo Corner, Fricěk started



One of the cages in Tyršův sad Park. It's proved impossible to discover the animal it was for

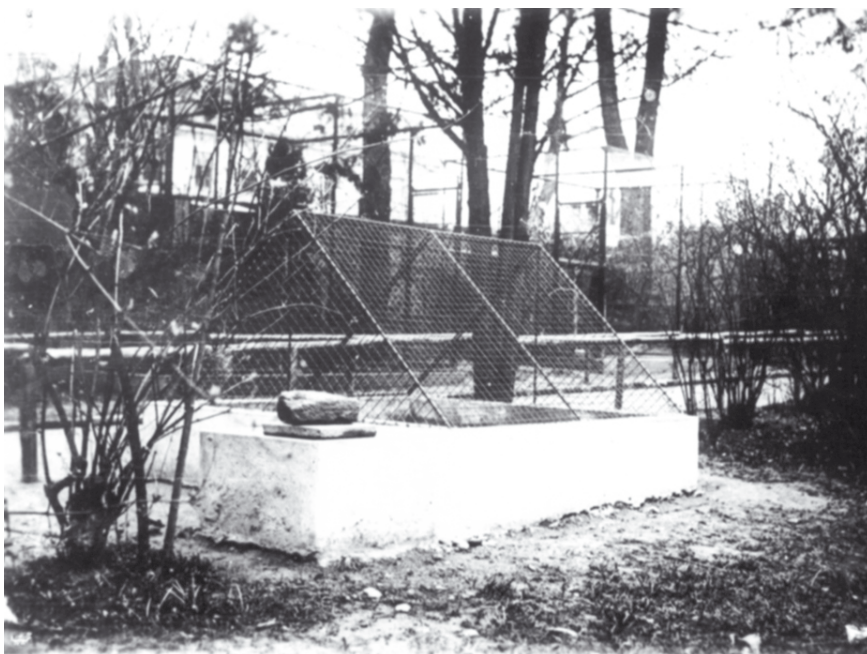
Photo Brno Zoo archive

to bang on the cage to welcome me so hard that it seemed he might knock it over," Bujnoch commented. Nothing bad happened, though. Fricěk frolicked in the cage, the children and the adults all laughed, and everyone was merry.

After the introduction of entrance fees, the association had the financial means to consider building sleeping quarters for the wintering of warmth-loving animals. With the approval of the administration of Tyršův Sad Park, the association had a brick chalet built with several cages inside where Fricěk, and later also his new female friends and other kinds of monkey, could spend the winter. A summer run was attached to the wall of the chalet, which had large windows and was accessible to the public in the winter.

When Fricěk obtained his new residence with a winter hiding place and a summer run, he also got a swing. He became stronger and more exuberant due to good nourishment; but with the awakening of his sexual drive, he started

to suffer. "He offered me his male member and begged for mercy in monkey language. Yes, Fricěk, we want to provide a female friend for you, but where can we get one? Nothing that moves around us is suitable," Bujnoch explained to him. From Bujnoch's memoirs: "However, fortune smiled on Fricěk, who had resorted to the sin of masturbation. Out of the blue, a married couple, travelling comedians, appeared in the park. The man carried a lively female vervet monkey on his shoulders. She had side whiskers on both her cheeks and looked like she was smiling all the time. They stated the price, 700 CZK, and offered no discounts. Fricěk concentrated all the power of his look on the jolly monkey, who was receiving positive responses from all passers-by. Any worries that Fricěk would not welcome Karlička, as the female was called, were groundless. Without hesitation, and without bothering to discuss things first, he exercised his rights before the very eyes of the spectators!



One of the cages in Tyršův sad Park. It's proved impossible to discover the animal it was for

Photo Brno Zoo archive

After a short while, he accepted a second female friend, Želina, in the same manner. She came from the garden of a house in Lipová Street, where she had entertained two old ladies living in seclusion for several years until they got tired of her quarrelsome character.

Attacks of the conservationists

The Society for the Protection of Animals strove for the abolition of the Zoo Corner from the very moment of its founding. An incident from January 1937 is worth mentioning. The executive director of the conservationists' society, Dr. Slezák, came to Tyršův Sad Park with another conservationist to release the animals

which, they alleged, were being imprisoned and malnourished there. When this plan was thwarted, Dr. Slezák went to complain about the Zoo Corner to Prof. Weyer, who was the chairman of the Union of Societies for the Protection of Animals and also a member of the Zoo Foundation Association. He also "told Mrs. Jičínská off in an unkind manner for obtaining iron of great value for the zoological gardens." A year later, when he had already become the head of the Society for the Protection of Animals, Dr. Slezák submitted a complaint regarding the maltreatment of animals in the Zoo Corner to the city council. Some citizens living near the park joined in, drawing attention to the violation of their right to peace and quiet at night, and to the smell which spread from the cages and runs. Dr. Slezák claimed that he couldn't stand next to the cages for even a short while due to the strong smell. During the committee investigation, it was proved successfully that the unpleasant odour came from the public toilet which had been placed by the entrance to the park before the Zoo Corner had even existed. The committee didn't find any flaws in the operation of the Zoo Corner, and it recommended that the city council remove or change the public toilet.

When Dr. Slezák failed with his complaint, he tried to get Bujnoch on his side and invited him to a meeting of the society. Bujnoch heard many accusations at this well-attended assembly: that the animals in Tyršův Sad Park suffered from hunger; that there was no money for food; and that the public was embittered and demanded the abolition of the Zoo Corner. Slezák reminded Bujnoch that the former cashier, Lazar, spent only 6 CZK per day on feeding the animals in the Zoo Corner, which couldn't be enough to feed all the individuals kept there. Very angrily, and with not overly kind words, Bujnoch

answered that the voluntary entrance fees exceeded the standard expenditure on food and services, and countered that: "The animals are fed perhaps too much, which can be seen for instance in the cases of the fallow deer or the monkey, which has almost knocked its cage down due to its strength." Slezák emphasized that not only the members of the Society for the Protection of Animals but also two former top representatives of the Zoo Foundation Association (Hrůza and Lazar) constantly complained about the Zoo Corner. When "Mrs. General Pšornová elevated Dr. Slezák's personage to the level of a renowned expert on just about everything and particularly in matters of animal protection," Bujnoch reached his limits of self-control. He rose from his chair and left the room without a single word.

New arrivals, as well as problems with growth

All the donated iron and cement was used to build sleeping quarters for a badger under the monkey's summer run. So much material was used that the badger looked like a breathing ball of fur in an air-raid shelter. Bujnoch, who had already drawn attention to the unnecessary solidity of the structure during its construction, was told that, as it wasn't he who was paying, why should he care. This story reflects the fact that Bujnoch was not getting on well with the new chairman of the association. Stejskal didn't have an easy time in his job, though. An Amazonian parrot, which was a present from Prof. Dr. Leichmann, was an unusual ornament for the Zoo Corner. However, soon after, this beautiful bird was attacked by a small parasite. As there wasn't an expert then available to recommend a suitable treatment, the boss himself dealt with the issue. He used an anti-insect spray, Flit, upon the bird, whereupon the feathered beauty died. Stejskal didn't turn up at the park for the rest of the week, and a rumour spread that he "was crying and hiding in his flat." His self-confidence allegedly dropped significantly after this affair.

The Zoo Corner was given other presents – a pair each of coypu and raccoons. As architect Poříška was too busy to draw plans for the housing of the new acquisitions, Bujnoch prepared both drawings himself and brought them to Kuba Brothers Building Company, which was the contractor for the order. The drawings were accepted and everything went well in the end. The raccoons climbed up the netting, which was laid in a roof-like shape, and the coypu ran through the narrow opening from their sleeping quarters back into the run with ease, bathing in a small tank and "pooping into the water without being ashamed."

Animals from Petržalka

Shortly after the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the German army in March 1939, a letter from a Mr. Janečka arrived from Bratislava. Janečka operated a smaller zoo in Bratislava-Petržalka, which suburb was cut off from the



Ticket for the Zoo Corner

city which provided Janečka's visitor base as a result of Bratislava's connection to what was then known as the Greater German Reich. The writer offered all his animals as well as his services, for which he required a salary of 800 CZK, promising that he would raise Brno's Zoo Corner to a higher level. Bujnoch suggested they only purchase the more expensive animals, warning that the protectorate administration would not allow the expansion of the Zoo Corner, particularly as the association always avoided cooperation with Brno's German community. The committee reportedly made no decision, but two members of the society - the editor of the Lidové Noviny newspaper, František Komenda (whose attitude was that our people should be helped when in need), and the executive manager of the society, Štěpánek (who was also the administrator of the Agricultural Museum) - left for Bratislava. There they arranged the transfer of Janeček's entire property to Brno. Bujnoch angrily watched as Janeček's inventory was moved into the courtyard of the Zoo Corner. "Old, unneeded boards and cages nailed together from boxes were put in the courtyard of the neighbouring university building, which completely collapsed after the later bombardment of Brno. The only precious animals which Janečka brought were a family of collared mangabeys and two white-headed capuchins," Bujnoch complained.

Two rhesus monkeys also came to Brno with Janečka. Fricek, who was living in peace and harmony with his female friends, frowned when he saw his human friends taking care of unknown members of a similar species. The committee of the society believed the experienced Janečka when he claimed that it was possible to keep rhesus monkeys in the same exhibit as vervets and a green monkey. When an incident occurred, they watched the dramatic action resignedly, "not knowing what to do." "When the two rhesus monkeys, father and son, were put into Fricek's cage, he forgot his decent manners and threw himself at the uninvited guests, attacking them viciously with his teeth and arms. Želina and Karla helped him, and there was a brutal fight. Traces of blood on heads, limbs, and torsos showed that the matter had become serious." In the end, both rhesus monkeys were placed in a cage in the neighbourhood of the green and vervet monkeys' cage in the winter shelter. Bujnoch observed the behaviour of the monkeys carefully, writing down his ethological observations: "Fricek fought for his female friends; however, it became obvious that monkey females are a philandering species. Želina soon started to make advances close to the taut netting behind which the rhesus monkeys resided. Karla joined in as well while Fricek ate a fig without concerning himself about all the intriguing that was going on. However, such advances came to nothing due to the unsurpassable obstacle between the monkeys. The father and son had to share a destiny as loners and celibates." Bujnoch explained the

O brněnském zoologickém koutku se už mnoho mluvilo. Je to osud všech nezvyklých věcí. Většinou lidí se koutek líbí a chtějí, aby byl zachován a rozšířen. Vyskytli se však i opozičníci. Prý je to trápení zvířat a bůhví ještě co.



Největšími přáteli zvířátek jsou děti.
Zvířata jim také nejvíce věří.

My soudce dělat nebudeme. Myslíme jen, že s tím trápením zvířátek to nebude tak zlé, již proto, že většina čtvernohých a dvounohých obyvatel zoo pochází od lidí, kteří s nimi neuměli zacházet a byli rádi, že se jich mohli zbavit a nemuseli je utratit. Naopak, zoo je jakousi opatrovnou, protože v ní našla útulek zvířátka, která byla postižena nějakým úrazem. Jsou to hlavně ptáci s polámanými křídly, kteří by ve volné přírodě jistě zahynuli. Zvířátkům se daří uprostřed zelené Tyršových sadů docela dobře. Brňané nemohli přijít na počátku zoologického koutku na chuť, ale už se rozešli. Prostorové voliery jsou stále obklopeny množstvím návštěvníků malých i dospělých, a to i nyní, o prázdninách, kdy tisíce lidí odchází z města. Všechna zvířátka jsou pěkná, ale přece některá mají obdivovatelů více, jiná méně. Největší popularitě se těší Kadlíčka a Fricek. Kadlíčka je opička rodu ženského, trochu menší, má vystouplou bradu a na ní pěkný knír. Fricek je její partner. Oba jsou ztělesněná dobrá

nálada. Hlavní je, aby měli stále dost obecnosti, které je povzbuzuje a odměňuje smíchem za žonglérské kousky. A o to opravdu není nouze. „Kadlíčko, zabrbli!“, ozývá se najednou z hloučku chlapců. Kadlíčka si to chvíli rozmýšlí, najednou skočí na drátěnou síť, třese s ní a brblá opravdu jako stará, mrzutá bába. Fricek na neštěstí nemá takového projevu rád, hned je u Kadlíčky a voliéra se mění v boxerský ring. Ne však na dlouho. Kadlíčka skočí na větev, Fricek za ní, Kadlíčka se snese dolů a zase je klid. A za chvíli se tanec opakuje. Fricek šplhá po kleci, tahá za větévký lípy a pro změnu straší kluky, kteří jsou příliš rozpustilí. Kadlíčka si zase chytá blechy na ocasy a nebo loví mouchy a pojdá je. Druhým předmětem zájmu je voliéra, ve které jsou kavky, sojky, straka a vrána. Sojky jsou klidné a také vrána. Dělá jakéhosi správce a dohlíží na pořádek. Vůbec je



I opička je v rukou pečlivého ošetřovatele
nezvykle krotká.

tahle vrána hrozně rozumná. Ta na př. nosí tvrdé kousky housek do malého basénku ve voliéře, počká až se rozmočí a pak je spokojená

Cutting from a newspaper of the time reporting on events at the Zoo Corner in Tyršův sad Park; unfortunately, there is no date on the document or any information about the newspaper it came from

different behaviour of the male green monkey and the male macaque in a rather direct manner when he described a certain "moral difference" between Fricek and the young rhesus monkey: "The son didn't masturbate. Burdened by the painful erection of his male member, he put the palms of his upper limbs on it and achieved its wilting with a short roll. The calmness and satisfaction which followed shortly disappeared and the operation was repeated."

The quiet before the storm

The Zoo Corner, which housed about two hundred animals, was always busy; it was spoken and written about a lot, and most visitors liked it. The animals prospered in the greenery of Tyršův Sad Park. The two animal keepers were also a local curiosity - fat Mr. Burian and thin Mr. Janečka. Adults liked them, and the young rascals that visited had great respect for them, not daring to tease the animals or feed them prohibited food when the keepers were around. As a contrast, a small hamster was put near the monkeys which lived in the chalet by the

entrance to the park. It slept curled up in its nest all day long, only waking up when hungry. So that it wasn't lonely among the more exotic animals, a neighbouring cage was populated with a skunk, a marten, and a badger, which was also perpetually sleepy. Other furry animals occupied the next three cages: a pair of our foxes, a family of muskrats, and raccoons. White mice performed acrobatics on all kinds of equipment in another cage and, in their vicinity, a pair of white sewer rats resided. Somewhere else, our old friends the squirrels hopped around and, on the bottom part of the main path, rabbits of various breeds sat up on their hind legs. There was an exhibit of toddling guinea pigs opposite. Roe deer bucks and does lived in the largest run together with a fawn which was born there. The neighbouring run hosted white fallow deer from an enclosure in Náměšť nad Oslavou and a female fallow deer from the Hukvaldy forests. A Muscovy duck shared the run with them, and a small pool there made life more pleasant for storks which couldn't fly due to injuries. Peacocks moved freely around the Zoo Corner.

In one exhibit devoted to exotic reptiles,



Volunteers build roads on the Mniší Hora ("Monk Hill")

Photo K. O. Hrubý

several Greek tortoises fed on lettuce. Two terrariums housed grass snakes and lizards for a short time. Purchased aquaria weren't installed because there was no suitable building for them.

Lori, a clever green macaw, lived by the entrance to the Zoo Corner, and he had many fans. His calls could be heard from a distance. It was as if he were looking after a small bird paradise: There were birds on twigs in a nearby exhibit, all twittering and looking as if they were made of glass – these were exotic chaffinches. A roller and a hoopoe formed a transition to birds of prey in a row of aviaries placed along the wall which separated the park from the botanical gardens. There were a sea eagle, an eastern imperial eagle, a lesser spotted eagle, a hawk, a buzzard, a kestrel, and falcons in a large cage. An aviary in which two jackdaws (one an albino), jays, crows, and a magpie lived received a lot of attention. Some turtle doves, which were kept together with a flock of chickens of various breeds, had a special cage. The only loner was the horned owl, which mostly hid in the shade. There were also a barn owl, a long-eared owl, and a tawny owl. Immediately next to these, there were smaller cages with golden, silver, Lady Amherst's, Reeves', and common pheasants. And there were budgerigars, of course. Unfortunately, a cardinal (a red-crested bird) was later stolen. There also used to be a cage with small birds. They were common to our area, and yet there were people standing in front of their home watching all the birds they knew and which flew above their heads in parks and forests almost every day but which couldn't be viewed so closely in the wild: chaffinches, tits, buntings, goldfinches, crossbills, bullfinches, hawfinches, siskins,

and others. Descriptions and coloured pictures made recognition of each of these singing birds easier. The Zoo Corner was simultaneously a nursery for animals which had suffered some kind of injury: Most frequently, people brought birds they had found with broken wings, which would otherwise certainly have died in the wild.

Peace arrived at the park, and the voices of its opponents went quiet. It seemed as if everything would be fine and that "the Germans are not so bad." There was a hope that the Zoo Corner would remain and that it would expand in the future to take up the whole park. The expansion process was planned and the society had a goodly amount of money saved for it. However, hope gave way to disaster.

The end of the Zoo Corner

Bujnoch attributed the sudden end of the Zoo Corner to the arrival of a lioness from Prague Zoo. "Many things were kept secret from me. A cart arrived at the entrance to the park and there was a crate with a lioness in it. She was called Mina. She was young and pretty, allegedly already several months pregnant. I liked her but I felt sorry for her. I combed the hair on her head in secret, so that no one would catch me. The crate with the lioness stood by the entrance to the aviaries. 'Why did they send you here,' I asked her; 'they didn't even give you a home.'" About two months later, a cage for the lioness finally appeared in the park, "as clumsy and strange as the first aeroplane had seemed in the past." The main problem was that it was so cramped that it couldn't be suitable for such a large animal. "It isn't a cage for the raccoons - is it supposed to be for the lioness? Do you know that the Germans will chase

us out of the park because of this?" Bujnoch warned Janečka, who had probably organized the transfer of the lioness and was responsible for looking after her.

The members of the Zoo Foundation Association received a letter inviting them to come for negotiations to the office of the city veterinarian. At that time, the association was headed by a famous Brno advocate, JUDr. Osvald Brázda, who was known for settling disputes peacefully. The city administration had ordered that the Tyršův Sad Park be cleared within 24 hours, and made it clear that the re-establishment of the Zoo Corner in a different place would not be tolerated. Brázda managed to get the deadline extended to 48 hours, and the association met this deadline. About one hundred animals had to travel by rail to Prague in frosty weather. Luckily, most of them survived the journey, and they became a valuable acquisition for Prague Zoo. Only a young red-capped mangabey named Peta succumbed to a chronic lung disease. The lioness Mina, nicknamed Miss Europe, later moved to Pilsen Zoo.

The remaining members of the now-dispersed Zoo Foundation Association met on 15th November 1945 to put together a new committee, and Mr. Brázda was elected to be the head again. They decided to report the damage which the association had suffered as the result of wartime events to the national city committee, and to ask for building material from the ruins and property "confiscated from the Germans," as well as for the allocation of a place for new zoological gardens.

A place for a large zoo

It may seem that the association had woken up again, but it wasn't so - there were far fewer members. Only Bujnoch and his colleague, Václav Olšanič, went walking around the surroundings of Brno seeking a suitable place for the zoo. They even made an attempt to regain Tyršův Sad Park, but this failed due to lack of interest from the former members of the association. On Olšanič's insistence, Bujnoch kept visiting the gardens and forest administration of the city, but there just wasn't any space for the zoo. After extensive talks, one administration employee drew Bujnoch's attention to a former firing range in Pisárky which had been confiscated, having been the property of displaced Brno Germans. However, the requirements of the army were given priority, and the zoological gardens were allocated a replacement area in a nearby wedge of forest along the way to the Myslivna Restaurant. This option, however, met with opposition from the forest administration. Another proposal was a place near the road which goes up from the Na Štělčnici Restaurant in Pisárky in the direction of Nový Lískovec. A path which connected the



The last Annual General Meeting of the Zoo Foundation Association, which was held on 30th April 1952, decided that the Association would join the Zoo Foundation Collective as a Zoological Club. There are seven members of the committee of the Association in this photo, each of them holding what is probably the foundation charter of the Zoo Club. From the left: Jan Šrubař, Antonín Bujnoch, JUDr. Osvald Brázda, Václav Olšaník, Ing. arch. Otto Eisler, Jan Hromek and Jaroslav Kvapil
Photo Josef Mráz

above-mentioned firing range with the road to Liskovec would have had to be abolished if the zoo had been established there. The military refused to accept this.

In their next search, the society focused their attention on the exhibition grounds. The slope behind the river seemed to be suitable. However, an application submitted to the Exhibition Company was ignored. During the next visit to the city gardens administration, a suitable place for the establishment of the zoo seemed to be the expropriated former chateaux and park in Medláňky, which was supposed to be given to the public. Bujnoch and Olšaník took part in long but fruitless negotiations with the authorities until they learned, in the end, that the regional national committee was considering the establishment of botanical and zoological gardens at Mniší Hora ("Monk Hill") in Bystrc, near Brno.

Mniší Hora on the horizon

The committee of the association were informed about the intention of the regional administration at a meeting on 21st January 1950. Chairman Dr. Brázda announced that the association had been commissioned to produce a design for the zoo, including an estimate of costs. The meeting drew up the main principles that would govern the first steps toward the establishment of the new zoo, which included the following: "to put all interesting forest animals (fallow deer, roe deer, stags, foxes, silver foxes, wild boar, etc.) in the zoo right away. Also, to

take cages from Bítov Castle and use them for smaller birds of prey. This temporary population will be complemented with monkeys, thoroughbred pheasants, and domestic and exotic birds. The construction of the zoo will be supported through donations by the public. Experience will be obtained with keeping and providing medical care for animals." Three committees were elected at the meeting: one for the survey of conditions at the location, a permanent specialized committee, and an organizational and technical one. However, the committees couldn't start their work because Mniší Hora was allocated to the Faculty of Natural Sciences, and the zoo was supposed to be built as a complex together with the botanical gardens. (As early as 1949, the Brno press had informed the public that a miniature Zoo Corner with tortoises, badgers, and hedgehogs had been created during the construction of the botanical gardens on Mniší

Hora, which would become the base for a large zoo as part of the natural park of the botanical gardens.)

The merging of the zoo with the botanical gardens seemed contentious to the Zoo Foundation Association. The administration of the newly founded zoological gardens, which consisted of three paid employees, disagreed with the establishment of provisional solutions, and thus rejected the conclusions drawn up at the meeting of the association on 28th January 1950. It also rejected other proposals which came from outside regarding the execution of work on Mniší Hora, and perceived the Zoo Foundation Association (with its interest groups) as an unwanted competitive element. This was understandable, mainly as the administration of the zoo, the professional efforts of which were financed by the Ministry of Information, felt responsible only to its employers.

The first work on terrain alterations on Mniší Hora started on 1st June 1950. The construction of the zoo was beset by issues connected with the obtaining of building materials and a permanent work force. The Zoo Foundation Association members couldn't put their experience into practice, and therefore limited themselves to the organization of lecture evenings. The mission of these events was to popularise the zoological gardens. They were always accompanied by projections of natural science films, and were very well attended.

The Czechoslovak political regime banned all activities by societies in 1951. The Zoo Foundation Association joined a so-called 'people's organization for the zoological gardens' named the Zoological Club at the Zoological Gardens in Bystrc near Brno. Apart from lecture evenings, which it continued organizing, it extended its activities to include supervisory services on Mniší Hora during the holidays.

At the end of his document, Bujnoch said that many fine buildings had been erected on Mniší Hora, and that the opening of the zoo was expected in June 1953. He was sorry, though, that there weren't many exotic animals. However, he believed that the public would understand such teething problems, and would patiently wait for more interesting exhibits.

Eduard Stuchlík



A scene from the ceremonial opening of the zoo on Mniší Hora in Bystrc near Brno

Photo Brno Zoo archive