



THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF JOURNALIST VIKTOR MUSSIK IN THE COLLECTION OF THE NÁPRSTEK MUSEUM¹

Jiřina Todorovová²

ABSTRACT: Journalist and photographer Viktor Mussik (1899–1952) travelled to many Asian and African countries in the 1920s and 1930s. His photographs are a typical example of documentary photojournalism – they have no artistic ambitions, but capture a particular state of affairs at a particular moment in time in a particular country. Given the period in which they were created, and Viktor Mussik’s great talent for observation, his photos are among the best collections in the National Museum – Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures. After the Second World War Mussik was accused of collaborating with the German occupiers, and although he was later rehabilitated, he was unable to continue working as a journalist.

KEY WORDS: photographic collections in the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures (Prague) – photojournalism – travels in Asia and Africa – journalists during the occupation

The photographic collection of the Náprstek Museum contains many extensive photographic archives, the oldest being an entirely unique set of negatives from the traveller Enrique Stanko Vráz. Then there are the collections bequeathed by travellers of the 1920s and 1930s (Alberto Vojtěch Frič, Bedřich Machulka, Richard Štorch, Josef Ladislav Erben) followed by photographic documentation of research by ethnographers in South America (Václav Šolc), Africa (Ladislav and Alice Holý) and Asia (Eva Rychterová, Václav Šolc, Dana Heroldová) from the 1960s.

One of the largest photographic collections comes from the estate of Viktor Mussik (1899–1952). Viktor Mussik was a journalist who not only described his experiences of his travels, but also captured them in photographs and drawings. He made his own illustrations for his first two books of travel writing – “Hiking From The Nile To Jordan”,

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² Contact: Jiřina Todorovová, curator of the Photographic Collection, National Museum – Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, e-mail: jirina_todorovova@nm.cz

published in 1924, and “On Foot Through North Africa” in 1925. However, the NpM does not, unfortunately, have any drawings by Mussik in its collections. For his other books and travel articles he used his own photographs. Mussik’s negatives were acquired by the Náprstek Museum through purchase – in 1952 Mussik was already talking to the NpM about their sale. Later, after his death, his sister Zdenka Mussiková continued the negotiations, and after she died, his other sister Jaroslava Fiedlerová carried on. In 1954 the negatives were recorded in the acquisitions book. Negotiations regarding other items from Mussik’s estate continued until 1957, when the three-dimensional objects were recorded in the acquisitions book. They included the “travel book” – a sort of album in which Mussik collected descriptions of the people he met in various parts of the world and in which he stuck photographs and newspaper cuttings. It accompanied him on his travels until 1939. It was recorded as acquisition number 503/57, and was later transferred into the NpM archive with the label KNpM Mussik/12³.

Mussik took photographs from his first longish expedition onwards (June 1925 to October 1926 via the Near East to his longed-for destination of India, Sikkim and Ceylon). The last photos in his archive in the NpM’s photo collection come from his travels around the Near East in 1937.

His photographs clearly show his journalist’s outlook, which gives them documentary value. Because, as a journalist, he was sent to cover specific events, his estate contains a series of photographs capturing these events (such as the 10th Far Eastern Games in Manila on 12–19 May 1934).

Naturally he photographed objects of natural beauty and of historical and architectural interest, but like any proper journalist he was far more interested in everyday life – Indian washermen, Chinese dyers, women selling in the market in Bangkok, Thailand and children in a playground (Japan, 1935). In the Philippines he took photos of sporting events on one hand, and on the other of members of ethnic groups living a simple life. In China he photographed fashionable urban Chinese beauties⁴ and peasants working in the muddy rice fields.

Mussik liked to meet other Czechoslovaks in the countries he visited, whether they were on short visits or living there permanently. He captured them for posterity with his camera (in China in 1932, for example, he photographed the friends of Czech sculptor Bohuslav Kočí, who lived in Shanghai, and the employees of the Baťa company).

Given that Mussik was later accused of being a Nazi sympathiser, it should be emphasised that none of his articles, books or travel photographs contain any hint of racism or anti-Semitism.

The photograph collection of the Náprstek Museum contains 2,192 inventory numbers of negatives and 112 of positives, a total of 2,304 inventory numbers.

³ NpM Acquisitions Book: Rok 1954: 478/1954 Negatives and photographs, Mussik’s estate, purchased from Jaroslava Fiedlerová, 1500 Kč. 1957: 401-504/1957 Three-dimensional items, bought from J. Fiedlerová from the estate of V. Mussik. These are mostly minor items from various places in Africa, Tibet, Indonesia, Borneo, Japan, India and China.

⁴ According to the curator of the NpM’s Chinese and Lamaist collection Mgr. Helena Heroldová, PhD., the pictures in our collection of women dressed in the qipao are highly unusual, since clothes of this type from the 1930 are not represented here and are not captured in photographs. See Heroldová, Helena, *Allure of the Body: Chinese Qipao*, *Annals of the Náprstek Museum*, 35/1, 2014, p. 23–38.



Fig. 1: Viktor Mussik in Japan, 1935, bw film 6 x 9 cm (As I 5129)



Fig. 2: Washermen at the tubs, 1925, Bombay, Maharashtra state, India, bw film 6 x 9 cm (As I 4456)



Fig. 3: Man with hand scales at a market, 1924 or 1927, Algiers, Algeria, bw film 6 x 9 cm (Af I 3668)



Fig. 4: Round mud village hut with reed roof, Xhosa ethnic group, 1929, South Africa, bw film 6 x 9 cm (Af I 3672)



Fig. 5: Dyers. The woman sitting on the stool is mixing with a stick in a large clay vessel, 1929, Zambia (formerly Rhodesia), bw film 6 x 9 cm (Af I 3687)

Viktor Mussik's photographs are a typical example of documentary photojournalism – they have no artistic ambitions, but capture a particular state of affairs at a particular moment in time in a particular country. This makes him different from most travellers, who focused on widely-known and endlessly repeated subjects such as shots of historical buildings, landscapes and human artefacts. The period during which they were taken, and Mussik's superb observational talent, makes his photographs one of the most outstanding collections in the National Museum - Náprstek Museum of Asian, Africa and American Cultures.

Viktor Mussik's own life story is also not without interest. He was born on 23 December, 1899 in Královské Vinohrady, Prague. His father, Karel Mussik, born in 1846, was a clerk, his mother, Leopoldina, born in 1872 (née Hubertová) was Karel's second wife. They were married on 17 May 1897. With his first wife, Walburga, Karel Mussik had had two sons, Václav (1880–1902) and Karel (born 1881) and two daughters, Jaroslava (born 1885) and Zdeňka (1886–1954).

After graduating from three-year secondary school, Viktor started to study at a four-year commercial academy, but in 1917 he had to interrupt his education and join the army. During the First World War he took part in battles on the Russian and Italian front, where in spring 1918 he was injured during the attack on the Alps. After the war ended he finished his education at what was by now the Czechoslovak Commercial Academy in Prague, graduating in 1919. He then worked for three years as a clerk in the fields of industry and insurance (a year as a clerk at the Lukeš glass works, and three years as a clerk at the Workers' Accident and Insurance Office). However, office work bored him – Viktor seems to have been a fairly wild and adventurous character from a young age. This is also hinted at by archive documents – in 1913, for example, Viktor's father applied to the police headquarters for a weapons licence for a Flobert gun and a 6 mm pistol for his son, a fourth-year secondary school pupil.⁵ Viktor then applied for a gun licence every year – in 1923, for example, he was allowed to hold "1 shotgun, 1 Flobert gun, 1 Flobert pistol, 1 repeating pistol of the legal length for personal security".⁶

Viktor's unwillingness to submit to authority is also apparent from a mention of a misdemeanour that occurred on 8 October 1920 and which related to paragraph 312 of the criminal code ("Insulting a public official, servant, constable, railway employee etc."). Unfortunately, however, no more details of the incident have been preserved in the archives.⁷

In search of something more interesting and varied than boring office work, Viktor Mussik longed to become a commercial representative abroad, a sportsman (he was a successful boxer) or anything that would enable him to travel. He loved reading books by Jules Verne, Karl May and the travel writings of Josef Kořenský and Enrique Stanko Vráz. Of all the parts of the world, he was most interested in the Balkans and the Orient – Turkey, Arabia, Persia. He undertook his first journey when still an insurance clerk, in spring 1923. He travelled via Belgrade and Sofia to Istanbul and Skutari, then by boat to

⁵ NA, collection: Police Headquarters, Prague II – General Registry 1941-1950, box 7688, sign. M 3823/8, file Viktor Mussik.

⁶ NA, collection: Police Headquarters, Prague II – General Registry 1941-1950, box 7688, sign. M 3823/8, file Viktor Mussik.

⁷ NA, collection: Police Headquarters, Prague II – General Registry 1941-1950, box 7688, sign. M 3823/8, file Viktor Mussik.

Greece, Thessaloniki, Athens, Piraeus, from there to Italy – Brindisi, Naples, Rome, Venice, Verona and back to Prague. His travels were facilitated by his membership of various organisations such as the International Student Conference (CIE), YMCA and Scouts (the Federation of Socialist Scouts and the Association of Socialist Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts in the Czechoslovak Republic). When he got back he knew immediately that he would no longer be devoting himself to an office career.

Hardly had two months passed before he set off again with two friends on a journey, he hoped, to the India that he so admired. On his earlier voyage he had already acquired a "travel book," a sort of album that he used to collect descriptions of the people whom he met in various parts of the world, and in which he stuck photographs and newspaper cuttings. It accompanied him on his travels until 1939.

In mid-1923 the adventurers set out via the Balkans and Greece to Egypt, heading for Asia. In Alexandria, however, Mussik fell ill – for some time, it seems – and his friends therefore continued on their journey to India alone, leaving him in Alexandria. Once he had recovered he set out with some Italian scouts to walk up the Nile to Cairo. There he spent more than a month, as a guest of some Jewish and Nubian scouts. From Cairo he returned to Alexandria, from whence he travelled via Port Said to the harbour of Jaffa, near Tel Aviv. He left for Tel Aviv straight away and was welcomed by Jewish scouts. He travelled around Galilee, and visited Jerusalem, Haifa, Mount Carmel, Nazareth and Tiberias, where he came down with a fever. Luckily it was not malaria as he had feared, but it caused him to cancel his planned trip to Damascus. He accepted the offer of a French border guard to continue in a military vehicle to Beirut in Lebanon. There he earned enough money by taking part in a boxing match to pay his passage on the ship "Kefalinia" to Athens, where he found work on a further ship. He sailed on it via Istanbul to Bulgaria, returning to Prague via Romania at the end of October 1923. At the urging of his friend, the geologist Jaroslav Petrbok, he summed up his experiences in a book, "Hiking From The Nile To Jordan," which also featured his own pen and ink drawings and caricatures. The book was published in 1924 by Vortel and Rejman in Prague, and was extremely successful with younger readers in particular, as the result of its witty style and youthful exaggeration.

This essentially marked the turning point in Mussik's career as a journalist and reporter. On the recommendation of Emil Vachek, at that time an editor at the paper *Právo Lidu*, he started to work for the paper – the start of his journalistic career. As a freelance journalist he contributed to *Právo Lidu*, *České Slovo*, *Venkov*, *Národní Politika*, *Židovské Zprávy* and picture magazines. He also worked for the American, English and French press. His speciality was travel writing.

Právo Lidu contributed towards the funds for his journey to northern Africa, on which he set out on 1 July 1924, travelling through Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.⁸ From Tunisia he returned by boat to Marseilles, and then travelled back to Prague via various French and Italian cities, arriving in mid-October. Once again he worked his experiences from the journey into a series of humorous reports, which appeared daily over a period of two months in *Právo Lidu*'s evening edition. In 1925 he published the reports in book form at his own cost, with his own illustrations, under the title "On Foot Through North

⁸ From Marseilles he sailed for Casablanca in Morocco, from where he set out to Marrakesh, then back to Casablanca, from thence to Rabat. He visited the cities of Salé, Meknes, Mulaj Idris, the ruins of ancient Volubilis, the cities of Fes, Oujda, in Algeria Tlemcen, the ports of Oran and Algiers, the cities of Constantine and Bone, and in Tunisia Tunis and the ruins of Carthage.

Africa." In this book, too, he describes his experiences in an original way, with witty and pertinent comments. He adds funny anecdotes – describing, for example, how in Algeria he earned money for his travels by appearing in a circus.

At the end of June 1925 he set out on another journey, this time to his longed-for destination of India. He set out from Prague by train to Bucharest and Constanta, then sailed via Istanbul and Cyprus to Beirut in Lebanon. He continued on foot via Homs and Hamal to Halab (Aleppo) and Damascus in Syria. In Syria the Druze rebellion, or the Great Syrian Uprising against French administration, was at its height.

Leaving Syria, he travelled over the desert to Mosul in Iraq and on to Baghdad, where he was received by Prince Zaid, the brother of King Faisal I. On 15 September 1925 the Prince wrote in his "travel book," the album that Mussik had been keeping since his first travels in 1923.

Mussik visited the famous pilgrimage site of Khadimain, and then travelled by boat up the river Tigris to Basra and via the Persian Gulf to Karachi and Bombay in India, the country he had been so longing to see. From there he continued north to Baroda, also visiting Ahmadabad, Adjmer, Mount Abu, Udaipur (where on 19 December 1925 he was invited to the palace of the prince of Udaipur, he records in his travel book) and other notable places.⁹

In Kolkata he decided he would walk across the Himalayas to Tibet. He travelled as far as Darjeeling, where he gained permission to cross the border into Tibet. For three weeks he wandered with a Tibetan porter across the mountains and valleys to Sikkim. In Gangtok, the capital of the district, he was received by the family of the Maharajah. However, the weather prevented him from travelling further. After returning to Kolkata he continued his journey in the direction of southern India,¹⁰ and from the island of Pamban sailed to Ceylon, where he visited Kandy and Colombo. From the port he sailed to Marseilles via the Suez canal, and at the start of October 1926 he arrived in Prague. Mussik reported on the journey in many articles sent from his travels to the paper *České Slovo* and its evening edition, *Večerník Českého Slova*. The slim volume of his collected reports was published by Orbis in its "Window on the World" series in 1940 under the title "The First Czech in Tibet."

At the end of 1927, as a reporter for *České Slovo*, he set out for north Africa again. Before he left he was received by President T. G. Masaryk and his son Jan Masaryk in Karlovy Vary, where they were on holiday. On 11 and 12 August 1927 Mussik gained their signatures and wishes for a good journey in his travel book. He travelled via Switzerland (Zurich, Bern, Lausanne, Geneva) to Marseilles, from where he made a side trip to Corsica, visiting Ajaccio, Bastia and Corte. He returned to Marseilles and from there sailed to Algiers and Morocco.¹¹ He returned to Prague in mid-November 1927, and once again described his journey in a number of articles for various magazines.

⁹ Alwar, Jaipur, Delhi, Agrawith the Taj Mahal mausoleum, Sikandra, Kanpur, Lucknow (Lakhnau), Allahabad, Benares (Varanasi), Kolkata.

¹⁰ He visited the cities of Vizianagaram, Madras, Bangalore, the pilgrimage place of Puri, Madurai, Mysore (Maisur), Utakamund (Udhagamandalam, Ooty). He continued to the famous pilgrimage city of Trichinopoly (Tirucirappalli), where he visited part of it, the island of Shrirangam with its famous temple, and then on to the city of Rameshwaram on the island of Pamban.

¹¹ Here he visited Fes, Algiers, Mazagan, Mogador, Safi, Rabat, Meknes, Agadir, Marrakesh and Casablanca.

On 9 August 1928 Mussik left Prague for Moscow to attend the All-Union Spartakiad as the Czech delegate from the Federation of Socialist Scouts, and as a reporter for *České Slovo*, its evening edition and the sporting weekly *Start*. He also visited Leningrad.

Mussik's next journey was to equatorial Africa, which he left for on 4 December 1928 as a reporter for *Venkov* and *Světobor*. On 10 December 1928 he boarded the steamship "Valdivia" in Marseilles and sailed to Dakar in Senegal. From there he continued on his journey to equatorial Africa, which he had interrupted last year in Morocco.

After Dakar he visited Bathurst in Gambia, Freetown in Sierra Leone and Monrovia in Liberia. He sailed in small boats or walked down the Ivory Coast, Gold Coast and present-day Ghana to Togo, into the Upper Volta region, back to the coast, in Dahomey, and then into the interior of Nigeria again, back to the coast, to Cameroon, to the Belgian Congo, and visited Brazzaville and Leopoldville.¹²

From here he travelled south downriver for two weeks, and then by train to the commercial centre of Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi) and then on to Livingstone in Rhodesia, the Victoria Falls and then to Bulawayo and to Kimberley in the then Union of South Africa. He stayed for some time in Cape Town, publishing articles in the local press both about his travels and about Czechoslovakia. He travelled through south Africa, visiting a number of towns and regions (Oudtshoorn, George, Port Elizabeth, East London, Vilela in the Transkei region, at that time a Xhosa reservation). He learned about the lives of the local inhabitants, and also about that of a Czech farmer, Vladislav Bouček, and his family, who had settled in Mbancolo. After Pretoria and Johannesburg he visited Durban, from where in December 1929 he returned to Prague via the Canary Islands and Britain. Once again, he published his travel experiences in a number of Czech newspapers and magazines, with his photographs being published by the German agency George Kutschuk & Co. in the German, English, American and French press as well.

On 3 January 1931 Mussik, as a reporter for the journal *Venkov a Večer*, set out on a longish journey, to Habesh in present-day Ethiopia. He went by boat via Bucharest and Istanbul to Alexandria, and from there to Cairo, where he represented his magazine at the International Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition. He was intending to continue to Khartoum, but he did not gain permission because he did not have a sufficiently-armed guide. Instead he went to Port Said, and then on by boat to Djibouti in Somalia and by train to Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, where he was received by Emperor Haile Selassie I. Mussik treasured the emperor's photographs and entry in his travel book so much that he even published a sample of his handwriting and his signature in his book on Habesh. This was published in 1935 under the title "A Journey to the Middle Ages – A Report From Habesh," and in it Mussik was highly critical.

Mussik visited various areas of Ethiopia – the territory of the Galla tribe in the south west and the the primaeval forest area of Jum-Jum in the west. On his way back he

¹² On the Ivory Coast he visited Abidjan, on the Gold Coast New Town, Axim, Secondi, Cape Coast and Accra, in Togo Palimé and Bassari. He then travelled into the interior, to the Upper Volta region, back to the coast, in Dahomey, and then into the interior of Nigeria again, where he visited the cities of Lagos, Ibadan, Oshogbo, Onitscha, returned to the coast, visited Calabar and Port Harcourt, and then in Cameroon the cities of Ikang, Bonge, Bavo, Kumba, Mundame and Douala before continuing to the Belgian Congo.



Fig. 6: Villagers hoeing a field, 1932, near Peking, China, bw film 6 x 9 cm (As I 1074)



Fig. 7: Bat'a shoe store, 1932, Shanghai, China, bw film 3.5 x 4.5 cm (As I 1189)



Fig. 8: Disinfection measures against disease. „All possible measures have been taken to prevent the spread of cholera. The wheels of vehicles have been sprayed with lysol“ (V. Mussik's description), 1932, Harbin, Manchuria, China, bw film 8 x 6 cm (As I 6827)



Fig. 9: Dye house. The pieces of material are stretched out on the ground between pegs, and blue dye is then applied to them several times a day with a brush, 1933, southern China, bw film 4.5 x 3.5 cm (As I 1440)

visited the ancient monuments of Harar and Diré Daa. His entire journey was complicated, however, by continual struggles with the imperial bureaucracy. From Djibouti he went on to Port Said and Cairo, from where he took a trip to the ancient Egyptian monuments – Memphis, Luxor, Karnak, Thebes and Aswan, where the dam on the Nile, now known as the Aswan Low Dam, was being rebuilt and raised. From Alexandria he returned to Prague, via Piraeus, Constanta and Bucharest. He created a number of reports from this journey for Venkov, accompanied by his own photographs and pen-and-ink drawings.

The book “A Journey to the Middle Ages – A Report from Habesh” was also published in Slovak translation in 1936.

At the end of February 1932 Mussik was sent to China as a reporter for Venkov a Večer and the press agency George Kutschuk & Co.

He travelled from Prague to Genoa, and from there sailed to China via Port Said, Suez, Djibouti, Colombo, Singapore and Manila. He arrived just after the battles for the port between China and Japan had come to an end, but a new phase in the fighting over Manchuria had just broken out. The puppet state of Manchuria was created, with the help of Japan. It was a troubled time, and the situation was dangerous.

Mussik continued by boat from Shanghai via Qingdao (Tsingtau) to Dalian (Dairen, Dalniy), visiting Port Arthur, and then continued by train via Shenyang (Mukden) and Changchun to Harbin (Haerpin) on the river Sungaria (Songhua). Here he experienced a huge flood that hit the area around Harbin, and which he documented in photographs.

From Harbin he went via Cicikar to Hailar (Hulun), a centre for horse and cattle herders in Inner Mongolia on the edge of the Mongolian steppes, where he learned about nomadic life.

Then he returned to Changchun and went on to Jilin (Kirin), a port on the river Songhua, where he was twice arrested by the Japanese, to Mukden, Anshan with its huge railway companies, Fushun, where there was a large opencast mine, and on to the river port of Antung on the river Yalu, a centre of the wood trade. Because he did not gain permission from the Japanese authorities to visit Korea, he went to Peking (Beijing), whose monuments made a huge impression on him, although he was saddened by their desolate state.

He then travelled via Tientsin (Tianjin) to Nanking, the headquarters of the central Chinese government, visiting the ancient city of Soochow (Suzhou), known as the “Chinese Venice” and returned to Shanghai. As on his other foreign travels, here, too, Mussik sought out and photographed Czechoslovak citizens. In Shanghai he met fellow countrymen who were living there, mostly for reasons of work, such as the employees of the Baťa company. He also visited the atelier of the sculptor Bohuslav Kočí, who had settled permanently in Shanghai.¹³

At the start of 1933 Mussik left for Hongkong, where he also met Czechoslovaks, and then continued to Canton. In autumn he returned to Shanghai, and then went to

¹³ Bohuslav Josef Kočí, born on 21. 7. 1890 in Mlada Boleslav, travelled through Russia as a legionary and worked in a legionary sculpture workshop in Vladivostok before settling in China in 1920. He lived in Peking and Tientsin, and then from 1922 in Shanghai. After the death of the first democratic Chinese president, Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925) he won the design competition for the decoration of his mausoleum in Nanking, which was completed in 1929. Before the Second World War Kočí moved to Alor Setar in Malaysia, and later to Johor Bahru close to Singapore. After the Japanese offensive started, he and six other Czechoslovaks tried to leave on an American boat, but it was sunk by the Japanese navy.

Nanking again and back again to Shanghai. At the start of December 1933 Mussik arrived in the province of Fukien (Fujian), where he interviewed the foreign minister of the revolutionary government¹⁴ Eugene Chen (1878–1944). Then he went to Hong Kong again via the coastal cities of Amoy (Xiamen) and Swatow (Shantou, Suatao).

From there he travelled to the Philippines, where independence was just about to be declared. In January 1934 he arrived on the island of Luzon in the Philippines, where, in the capital, Manila, he worked for the American magazine "Philippine Magazine." As a journalist he attended a significant sporting event – the 10th Far Eastern Games in Manila from 12–19 May 1934. He was highly critical of the political interference in this sporting event.

At the suggestion of the Philippine Magazine he set out for the north of the island, where he met various local tribes (the Igorot, Kalinga, Bontok and Ifugao). He travelled to other islands in the Philippines¹⁵ before sailing to Borneo.

In the sultanate of Brunei he was received by Sultan Ahmed, with whom he was photographed, and in Sarawak he met the family of Raja Brooke and gained their signatures for his "travel book." From Borneo Mussik sailed to Singapore, and from Singapore set out on a journey to the Malayan peninsula.

He then continued to Siam (present-day Thailand) where, in addition to Bangkok, he visited further places (Nakorn Patom, Rajburi, Phetchaburi, Hua Hin). On returning to Singapore at the start of February 1935 he continued to Hong Kong and from there to Japan.¹⁶

After a stay of two months in Japan he left for Korea, where he visited Fusan and Seoul. He then continued via Mukden and Harbin to Chita, where he boarded the Trans-Siberian Express. He obtained permission to get off in Sverdlovsk and Moscow, where he stayed for a week, and then continued via Warsaw to Prague, returning at the end of June 1935.

In addition to a number of reports in various newspapers and magazines, Mussik also presented his findings from this journey in the book "The Rise of the Yellows", published in 1936. During the Nazi occupation the book was confiscated by the German authorities because it criticised the propagation of Nazism and Japan's expansionist policy in the Far East, and during the Second World War Japan became a German ally.¹⁷

In 1936 Italian king Victor Emmanuel II made Mussik a Knight of the Order of the Crown of Italy as a traveller and journalist.

At the start of January 1937 Mussik set off for the Near and Middle East as a reporter for *České Slovo* and the magazine *A-Zet*. He travelled via Alexandria and Cairo, where the problem of the withdrawal of British forces from Egypt was being dealt with, and from there continued to the Near East.¹⁸ After a two-month stay he boarded a Russian steamship to Baku, from where, three days later, he continued by train via Kharkov to Prague, arriving at the end of September 1937.

¹⁴ The People's Revolutionary Government of the Republic of China was short-lived (November 1933 to January 1934). It ruled in the province of Fujian and was in opposition to the Kuomintang.

¹⁵ Mindore, Panay, Negros, Cebu, Maktan, Mindanao, Basilan, Jolo and the Tawi-Tawi island group.

¹⁶ He arrived in Japan in the port of Shimonoseki, and during his stay, from mid-March to mid-May, he visited Kobe, Osaka, Yokohama, Tokyo, Nagasaki, Kyoto, Nikko and Kamakara.

¹⁷ In 1938 Germany recognised the state of Manchuria and in 1940 Japanese Foreign Minister Yosuke Matsuoka negotiated a ten-year Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy.

¹⁸ He visited Tel Aviv, Jaffa and the surrounding Jewish agricultural settlements, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jericho, and from the Dead Sea returned to Jerusalem. He continued to Haifa, Beirut in Lebanon, north to Tripoli, back to Beirut, from there to Damascus in Syria, and then by car to Baghdad in Iraq and to Tehran, Isfahan and the Shiite pilgrimage city of Meshed in Iran (Persia).

At the end of February 1939, as a foreign policy editor for the Czechoslovak News Agency, he set off on a journey through Italy and northern Africa. Here he visited Tripolis in Libya and nearby ancient monuments, continuing to Tunisia, where he visited the cities of Sfax, Kairouan and Tunisia. From Tunisia he flew by plane to Palermo, and then on by boat to Naples and via Bologna and Florence to Prague.

During the Second World War Viktor Mussik did not travel outside Europe. He did, however, visit Germany (1939, 1940), Italy three times (1939, 1940, 1941) and Norway (in autumn 1942, via Denmark and Sweden).

Nor did he travel outside Europe after the war, although he had intended to. In his autobiography he gives the unsettled international situation as the reason. The fact is that from 1946 he repeatedly asked for a passport to be issued to him, but none of his requests were ever met. The reason was his contacts and attitudes (both conjectured and actual) during the period of the Protectorate. From March 1938 Mussik worked as a contract editor in the Czechoslovak News Agency. He later worked in the political section there, and translated French and English, and later mainly German, news stories into Czech. He also wrote and took photographs for the Centropress agency, an agency that provided news and photographic materials to the various desks. From here Mussik's stories were taken by, among others, the magazine *Vlajka*, a fact that was later used to discredit him. From 1939 Mussik was a member of the National Union of Journalists, created through the merger of two other journalist organisations. From 1942 the union was subject to the policy of National Enlightenment Minister Emanuel Moravec, who ensured that it was led by editors-in-chief of daily newspapers who were Nazi collaborators. Thus in February 1942 the notorious anti-Semite and collaborator Vladimír Krychtálek became the union's chairman.¹⁹

In early September 1940 Viktor Mussik, together with some thirty other Czech cultural figures, took part in a propaganda trip to the Reich for Czech artists and journalists. It was an eleven-day trip to Germany and Holland, organised at the instigation of Joseph Goebbels. After the creation of the Protectorate, German propaganda institutions assumed that Czech intellectuals, in particular, needed to be encouraged to show marked support for the loyalty of the Czech nation to the Reich, and to demonstrate Germany's unshakeable position on its road to final victory. The delegation consisted of representatives of various spheres of culture. Journalists formed an important group – there were those who actively supported Germany's national socialist policy, known as the "activist journalists" (the editor-in-chief of *České slovo* Karel Lažnovský, Rudolf Procházka of *Lidové noviny*, Vladimír Krychtálek of *Venkov*) and those who had to be convinced (the editor-in-chief of *ČTK* František Hofman, who in 1942 died in Auschwitz, the editor-in-chief of the Centropress agency Dr. Václav Fiala and the director of the Czech film weekly *Aktualita* Karel Pečený). Among them, as an editor at *ČTK*, was Viktor Mussik.

¹⁹ Vladimír Krychtálek (1903–1947) was a Czech journalist who during the period of Nazi occupation belonged to a group of activist journalists that, both in their writings and behind the scenes, exercised very heavy pressure on the protectorate government in a markedly pro-Nazi direction. When he had to leave *Lidové noviny* following his criticism of President Beneš, he worked at the papers *Večer* and *Venkov* and published under the pseudonym Vladimír Korda. After the war he was condemned to death by the National Court and executed. Krychtálek can be included among the relatively large number of people whose hatred of one form of totalitarian regime (in his case communism) led them to enter the services of another totalitarian regime (Nazism).

From 1942 to May 1945 Mussik also worked, at the invitation of Wolfram von Wolmar²⁰ as editor-in-chief and responsible editor of the Czech workers' cultural monthly *Lidé Práce*. In a protocol from an interrogation at the Land State Security Office in Prague of 9 April 1946 Mussik states that "In May 1942 I was called by the press commissioner at the office of the former protector, Wolfram von Wolmar, who told me that NOÚZ (*National Trade Union Employee Office – JT*) would be publishing a magazine for workers, and that he had chosen me because I was well-travelled. I objected that I did not understand trade union affairs, to which he replied that the magazine was to be cultural and not political. I excused myself, saying that I would not have time, but Wolfram said he would arrange for ČTK to free me up."²¹ It is understandable that it was not advisable to resist an SS member and high-ranking protectorate official, famed for his harsh sanctions against Czech journalists.

It is highly unlikely that Mussik would have taken on the leadership of the magazine voluntarily, as some denunciations state.

In *Lidé Práce* Mussik published his reports and photographs from his earlier journeys around Africa and Asia, which from today's point of view are entirely unobjectionable. Only in articles describing his impressions of European countries can sentences or paragraphs be found exalting German policy in Europe, or describing people's enthusiasm for the building of a new order. It is not clear whether this was a sop on his part to the German owner of the magazine²², or represented German interference in the text, something that happened on a frequent basis and over which the authors of the articles had no influence, as Mussik himself said in his defences.²³

Mussik was also reproached for having become a member of the *Presseklub*, where German and activist journalists met. His membership fees were paid by the publisher of the *Lidé Práce* magazine.

In May 1945 Mussik's work at ČTK came to a de facto end following the purges there. However, it was not until March 1946, the end of his term of notice, that his employment there officially terminated. From October 1945 he had been working in the Brázda publishing house on their book series. He remained there until the end of April 1946, when he was dismissed at the request of the works council there because investigations into him had started again. After that, Mussik never again engaged in journalistic activity. Archive material shows that on 23 May 1945 he was expelled from the Union of Journalists following accusations of collaboration. After he appealed against the decision several times, the Appeals Commission for the Purging of the Journalism Profession decided that his membership would only be suspended, with a waiting period of three years – from 23 May 1945 to 22 May 1948.²⁴

²⁰ Wolfgang Wolfram von Wolmar (1910–1987) SS officer who from the end of the military administration of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (June 1939) until October 1943 was the head of the "Press Group" (*Gruppe Presse*), subordinated to the cultural and political division of the Office of the Reichsprotektor.

²¹ State district archive, Prague, Extraordinary People's Court collection, file no. Ls 7232/1946, box 648, no. 20.

²² The owner of the magazine was the German Working Front (*Deutsche Arbeitsfront-DAF*), or the leader of its Prague branch Michler. The DAF was created after the Nazis came to power in 1933, when all the independent union organisations were dissolved and replaced by the DAF.

²³ SOA Prague, Extraordinary People's Court collection, file Ls 7232/1946, box 648, nos. 4–13

²⁴ NA, Archive of the Journalists' Syndicate, Prague



Fig. 10: Street seller, 1934, Bangkok, Thailand, bw film 6 x 9 cm (As I 5440)



Fig. 11: Fisherman in an outrigger boat, 1934, island of Siasi in the Jolo archipelago, Philippines, bw film 6 x 9 cm (As I 5664)

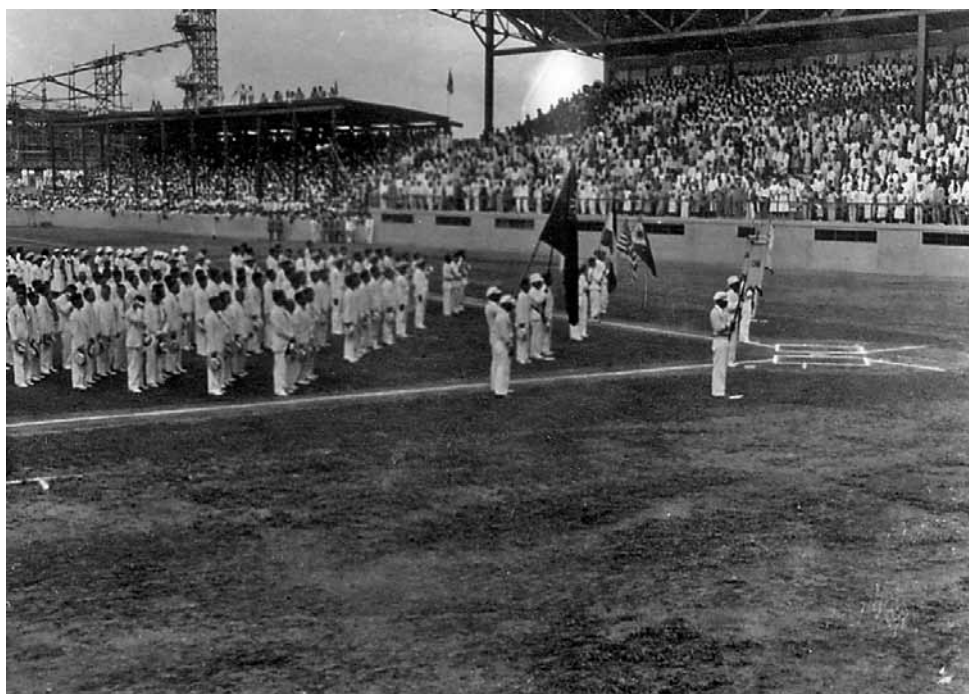


Fig. 12: 10th Far Eastern Games, 12–19 May 1934 – opening ceremony in the stadium, 1934, Manila, island of Luzon, Philippines, bw film 6 x 9 cm (As I 5808)



Fig. 13: Woman shutting fowls into a wicker cage for the night, Banaue, 1934, island of Luzon, Philippines, bw film 3 x 4 cm (As I 5832)

In April 1946 criminal proceedings were brought against Mussik at the Central National Committee of the Capital City of Prague, on the basis of presidential decree no. 138/1945 Sb., known as the "Small Decree."²⁵ Once again, investigations into him started again. In October 1946 the OStB (*District Office of the State Security Force /secret police/ – JT*) in Prague asked the Central National Committee in Prague for Mussik's case to be sent to the Extraordinary People's Court in Prague. During investigation, Mussik and a number of witnesses were interrogated. On 16 April 1947 the public prosecutor stated that he could find no reason to prosecute Viktor Mussik, and that he recommended that the file should be handed over to the Municipal National Committee in Prague.

In June 1948 a revision of the criminal proceedings in the case of the offence against the national honour under decree 138/45 Sb. was launched by the revisionary commission of the Central National Committee (ÚNV) of the Capital City of Prague. The evidence against Viktor Mussik was not sufficient, however, while the evidence in his favour was cogent. As a result, on 11 October 1948 the criminal proceedings against him were definitively halted by the criminal inquiry committee of the ÚNV.²⁶

Did an admirer of T. G. Masaryk change into an admirer of Mussolini? Or was it just an attempt to conform to the times?

Since he was small, Mussik had shown a tendency towards a certain degree of militancy (viz his regular requests for a gun licence), but as his photographs and articles from his travels round the world show, he was neither a racist nor an anti-Semite. The ideas of national socialism were close to Mussik's opinions, and he was favourably inclined towards fascist Italy, which he visited several times.

Mussik's superior at the journal *Venkov* was the pro-Nazi Vladimír Krychtálek, with whom Mussik was understandably in close contact. Did he let his opinions be influenced? Was he just trying to go with the flow?

The archive materials include both accusations that he was an informer and a collaborator, and ungrounded attacks, as well as Mussik's defence that he had worked with the resistance (on his visit to Italy he carried out an assignment by General Eliáš to photograph the movement of German troops from Italian ports to northern Africa) and declarations by witnesses that confirm Mussik's self-aware Czechness – that he had saved them from forced labour, for example.²⁷

On one hand this evidence is testimony to human vengefulness, animosity and the settling of personal accounts, on the other hand it shows an honest attempt to help and to achieve justice.

²⁵ Decree no. 138/1945, known as the "Small Decree", enabled national committees to punish some offences against the national honour. "Offence against the national honour" was an expression that appears to have been taken from presidential decree no. 105/1945 Sb. of 4 October 1945 on purgative committees for the revision of the activity of public employees. The decree, the implementation of which fell into the competence of the whole government, was meant to enable the punishment of state employees or persons paid from public funds who during the period of occupation had violated their loyalty to the Czechoslovak Republic, or to the Czech or Slovak nation. It forms part of Beneš' retributory decrees, like the "Big Decree" no. 16/1945 Sb. concerning the punishment of Nazi criminals, traitors and their assistants and regarding the extraordinary people's courts, which introduced the definition of informing; or decree no. 17/1945 Sb. regarding the creation of the National Court.

²⁶ AHMP, Small Decree collection, 118, sign. 36-18078/I-VI.

²⁷ SOA, Extraordinary People's Court collection, file no. Ls 7232/1946, box 648, no. 172–173.

After the Second World War Mussik worked for a short time as the head of reception at the Ambassador Hotel in Prague (1946), since he was banned from journalism. He was still trying to obtain permission to travel, at least in Europe. Once again, however, he was not issued with a passport, for reasons of "threatening the important interests of state security or important economic interests of the Czechoslovak Republic."

At the start of 1948 Mussik applied for a passport in order to create a photo report on the situation in the Near and Middle East, in view of the proposed division of Palestine. He attached a recommendation from the foreign press and picture agency Pressagence, a recommendation from the press department of the Ministry of Information and the Jewish Agency for Palestine. It was all in vain. Not even a lengthy appeal, submitted on 13 March 1948 through the attorney's office of Dr. Theodor Bartošek at the Land National Committee was any use.

"...the above-mentioned complainant was chosen because he is a well-known traveller with a large amount of reporting experience, given that for 15 years he travelled as a special reporter for the Czechoslovak press around Europe, Africa, India and Indonesia. He has twice been to Palestine itself, and his book "From the Nile to Jordan" (1924) and his journalistic reports from Palestine (1937) met with great interest in this country. His popularity as an experienced reporter can be seen from the fact that his book "The Rise of the Yellows," which the Germans confiscated at the start of the war, was secretly sought out by Czechoslovak readers during the war. That there are not and cannot be any objections from the point of view of state and national reliability against a complainant who is a well-known member of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*this is an exaggerated statement by Bartošek, who was himself a significant Communist Party member – according to archive materials, Mussik was not a member of the Communist Party, although, as can be seen, he had contact with the left – JT*)²⁸, is evidenced by a confirmation of the security expert of the Central National Committee of the Capital City of Prague... the reasons for the ban are not given in the assessment, but here, however, the exact opposite is given: it will aid the interests of our state security if our public is truthfully informed regarding the complex situation in the Near East... "

Also of no use was a confirmation from the Prague Central National Committee (ÚNV) on 16 February 1948 that Mussik was not on the list of persons condemned by the ÚNV of Prague for the offences against the national honour under presidential decree no. 138/1945 Sb.

Definitive rejection came in August 1948. The justification states, among other things, that

"... your application for a passport to travel to all European states, to Africa and to Asia has been rejected on the basis of §7, section 1 d) of law no. 55/1928Sb, since your journey abroad could threaten important interests of state security or important economic interests of the Czechoslovak Republic. The Land National Committee in Prague has rejected your appeal, made within the prescribed deadline, confirms the assessment against which you appealed and modifies the decision of the I. instance to the effect that, given your journalistic activity during the occupation and your contacts with the Germans, which were reason for the launch of proceedings before the purge and appeals

²⁸ NA, research into the Communist Party Central Committee archives, Communist Party membership archive regarding Viktor Mussik's membership. No evidence was found in the above-mentioned archive that Viktor Mussik, born 23. 12. 1899, was a member of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.



Fig. 14: Potters in the market at Cotabato, 1934, island of Mindanao, Philippines, bw film 6 x 9 cm (As I 5940)



Fig. 15: Children by a fisherman's hut on stilts, 1934, Cotabato, island of Mindanao, Philippines, bw film 6 x 9 cm (As I 5938)



Fig. 16: Children's playground, 1935, Tokyo, Japan, bw film
3 x 4 cm (As I 5045)

committee of the Union of Czech Journalists, your journey abroad could threaten important interests of state security. This decision is final."²⁹

It is clear that a journalist of Mussik's type was not desirable after the Communist takeover in February 1948, and so the ruling elite made use of the proceedings that had been held against him in order to close down his career as a journalist once and for all, although in October 1948 the criminal proceedings against Mussik were stopped for lack of evidence.

In the end, following all his unsuccessful attempts to travel abroad, Mussik gave up and retired from public life. He devoted most of his time to the family of his sister Jaroslava, now Fiedlerová, via whom Viktor's ethnographic collections and photographs from his travels entered the Náprstek Museum after his

death.

Viktor Mussik died on 19 November 1952 in Prague, after a longish illness.

It is a pity that after the Second World War Viktor Mussik did not continue his activity.

The collection of photographs from his travels is a rich source of information regarding people in non-European countries and their lives. Detailed study of the collection reveals many unexpected connections and facts, thus making Mussik's archive one of the unique collections in the Náprstek Museum's photo corpus.

Sources:

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collection no. 233 – Foreign Ministry, 2nd and 3rd section, labels 233-4-5/27-31;
collection no. 301 – Interior Ministry Investigatory Commission for the National and

²⁹ NA, collection: Police headquarters Prague II – general registry 1941-1950, box: 7688, label: M 3823/8 viktor mussik).

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Archive of the Capital City of Prague:

Prague City Hall collection I., Department IV., Registry of Prague building inhabitants 1911–1949, entry Mussik Karel;

Small Decree collection, no. 118, label 36-18078/I-VI.

Náprstek Museum Archive:

Travellers collection, 2/27, 28;

Exhibitions collection, 25/10 (1–84).

National Archive:

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Fig. 17: Mussik in Babylon, 1925, Iraq, bw film 6 x 9 cm (As I 7972)