

## THE FIRST WORD

*Six decades have passed since the archive centre in Nis was founded by the decision of the Ministry of Education of the National Republic of Serbia on April 24<sup>th</sup> 1948. That is how the organized social concern and care for written documents began. 4000 metres of the archive materials are kept in the archives of Nis, and they encompass all areas of social life – administration and public services, the judiciary, education, economy and banking, socio-political organizations, as well as important family and personal archive funds. Several collections also comprise the treasure of the Nis archives – the collection of 7,893 photographs starting from 1876, the collection of 2,520 posters from 1890 up to the present day, the collection of 1,420 invitations, catalogs and booklets, the oldest one dating back to 1878, and the VARIA collection consisted of individual significant documents the oldest of which is the copper engraving print from 1737, which is, in fact, the oldest document kept in The Historical Archives of Nis. The archives also keep 56 old books which originated between 1788 and 1867. The oldest among them, registered under number 1, is the book “Fables of Aesop and Other Writers of Fables”, which was translated and edited by Dositej Obradovic. The archives also keep 128 rare books from the period between 1868 and 1941, then 201 Nis publications from 1885 and 1945, magazines and newspapers from 1841 to 1941, as well as 201 church birth, death and marriage registries from the period between 1832 and 1913, which the archives were authorized to keep. The Historical Archives of Nis acquired the microfilming equipment and started the independent archive materials permanent conservation and so far they have conserved 100,000 documents.*

*In its history, The Historical Archives of Nis have organized 78 thematic exhibitions of documents, books, photographs and displays. The most recent one was the exhibition devoted to the history of the Historical Archives of Nis.*

*The first publishing project the Archive recorded in 1982, when the collection of the oldest document fund was printed “Sokobanja and Sokobanja District (1836-1914)”. Soon after, the publications “Old and Rare Books (1788-1945)” and several monographies were published, as well as the largest and most significant among them “A Guidebook to The Historical Archives of Nis” which was printed in 1996. The magazine for historiography, archivistics and humanitarian sciences “Hourglass” is the latest contribution to the cultural and educational activity of The Historical Archives of Nis. The first number appeared in 2003, and in 2006 Ministry of Science and Environmental Protection classified “Hourglass” as a magazine for history, archeology, entology and art history and included it in the list with the mark R-62.*

*In the jubilee year, The Historical Archives of Nis decided to appear before the wide public with the special edition of the magazine "Hourglass" number 6, which is the result of the effort to meet one of the most complex and responsible requirements of modern archives – publication of archive materials , i.e. presentation of the most valuable funds. In The Historical Archives of Nis, there are 56 funds of exceptional and great significance in the total volume of 536,36 metres. These funds were declared to be of exceptional value by the decisions of the Government of Serbia in 1979 and 1998 and the Serbian Archives, at the suggestion of the Nis Archives, established the list of archive material funds of great cultural value. All of them come to light through works of the Nis Archives archivists who tell the true story of events, institutions and people who marked the time they lived in and left a trace about themselves in the period between 1834 and 1971.*

*The archive materials of exceptional importance are classified into five funds which represent illustrated testimonies on the events in the first years after the II World War. Immediately after the liberation from the fascists, in 1945, two commissions were formed: War profit commission and War damage commission, and the district commission for establishing the crimes of occupying forces and their collaborators in Nis, started working even during the war – on the free territory of the village of Lipovac, on October 8<sup>th</sup> 1944. Out of it, The District agency was founded which soon after formed the Town agency for establishing the crimes of occupying forces in Nis. During its one year's work, it received 1,915 reports against the occupying forces crimes, 636 criminals were recorded and 1,666 crime victims, and it finished its work with the conclusion that there "was the reason to believe that not all the war criminals had been reported". This fund, under the archive signature "KOZARA" (War Crimes Commission 1944-1947), contains 2,347 documents on 5,188 pages of testimonies on the crimes in the districts of Nis, Aleksinac, Zaplanje, Morava and Sokobanja.*

*The archive materials of the Nis District Court fund, which was founded in the second half of 1944 by the decision of the District National Liberation Committee, provide testimonies on the legal authorities organization. The name District National Court was in use until June 30<sup>th</sup> 1948. The fund consists of 100 books, 144 folders of documents and 3 boxes of papers.*

*Nis District Economic Court was founded in 1954 in accordance with the Law on Economic Courts, although the economic-commercial courts, as a kind of specialized courts, had existed since 1807.*

*There are 51 archive funds of great cultural significance, of different content and originating from different historical periods. The oldest materials have been preserved as testimonies on the work of the head offices of the districts of Nis, Aleksinac, Razanj, Svrljig and especially the one of Sokobanja which is the oldest fund in The Historical Archives of Nis ,including the materials from the period of 1836 to 1941. After the liberation from the Turkish rule it had been under for centuries, in 1833, Sokobanja became a part of the Serbian state – Princedom of Serbia, which in the following year, at the February meeting in 1934, established its internal*

organization. That is how the captaincy of Sokobanja was founded – as the border area towards Turkey, and was the seat of the Sokobanja District for a year, when after a period of many changes in district territories and their seats, Banjski district became a part of Nis district in 1896. The main value of the documentation of these funds are the true and illustrated accounts of socio-economical and political circumstances of the people's life in this period after the liberation from the Turks. It is from them that we know that Nis was the centre of the first banking organization in 1881 when the district savings bank of Nis was founded, that that was the year when building of the Belgrade-Nis railway was started and the teacher-training school was opened, and two years later, in 1883, the first printing house began its work. In the fund of the head office of Aleksinac district, the data on the first brewery in Aleksinac in 1865 have been preserved, as well as those of the first industrial company – the mill in Vakup in 1870, and the first Women's state school in 1858. The elementary school in Sokobanja was founded in 1834, with its first teacher being Atanacko Radosavljevic, and in the same year Duke Milos sent "two bottles of water" to be analyzed in Wien. Baron Herder from Medical School of Wien, an expert in mineral waters of the time, who had visited Sokobanja at the invitation of the principedom parliament, pointed to its medicinal characteristics.

The history of the municipality of Nis was followed by the archive materials of several funds of great significance: firstly, the fund of the Municipality of Nis (1878-1915), whose incomplete materials from 1902 were taken out from a remarkably bigger fund of the Town Head Authority (1920-1941) with 122 boxes of archive materials and 43 books. Presentation of these funds elucidates the work and activities in Nis in the period when it was the second centre of the political life of Serbia – from October 1878 to 1880 Nis was the military and administrative head office, and the first administrator of the town of Nis was the government deputy Lazar Protic. Establishing of property, legal and agrarian relations found after these regions had been liberated from the Turkish rule, establishing of the first health service, organization of the first educational and church institutions, were the priorities of the Administration which divided the town of the time into three areas: the town area, the arnaut-bazaar area and the new-town area. In the following years, the administrative divisions and organizations changed – at one point the municipality of Nis was under the authority of the district council of Toplica District, then was separated from it, and on November 5<sup>th</sup> 1915 it even stopped working – the Bulgarian occupation followed.

After the liberation in 1918, the municipality of Nis started its work again. During the period of two years, three municipal presidents were elected and replaced, and on October 24<sup>th</sup> 1920, Pavle Stojkovic became the first municipal president of the Communist Municipality of Nis. Other municipal presidents elected until the beginning of the World War II were Dragisa Cvetkovic, Dr Dragutin Petkovic and Dragutin-Dragi Zivkovic. The organization and competences of the municipality were again determined by the Law on town municipalities from 1934 and the name was changed into the Town Head Office which also worked during the German occupation, but under the influence of and in connection with the felt commandment 809, formed by

*German authorities. The Town Head Office worked until the formation of the National Liberation Committees in 1944. The decision on their formation was made by the Presidency of the Antifascist Parliament of the National Liberation of Serbia on 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1941. The following districts were formed on the liberated territories: The Districts of Aleksinac, Bela Palanka, Zaplanje, Razanj, Svrlijig and Sokobanja, and then the National Liberation Committees were formed in each of them. The documentation on each of them is kept in The Historic Archives of Nis – the total amount of 37.65 metres of the archive materials and represent the illustrated testimonies on the work of the post-war authorities which are all presented in this special edition of “Hourglass”.*

*The biggest quantity of the archive materials preserved is the one testifying on the work of the District Assembly of Nis (1944-1967) – 1,225 boxes of documentation occupied a considerable part of the Nis Historical Archives premises. There is nothing unusual about it when it is known that in 1946, Nis District included 39 municipalities with numerous administrative organs, secretariats, departments, administrative institutions, committees and inspection organs for all areas of social life – internal affairs and general administration, economy, education and culture, national health, social policy, work and work relations.*

*From the total of 60 funds of The Historical Archives of Nis which refer to the post-war socio-political organizations, societies and associations, 8 of them were proclaimed the archive material funds of great significance. The materials on District Syndicate Council and District Socialist Union Committee are of the biggest scope – 18.8 and 7.4 metres. The Archive materials testify on the role of these and other organizations – Youth league, Veterans’ and War Army Veterans’ Associations, – in consolidating the new national authorities and achieving the objectives which they proclaimed. District Red Cross Council with its kind mission of being always and everywhere on the side of those who need help, in both war and peace, belongs to this group of funds.*

*In the area of economy and banking, ten funds are regarded as funds of great significance. The documentation on the work of the first private banking organizations has been preserved – Nis stock saving bank founded in 1884, Nis cooperative which was founded four years later by a group of traders and District bank of Nis, which was established as a financial fund by rich entrepreneurs from Nis on November 6<sup>th</sup> 1907. Apart from crediting the citizens and giving financial support to entrepreneurs, banking organizations founded their own industrial companies. That is how with the capital of the District bank of Nis an automatic mill was built (District Bank mill) which, with some interruptions, had worked until the nationalization in 1946. Nis stock saving bank built a cotton spinning mill whose quality matched the English since “the most modern American system machines had been bought in England”. The spinning mill was sold to the industrialist Mita Ristic and Sons in 1929. The electric mill of the Nis Stock saving bank founded in 1910, at one point made more profit than banking business of the saving bank.*

*Nis cooperative, which primarily encouraged the citizens to save money, also expanded its activities to economic business in 1912 - it founded a white brick and tile*

factory in Gorica and a shoe factory which in 1912, produced 200 pairs of shoes daily. It is interesting to notice that none of these banking organizations got the work license after the II World War – they were liquidated in 1947 and 1948, but the archives, by preserving the archive materials, preserved the memories of their work and contribution to the economic development of Nis at the end of XIX and in the first decades of XX century. At that time, or more precisely, on August 11<sup>th</sup> 1911, Association of Industrialists was founded which worked until the beginning of the II World War in 1941. However, the occupying forces ordered the association and its members – industrial companies, to go on working during the war. There is a datum in the archives that in 1941 there were 30 industrial companies in Morava region. Pejic foundry, Stefanovic and company, Jelasnica brown coal mine, Aleksinac mine, as well as the most lucrative coal mine in Serbia (the nameless society for exploitation of Aleksinac mines at the time) organized the war production of coal with the help of the foreign funds and according to the agreement between the German occupying forces and the Belgian owners of the mines. The leather factory, a private company founded by the Trading bank in 1910, as a Jewish property, was put under the authority of the German secretariat and worked exclusively for the needs of the German army. All these companies were nationalized after the II World War.

The Credit Information bureau – Trading information bureau, worked until the beginning of the war and it collected the information on quality and stability of the companies and individuals who applied for a bank credit. From 1928 to 1944, Morava Financial Head Office was the financial administration in charge of 27 districts – a poor fund of archive materials destroyed in the bombing, was taken over in 1952.

When it comes to the area of health, the funds of great historic significance are as follows: Clinical Hospital of Nis (1918-1971) with the archive materials of 15.4 metres in length, Health protection Institute (1937-1944) with the archive materials of 32 metres in length, District Hospital in Svrljig (1919-1944) with 8 boxes of the archive materials and Neuropsychiatric hospital Gornja Toponica (1925-1955) with the archive materials of 11.7 metres in length. These funds create a picture of health development which started in the year of 1881 when Civil hospital was founded under the name of District hospital, then in 1900, Pasteur Institute marked the beginning of professional and scientific exploring work in the area of medicine, then in 1910 when District hospital in Svrljig was built, until 1926 when the treatment of mental patients began in the hospital in Gornja Toponica. The first patient was the prince Djordje Karadjordjevic who left the hospital in 1941, having spent in it 15 years. In his autobiographic book “The Truth About my Life” the following prince’s words were recorded: “ Was it necessary for one people, my people ...to lose its freedom so that I could get mine?”

In the area of schools and education, the archive materials of four higher education schools and two secondary schools in Nis were proclaimed to be the archive materials of great significance. The oldest among them was State Mixed Civil school which was a lower secondary school which educated students for trade, handicrafts and agriculture from 1937 to 1945. In 1948 Teacher’s College was founded in Nis – the first high education institution as the only college in Serbia south of Belgrade.

8,142 students acquired this college diploma during two and a half decades of its work and the first PhD dissertation in the south of Serbia was defended after the war. The PhD degree in Geography was acquired by Jovan Ciric, later a professor at Faculty of Philosophy in Nis. This year of 1948 is also noted as the year when the secondary Theatre School "Dobrica Milutinovic" was founded in Nis, which educated the first generation of actors during its four-year work. In the 60s of the XX century, three more schools were founded in Nis –economic-commercial which existed for 15 years, Higher Administrative school and higher technical-mechanical school which educated the personnel for more than a decade.

Several archive materials funds of great cultural significance follow the life of the church communities – Christian orthodox, Jewish and Muslim. In Nis eparchy, the first church communities were formed in 1890. The Nis Historical Archives got more knowledge on one of them – the church communities of Gornji Adrovac, by taking the archive materials from the orthodox church of Holy Trinity, better known among the people as the church of colonel Rajevski in Gornji Adrovac. The Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments in Nis carried out extensive construction and conservation work on this object which was a sad example of indifference to such an object of great historical value as the only of its kind connected with the Serbian – Turkish war 1876-1878 and the role of the Russian Volunteers in it. The church was built on the place of death of the most famous of them - colonel Nikolai Nikolajevich Rajevski. It is interesting to mention here that the destiny of colonel Rajevski was Tolstoy's literary inspiration for the character of Vronsky in the novel "Anna Karenina"

The archive fund of church-educational Jewish community is precious for doing research on the Jewish people in these areas, and it dates back to XVI century. The Jewish community, being a powerful strongpoint, protected the rights of the Jews and looked after their religious, social, educational and other needs. The Jews, like Cincars, in Nis were mainly involved in trading activities, but they were also clerks, doctors, lawyers, teachers, pharmacists, as well as artists and people in other professions. Due to madness of the II World War only a few Jews survived, those who were hiding behind Serbian surnames and whom the people of Nis could help and protect.

The archive materials of the vakuf-mearif district whose main seat was in Nis, illustratively testify on the life of the Muslims whose number was about 15,000 until the I Balkan War. This main seat was of religious and property character, which means that it looked after the property of the Islamic community, as well as the building and maintenance of mosques and education of Islamic students.

Among 17 personal funds, the personal fund of Vladislav Cvetanovic is the only one classified as the fund of great significance of the Historical Archives of Nis. The person in question was a leading engineer in the first decades of the XX century and the first engineer employed in newly opened PP institutions in Nis. Vladislav Cvetanovic, who had finished the polytechnic studies in Germany, had a wide range of interests – from installing the first radio-telegraphic stations in Nis for the needs of the Serbian army, designing a number of electrical and hydro-electrical power stations, to

*doing research in thermal springs in Niska Banja. He was born in Batocina but served the army in Nis where he stayed and lived with his family until his death in 1975.*

*Four out of seven collections of The Historical Archives of Nis have been proclaimed the archive materials of great significance. The collection of photographs has 7,893 photographs taken in the period from 1876 up to the present day. 2,520 posters comprise the collection of posters which portray the political, cultural and entire life of Nis in the past 116 years. The oldest one is the Liberal party election campaign poster promoting Nikola Rasic and Panta Sreckovic for parliament members in 1890. In cooperation with the district and municipality offices of League of World War II Veterans' Associations, the newest fund was created – 77 chronicle manuscripts, biographies and autobiographies of the participants of the national liberation war were collected and are the documents of a precious value. The oldest one is VARIA collection consisted of documents which are not interconnected and which are of different origin and different time periods. The oldest document in it is at the same time the oldest document in possession of The Historical Archives of Nis - the copper engraving print from 1737. The most of the documents are in Serbian, but there are those written in Turkish, German, Russian, Bulgarian and Greek.*

*A reader will probably notice that some of the archive material funds presented in "Hourglass" number 6, are dealt with in detail and presented in a form of magazine stories, and some are just drawn attention to by an enlarged historical note given in order to encourage potential explorers to look deeper into them. Anyway, this special edition of the magazine "Hourglass" of The Historical Archives of Nis, appears before a critical judgment of the archive, scientific and general public, which will give the best judgment of its reach and value. However, at least two things are indisputable: firstly, publication of archive materials is the best way of preserving it, so this edition of "Hourglass" has primarily that role with understandably present wish to remind us of the historical events and facts, of what really happened and how it happened, and that is exactly what a historical and professional mission of all historical archives is in their service of the truth. "The power of one people is in its power to remember" (Dobrica Cosic).*

*And last but not least, indisputable is the effort of the archivists of The Historical Archives of Nis in this jubilee year for the institution., who, while involved in their regular working activities, step out with such a publication as their identification, before the professional and general public.*

*Editor in chief  
Ivanka Stancevski*