



## From Rector's Formal Address - University Day - June 15, 2005

(see <http://www.ni.ac.yu/index2.htm>)

Esteemed Colleagues,  
Dear students,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have gathered here today to observe the 40th Anniversary of the University of Niš, since on the same date, back in 1965, the official decree of its establishment was issued. Numerous scientific meetings, conferences, concerts and other manifestations are taking place throughout this year, all of them aimed at marking this significant anniversary, so that the entire year of 2005 may be regarded as the jubilee year of the University of Niš. It is, also, in these days that the **University Law**, so long expected and so important for the Serbian academic community, shall enter the parliamentary procedure. We hope that the **Law** shall soon be enacted, thus enabling a radical reform of higher education and successful implementation of the Bologna Declaration, all with the objective of ensuring more efficient studying, introduction of standards and quality control, and finally, our integration into the united European educational system.



Not long ago, at the University of Belgrade, we celebrated the Centenary of the first **University Law** of Serbia. On March 12th 1905, King Petar I signed the Decree on the Enactment of the **University Law** which, according to many academic standards, was in line with current trends of a modern university and which strongly resembles some of the principles of the **Bologna Declaration**. However, the origin of higher education in Serbia may be traced back to the 30s of the 19th century, when Serbia acquired the status of a vassal state after the II Serbian Uprising. The **Lyceum** was established in Kragujevac in 1838 and moved to Belgrade after three years. It was, we may say, one of the first institutions of higher education in the wider area of the Balkans, which had for centuries been under the Ottoman reign, having thus missed the opportunity to introduce higher education much earlier, like other parts of Europe did. We should recall that the universities appeared in West Europe in the period from the 11th to the 14th century. The first among them was the **University of Bologna**, founded in 1088, that is more than nine centuries ago.

In Serbia, which was facing final withdrawal of the Turks, in autumn 1863, the **Lyceum** was transformed into the **Great School**, which grew into the **University of Belgrade** in 1905. Southern parts of Serbia, however, remained under the Turks until 1878. During the Turkish domination, **Niš** was the center of military and administrative authorities. The **Fortress of Niš**, constructed in 1723, falls into the group of the most beautiful and best preserved Turkish structures in the Balkans. After long-lasting fighting, on January 11th 1878, Prince Milan entered the **Fortress of Niš**. From that moment, Niš discontinued its existence as an oriental casbah and started developing vigorously. The town was massively built up and developed culturally and politically. Niš became the Second Capital of Serbia. The Gymnasium was opened in 1878, the Teacher-Training School in 1882, and the Girls' College in 1894. Since 1878, Niš houses the center of church authorities – the **Metropolitan's Residence** and the **Eparchy of Niš**. Also, the first session of the **National Assembly of Serbia** was held in Niš in 1878, with the participation of 172 national representatives and the speech delivered from the throne by Prince Milan Obrenović.

On the bank of the Nišava River, in so-called **Beograd-mahala** area, the **District Government Palace** was built, and this is the building in which we are today. The building was constructed in

the style of Neo-Renaissance, after the design of an unknown Viennese architect, most probably in 1886. It was a monumental and modern palace, as described by the Austrian travel writer and archaeologist Felix Kanitz, who visited Niš in 1887 and published his impressions in "Illustrated Journal of Leipzig", having particularly described this construction. The building then had two floors, with the entrance from the quay, dividing the building into two symmetrical wings which housed the **District Court**, the **District Government** and the **Military Headquarters**.

During the period from July 26th 1914 to October 16th 1915, that is while Niš was the **war capital of Serbia**, this building was the seat of the **Serbian Government** and its **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**. Formal declaration of war by Austro-Hungary reached this building on July 28th 1914, two days after the Government had settled in it.

After the war, in the period of 1925-1930, a new story was added onto the old building. The second phase of the building construction started in 1930, when Niš became the administrative center of the **Morava County**. Finally in 1935 this edifice gained its present form, by building the front semi-circular annex. All the works were executed according to the design of the architect Petar Gačić from Belgrade. After World War II, the building housed the **District Administration**, while in 1967 it was ceded to the permanent exploitation of the **University of Niš**. As one of the most representative structures in the town, the building was placed on the national register of monuments in 1971 and proclaimed a cultural treasure of high significance in 1979.

Demetropolization of higher education and spreading of the university network through Serbia started in the 1960s. Namely, the University of Novi Sad was formed in 1960, as well as three faculties in Niš, operating within the University of Belgrade until 1965. The **University of Niš** was established in 1965, then in 1969 the **University of Priština**, and in 1876 the **University of Kragujevac**. In the meantime, in 1974, the **University of Titograd** in Montenegro was formed (now the **University of Montenegro**, seated in Podgorica). All of these universities stemmed from the University of Belgrade and with its direct assistance and support. Therefore, I would like to use this opportunity, ladies and gentlemen, to express the gratitude on behalf of all these universities to the University of Belgrade and its current Rector, esteemed colleague professor Dejan Popović, for everything that the University of Belgrade did and is still doing, generously and in the form of loyal partnership, offering its academic staff potentials and other resources for the quality improvement of studying and research in all the universities of Serbia.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The **higher education process** started in Niš before **45** years. The **Executive Council of the People's Republic of Serbia** issued on May 18th 1960 the **Decree** on formation of three faculties in Niš: **Faculty of Engineering** comprising four departments (Architecture, Civil Engineering, Electronic Engineering and Mechanical Engineering), **Faculty of Law and Economics**, with two departments (Law and Economics) and **Faculty of Medicine** with two departments (Medicine and Stomatology). With its position and size, Niš as one of big Serbian centers, then with developed industry and a wide network of educational, cultural, health and other institutions, fulfilled all the requirements of fast development into a great new university center. The first deans were: Prof. Dr. Nikola Djuknić at the Faculty of Medicine, Prof. Dr. Slavoljub Popović at the Faculty of Law and Economics and Prof. Eng. Dragoljub Macura at the Faculty of Engineering.

The total number of 3740 students enrolled the winter semester at all the three faculties. Number of students gradually increased, so that in 1965 there were 10500 students, out of which 6800 full-time registered, at the moment of institutionalizing the University of Niš. Regarding the teaching staff, the first year of the operation of faculties was covered almost totally by the academic staff from related faculties of the universities in Belgrade and Skoplje. Since the development of regular

teaching staff had been given particular attention from the beginning, in its foundation year, 1965, the University of Niš had the teaching staff of 234 professors and teaching assistants.

Owing especially to well-developed industry of that period and to its constant need of expansion, the principal characteristic was a joint participation of the faculties, economy and public services in the elaboration of curricula and teaching programs, as well as their close and concrete collaboration. The Faculty of Engineering established long-term cooperation with the Machine-Tool Industry and the Electronic Industry. The laboratories of the Machine-Tool Industry were moved to the Faculty, the students of the Department of Electronic Engineering were performing their practical training in the laboratories of the Electronic Industry, certain number of industrial experts carried out teaching courses, etc. The Faculty of Medicine successfully cooperated with health services and institutions. Within the limits of their modest capacities, parallel with teaching activities, the faculties were endeavoring to turn more and more toward the scientific research of problems imposed in practice. The emphasized principle **cooperation with economy and public services** was increasingly intensified year by year, and this represented a specific characteristic of the faculties in Niš in this phase of their development. First 57 graduate students were presented with their diplomas on November 26th, 1964, and this information was published next day in the daily newspaper "Politika". Engineers, physicians, dentists, lawyers and economists that graduated from the faculties in Niš subsequently got employed and soon earned recognition as good professionals in their respective working organizations. A certain number of graduates having shown the best studying results were elected teaching assistants within their faculties.

It was in such an ambience that the **Parliament of Serbia**, on June 15th 1965, enacted the **Law on Foundation of the University of Niš**. Thus, the third Serbian - seventh Yugoslav university was established.

On October 14th, 1965, at 11:00 h, the principal ceremony of the University of Niš inauguration started in the main lecture theater of the Faculty of Engineering, gathering about 500 guests. In an inspired address, our first rector, **Prof. Dr. Branimir Janković**, renowned professor of the international law, reported of the five-year period results and achievements in the development of higher education and its influence on general development of southeast Serbia, and then talked about the prospects and future development of the University of Niš, established in one of the oldest European towns, the existence of which had been recorded back in 286 BC. He mentioned all the significant stages and events that marked this vivid intersection of routes not only between the East and the West, but among three continents as well. The town of Niš was the point of great historical events, wars, rebellions, confronted interests and contrasted civilizations and cultures (Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, German, Austro-Hungarian, etc.). Rector Janković then talked about the role and mission of the University and the realization of such a concept, and particularly about the scientific rating of the University

The **Nobelist Andrić**, honored by the students' invitation to take part in this ceremony, talked about creative and artistic endeavors, the significance and role of art in the development of personality, including many useful advices to the young population of Niš. His visionary words shall come true in the following period. The president of the Municipal Assembly of Niš, Ratko Mitić, emphasized that the formation of the University of Niš represented an event of historical significance, which would create necessary conditions and open prospects for faster material, economic, cultural and educational emancipation of the town and its surrounding districts.

During the Protest of 1992, the epicenter of the students' and teachers' rally was within the Faculty of Electronic Engineering in Niš. The publication "**Forces of Darkness and Insanity**" by Professor Dragoljub B. Djordjević and Saša Dukić deals with these hard times. Students were also first to react when the regime rigged the winter elections of 1996-1997. It was an everyday strong protest which grew into a general national revolt that lasted for several months until the corrupt electoral practices were finally admitted and the first democratic authority was established at the local level.

The protests of Niš students and well worked-out actions reached the greatest TV stations and other media in the world.

In order to suppress the university democratic potential, the government enacted in 1998 the **University Law**, which abolished the university autonomy and subdued the academic freedoms. Rectors and faculty deans were appointed by the Government, teachers were being "elected" by the appointed deans, etc. On account of this law, the **European University Association** suspended all our universities from its membership, but it readmitted us after the changes of October 5th 2000, although we were waiting for a new University Law until 2002.

Intensification of the crisis led to the NATO aggression on the FRY in the spring of 1999, in which Niš was subjected to more than 40 aerial bombardments that caused great damages to industrial and public facilities, but to the University structures as well, in particular the complex of technical faculties. The effects of these air-raids are still visible. Paradoxical though it may be, the greatest ravages struck the parts of the University where the resistance against the regime of Milošević was the strongest. We should not forget the heavy loss of life, in which there also were the students of the University of Niš.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, the University of Niš embraces thirteen faculties (see <http://www.ni.ac.yu/index2.htm>) with 1450 teaching and 600 administrative and technical staff. All over the University of Niš at the moment, 26500 students are attending undergraduate study programs, 700 students are enrolled in master's studies, while more than 70 candidates applied for the admission to the PhD degree.

So far, more than 39800 students have graduated from the University of Niš, 1920 students have earned master's degree and 1090 candidates have successfully defended doctoral dissertations.

Since its foundation, the University of Niš has maintained various forms of academic cooperation with universities and other higher-education institutions abroad, either through the membership in international academic associations, the inter-university contracts on direct collaboration, or on the basis of joint research projects. We should particularly mention the cooperation with German universities in Bochum and Ilmenau, Bulgarian universities in Veliko Turnovo and Gabrovo, universities in Greece, as well as universities in the immediate environment.

The reactivation of our membership in the Association of European Universities (EUA) at the beginning of 2001 enabled the institutional quality review of the University of Niš by the EUA, which provided conditions for the University to continue with its own reorganization and internationalization of education by fostering the European spirit and the intentions of the Bologna Declaration. In April 2002, the University of Niš took part in the Visiting Advisors Program of the Universities Project organized by the Salzburg Seminar and at midyear of 2002 it became a regular member of the Interuniversity Center in Dubrovnik, whose various programs attract university workers worldwide, and particularly from the southeastern Europe.

Broken international relations have lately been reactivated, and new forms of cooperation have been established as well. In short time we established active cooperation with the Karl-Franzens University in Graz (Austria), the universities in Sibiu (Romania), Moscow and Belgorod (Russia), Veliko Turnovo, Gabrovo and Blagoevgrad (Bulgaria), Bitola (Macedonia), Milan and Potenza (Italy), Delaware (USA), Szeged (Hungary) and Berlin (Germany). Also, a tripartite contract was signed on cooperation among the universities in Sofia, Skoplje and Niš, based on the regional cooperation "Eurobalkan" among Serbia, Bulgaria and Macedonia. The University of Niš is making efforts to restore broken connections with the universities in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as other countries in the region.

The Faculties of the University of Niš independently collaborate with their foreign partners either within the University international cooperation framework or through particular cooperation agreements with related academic institutions. The cooperation is developed in the fields of education, research and other areas of mutual interest, and it is realized on the basis of reciprocal exchange of faculty staff and students, exchange of educational and scholarly information and literature, as well as through joint scientific meetings and research projects. Apart from that, TEMPUS projects in which the University of Niš has been participating significantly increase student mobility and improve other forms of cooperation, including the implementation of the Bologna Process. Owing to the TEMPUS and WUS projects, number of the University laboratories obtained significant equipment. I would like to use the occasion to express my gratitude to the TEMPUS Office in Belgrade and the WUS representatives for this fruitful collaboration.

In the sphere of publishing activities, the University has so far issued 160 publications – textbooks, monographs, workbooks and auxiliary textbooks. Starting from 1995, the University fosters desk-top electronic publishing. Beside the studying literature, the University of Niš issues two scientific journals, as well:

\* The Journal for Social Theory and Practice **Teme**, which has been edited since 1977 as a quarterly journal. Reviewed papers are published in Serbian with summaries in English.

\* The Scientific Journal **Facta Universitatis**, which comprises 13 independent series.

The first number of **Facta Universitatis** was issued in 1986, in the Series **Mathematics and Informatics**. Each series of the journal has its own editorial board consisting of renowned scientists from the country and abroad. Reviewed papers are published, as a rule, in English. The journal is exchanged with a great number of institutions worldwide, following the principle of reciprocity, and to the benefit of the University Library "Nikola Tesla". Nowadays we also have the electronic edition of the journal.

The University Library "Nikola Tesla" in Niš was formed only two years after the inauguration of the University, that is, in 1967. With the help of, but also alongside with the University, the Library constantly developed. Today, the Library possesses rich holdings of professional and scientific literature, modern local network of computers and information equipment providing it access to huge amounts of scientific information in the electronic form, and it employs young but professionally qualified team of librarians. Owing to the **Ministry of Science and Environmental Protection**, it is now possible to directly access numerous world databases with nearly 14000 scientific journals through the consortium of libraries and via the academic network..

The Library has established very efficient cooperation with all university and other libraries in Serbia and abroad, as well as with numerous scientific and cultural institutions, with which it exchanges publications, information and knowledge, all with the general objective to constantly keep pace with modern trends and improve library activities within the University. Thus, it has exceeded the framework of a classic library and developed into a modern information center, capable of providing comprehensive services adjusted to meet most of the requirements of University teachers and students and to reflect the interests in scientific information of the widest public.

The University of Niš closely cooperates with the SASA. **Research Center of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences and the University of Niš** was formed by the Decisions of the SASA Presidency and the Assembly of the University of Niš on December 18th, 1990. The Center has the status of a scientific organizational unit of the University, and performs its activities in the framework of the activities, rights and liabilities of the Academy and the University of Niš.

The first principal of the Center was the academician Momčilo M. Ristić, appointed on February 20th, 1991. Today, the function of the principal is performed by the academician Miroslav Pantić, who was appointed on February 29th, 1996.

The Center comprises 11 sections, directed toward distinctive research in the fields of the archaeological heritage of the Ponišavlje region, the history of southeast Serbia until 1918, Serbian vernaculars, literary and cultural life and aesthetic culture in southeast Serbia, population of southeast Serbia, endemic nephropathy, solar energy, etc. So far, the Center organized 14 international and national conferences and symposia, and published 19 proceedings of the conferences and monographs with the results of research. Two professors of the University of Niš have recently been elected corresponding SASA members

The **Center for Multidisciplinary Studies and Scientific Research** has been in function as an organizational unit of the University for two years now. It has its Academic Council composed of representatives of all the faculties of the University of Niš. Center activities are directed towards creating a core of a multidisciplinary approach to scientific and educational activities of the University of Niš. The Center stimulates and develops education and research through the interactivity of two or more sciences. The basic activities of the Center are reflected through **scientific research** and **postgraduate studies**, organized in two master's courses: **Quality Management** and **European Studies**. Organization of doctoral studies has also been envisaged.

In view of more efficient work, higher competence and accomplishment of integrative university function, the Academic Board of the University of Niš formed recently 14 boards of scientific experts, which consider and endorse: the faculty decisions on the elections for academic positions, proposals of doctoral dissertation themes and reports on completed doctoral dissertations.

In order to preserve the dignity of profession, to improve moral values, professional devotion and personal responsibility of university graduates and entire academic community, the **University Council** introduced the **Ethical Code** of the University of Niš. Violators of the Ethical Code principles are liable to responsibility to be determined by the **Court of Honor of the University of Niš**.

Finally, I would say that the University of Niš is prepared for all the challenges of the modern times, that it pursues efficient implementation of the Bologna Process, that it supports the introduction of European quality standards and that it strives at the quickest possible integration into the European educational area. This is the desire of both the students and most of the teaching staff of the University of Niš.

Thank you for your attention!



Prof. Dr Gradimir Milovanović, Rector