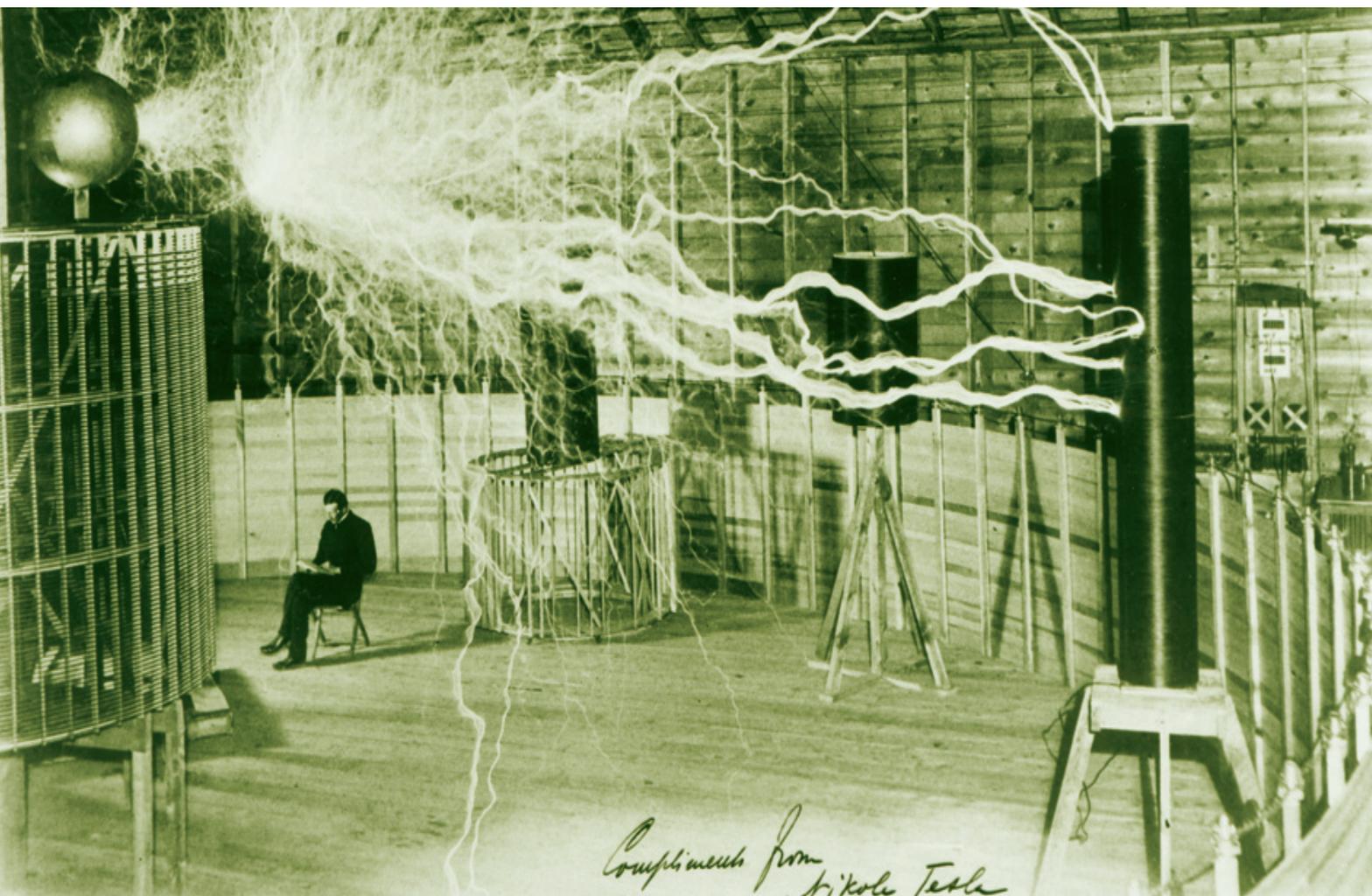
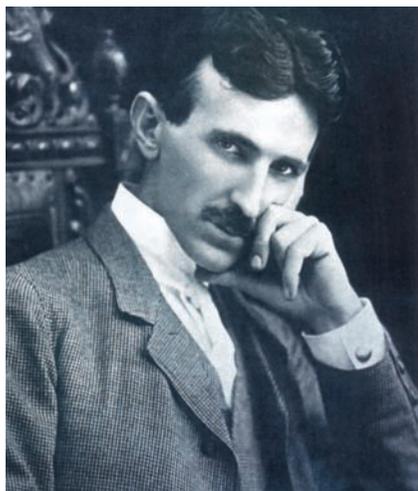


NIKOLA TESLA IN BELGRADE IN 1892



THE MAN WHO ILLUMINATED THE PLANET or ELECTRICITY OF THE HEART

This year celebrates the anniversary of the birth of a “man who illuminated the planet”. A dinner ticket in the Historical Archive of Belgrade is a reminder of his 1892 visit to Belgrade. On the 150th anniversary of his birth, this small homage is another recollection of his short visit. The research conducted by Branislav Stojiljković, published in the catalogue for an exhibition entitled “Nikola Tesla in Belgrade in 1892”, was helpful in reconstructing the complete events during Tesla’s stay in the Serbian capital.



In a trembling voice, Tesla thanked everyone for the warm welcome he received and recounted interesting events from the early days of his work. He ended his speech by saying, "I have some ideas I hope to realise, and when I do, the world will have to acknowledge them. For me it will be the greatest happiness because it will be the work of a Serb." Leaving Belgrade he said, "The time will come when we will be able to breakfast in New York and have dinner in Belgrade. I will not live to see it..."

Nikola Tesla was born into a respected Serbian family in 1856, in the village of Smiljane, in the province of Lika, in what was then Austro-Hungary (today the Republic of Croatia).

This "young Serbian genius" soared into eternity from the tiny Smiljane via Paris and London and on to the United States.

He attended schools in his native Smiljane, Gospić, Karlovac, Graz and Prague. He was first employed in Maribor (Slovenia), followed by Budapest, Paris and Strasbourg. In 1884, Tesla left Europe for America. Although he arrived to America with just four cents in his pocket, working for two years as a common labourer in order to survive, somehow he managed to find investors to support the realisation of his original invention, the alternating current electric power system.

His dream of taming the Niagra Falls came to pass. In 1895 he began work on the first generating system using AC circuits to transport energy for the Niagara Falls Power Plant, and the following year the power plant was constructed, inaugurating the first high-frequency alternating current that transported energy to Buffalo. The rest is history, and not just for him. Some attribute his work to Marconi or Edison, but experts know who Nikola Tesla is.

Tesla achieved international fame and respect in scientific circles with his discovery of the principle of the rotating magnetic field and its application in new models of electric power engines with a polyphase alternating current system. For his work and achievements in the field of the high frequency current systems, Tesla was invited to Europe to introduce British and French scientists to his research. Following exceptionally success-

ful lectures in London and Paris, he traveled to Gospić to his mother's deathbed, an experience that deeply affected him. Following his mother's death, Tesla fell ill.

When he recuperated Tesla visited Zagreb with his uncle and delivered a lecture at the Town Hall. He also had a meeting with Serbian students. In Budapest, Tesla received a delegation from Belgrade comprised of Gymnasium professors and representatives of the Association of Engineers. They invited him to visit Belgrade and Tesla accepted their invitation with pleasure, saying that it would be his greatest happiness to visit the "cradle

of my ancestors, the Kingdom of Serbia... the capital of the Serbs who invite me – which is to me a great honor. Nothing in the world or in my life could ever surpass this show of respect. I am happy to be a Serb and I'll be always be proud of it."

For Belgrade and Belgraders, Tesla's visit was an unforgettable event that was covered by all the capital's newspapers. Preparations for the welcome ceremony began immediately upon the return of the delegation that went to Budapest.

SERB AND NOTHING ELSE

On the evening of May 30th, the Railway Station in Belgrade was decorated with flowers, flags and the emblems of numerous associations. Belgraders gathered in droves to welcome a dear guest. Among them was the president of Belgrade Municipality, Milovan Marinković, gymnasium professors and other educational institutions, representatives of the Royal Court, engineers, students and other youth, and the University Choir "Obilić", all of whom contributed to the ceremony.

The newspapers described Tesla as follows: "Mr. Tesla is a handsome, dark-haired man, with a small moustach, tall with a fine figure, cheerful, and he looks younger than his years; he is also a very pleasant and likeable person and his gentle smile immediately beckons one to like him".

On the second day of his Belgrade visit, Tesla visited the Royal Palace in the company of Minister of Education and Church Issues Andra Nikolić, (the former palace now serves as the Belgrade City Assembly) where he was received by a young King Aleksandar Obrenović I. The Regency decorated Tesla with the Medal of St. Sava of the Second Order.



The railway station in Belgrade, 19th century



Invitation to a Belgrade dinner

Tesla visited the Gymnasium (today the Rector's Office of Belgrade University) in the afternoon and was welcomed by the rector and teaching staff. He later visited the National Museum, located in the same building it occupies today, and several cabinets. At 4 p.m. he was warmly welcomed by students in the Gymnasium Hall who greeted him exclaiming: Live, Live and Welcome. Tesla was so touched that for a minute he couldn't utter a word, and then, with obvious emotion, he addressed the students saying, "... The happiness that I feel at this moment I cannot express, but I am happy to have had the opportunity to express before you, my dear brothers, my greatest joy, as I was and I remain only a Serb and nothing else. It happens, gentlemen, being far from one's homeland and carried away by work, as I have been, one can sometimes forget one's name, nationality and his native land. This has never happened to me and I hope it never will or can happen, gentlemen. Although I don't live here with you, still I can contribute more to the altar of the Serbian idea, I am engaged in other work and in another way I spread the fame of the Serbian people and in another way I work and try as much as much as I can to be useful to my people and my dear brothers... Brothers and friends! Thank you for all this attention and for the medal. I see in you young Serbians that you will do your utmost to realise the task of all Serbians. You are the future of Serbia. I have always – as you can see and hear – remained a Serb, though I have lived across the sea, where I am engaged in research. This is what you should also be engaged in, and by your knowledge and work, you will contribute to the fame of Serbs worldwide". Tesla's address was frequently interrupted by exclamations, "Live Tesla!"

That afternoon a concert was organised in Tesla's honor at Kalemegdan. In addition to the Danube Regiment Band conducted by Davorin Jenko, the University Choir "Obilić" also performed, conducted by Josif Marinković, with a program that included compositions by Mokranjac, Josif Marinković and Davorin Jenko. After the concert, Tesla took a stroll through Kalemegdan where he was greeted by many Belgraders who came to see him.



Welcome to Nikola Tesla, a poem by Jovan Jovanović Zmaj written for Tesla's visit to Belgrade

I don't know what it is, if it's of the essence
Or just a thought
But as soon as we heard you were coming
Instantly we got electrified!

As a tree stands, so stands Serbia
A mother to every leaf – a son
The freshest leaf shimmers
And off it flies into the distance.

Belgrade is happy today
To meet a Serbian hero
Opening its heart
Before a Serb, an idol.

A fresh leaf will understand
Every vein of its tree
Electricity will connect us
(The electricity of our heart)
Without wires or cables

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL MOMENTS OF MY LIFE

The invitations to a banquet organised in Nikola Tesla's honour invited guests "to associate and to have a dinner at 9 p.m. in the garden restaurant of Weifert Brewery in honour of our dear guest Mr. Nikola Tesla, the famous Serbian electric engineer and scientist". The invitation notes that the "a la carte" dinner is at one's own expense. This impressive banquet gathered more than a hundred guests, including ministers, professors, representatives of various associations, and distinguished citizens. Toasts were given in honour of the great guest. Poet Jovan Jovanović Zmaj welcomed Tesla with a poem. The local legend was so excited Zmaj that he read his own verses for the first time in his life. Zmaj was so excited that he could hardly read the poem to its end and Tesla stood up and, with tears in his eyes, kissed the poet's hand. Many guests shed a tear while watching this moving scene and one journalist wrote: "I have never seen more noble tears in the human eye."

In a trembling voice, Tesla thanked everyone for the warm welcome and recounted some interesting stories from the beginning of his work. He ended his story by saying, "I have some ideas that I hope to realise, and when I do, the world will acknowledge them and for me it will be the greatest happiness, as it will be the work of a Serb."

Nikola Tesla left Belgrade on June 3rd, by express train bound for Budapest. Although it was early in the morning, Belgraders came en masse to see him off and to wish him a good journey.

Before leaving, Tesla promised to come again "next year to the Serbian capital and to deliver lectures about electricity"; but he never again visited Belgrade.

Impressions from Belgrade were deeply etched in Tesla's mind. He was happy with this visit and when he continued his journey to Paris, he said to journalists: "The moments I spent in Belgrade were indeed the most beautiful in my life..."

■ JOVANKA VESELINOVIĆ

photographs: NIKOLA TESLA MUSEUM



To keep the memory of the man who is said by many to have devised the 20th century, a number of institutions in Belgrade were named after him. With a museum and a monument, Belgrade has repaid its debt to Tesla, it has named a boulevard after him, whereas Tesla spent only one day in Belgrade, from where he was, according to tradition, seen off warmly.

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL OF LIGHT

This year the whole world is marking the 150th anniversary of Nikola Tesla's birth (1856-1943). Official academies, appropriate events, new and reconstructed monuments, films, songs, and the opening of museums and institutions carrying his name. According to announcements from the Serbian government, Tesla's jubilee will be marked in Serbia with a series of cultural and artistic programmes, educational and scientific events, the calling of a competition by the Nikola Tesla Foundation for awarding a prize to domestic experts and reconstruction of the church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul in Smiljan, where he was baptised. Tesla will get another monument in Belgrade, the work of Drinka Radovanović, whereas a fountain constructed according to a patent of the renowned scientist will be put up in front of the museum that keeps legacies of Tesla accessible to all of us. In the middle of October, the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences will organise a scientific event dedicated to Tesla and his work. An exhibition at the Matica Srpska Gallery in Novi Sad has been scheduled for November, with exhibits and photos from Tesla's life of work. A number of publications and monographs on Tesla are planned, and there will also be a large number of exhibitions. *The Museum of Nikola Tesla* will organise an exhibition titled "150 Years from the Birth of Tesla – Life and Work", which will be presented in Belgrade as well as in Zagreb, Rijeka, Osijek, Karlovac, Perth, Athens, Vienna and Vancouver. Central celebrations of Tesla's jubilee across the world have been announced for July 10, the day when Tesla was born one and a half centuries ago.

There are several institutions in Belgrade today that carry the name of the famous scientist. They are: the Belgrade airport, the thermal energy plant in Obrenovac, the Institute of Technical Engineering, the Secondary School of Technical Engineering, and a folklore group... Tesla has his own boulevard in the Serbian capital, a monument in front of the

building of technical faculties, and the museum where all his personal belongings are kept, including the urn with his ashes.

A THEATRE PLAY

As an introduction to the year of Tesla's jubilee, Madlenianum opera and theatre chose Miloš Crnjanski's play *Tesla* as its first play on the theatre's new stage in late May 2005. The play chronologically covers nearly one year of Tesla's life in the United States. This psychological and historical drama has been one of the most attended theatre shows on the Belgrade theatre scene.

AIRPORT

On the occasion of marking the 150th anniversary of Tesla's birth, it was decided to name the Belgrade airport after him as of January this year. The airport in Belgrade has been in use since 1962 and air transport experts claim that the airport's location is "ideal in relation to other airports in the surround-

ings, as it has no navigation limits and is on the crossroads of the biggest air routes".

THERMAL ENERGY PLANT

On March 7 this year, the thermal plant in Obrenovac marked its 36th anniversary and three decades since it was named after Nikola Tesla. The *Nikola Tesla A* thermal plant was built in 1970 and is the biggest thermal plant in Serbia. It produces 60 percent of the electric power in the country. *Nikola Tesla B* thermal plant is the strongest support of the Serbian power energy system. Rail tracks were built at the same time with the energy plant, which are considered not only among the most burdened in Europe, but in the world as well. They transport coal, materials, spare parts and chemicals necessary for the plant's operations. Guided tours and a multimedia presentation of the thermal plant are organised so that tourists are able to see the process of electric energy production.

INSTITUTE OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING

The Institute of Electrical Engineering has carried the name of Nikola Tesla since its founding in 1936. It is made up of four departments: the power systems department, automation and control department, electric power facilities department, department of electrical measurements as well as a testing and calibration laboratory. From 1950 until 1959, unique exhibits were created in this institute, which now are on permanent exhibition at the *Nikola Tesla Museum* – Tesla's transformer, the first engine, "Colombo's egg", and many more.

SECONDARY SCHOOL OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING

The Nikola Tesla Secondary School of Electrical Engineering is situated in the city centre and is better known by Belgraders as just *Tesla*. The school offers educational programmes for electricians of



The Electrotechnical school Nikola Tesla

TESLA'S POSTHUMOUS PATH

The son of an Orthodox priest, Nikola Tesla died on Orthodox Christmas, on January 7, 1943 and was buried according to Orthodox rite, but his remains were cremated several months later in New York and the ashes were temporarily placed in a local cemetery. His ashes were then transferred to Belgrade in 1957, and since then have been kept in the Museum of Nikola Tesla in an urn placed in a golden ball on a stone pedestal. The Serbian government's committee for marking the anniversary of Nikola Tesla's birth announced it will initiate the burying of Tesla's remains, with the Serbian Orthodox Church suggesting that Tesla should be buried near the Saint Sava Temple in Vračar.

computers, electronics, telecommunications, energy, radio and video, and for process controlling. The school celebrates its 60th anniversary next year.

MUSEUM

The whole personal legacy as well as Tesla's ashes are kept in the museum with bearing the great scientist's name and is located in the centre of Belgrade. The *Museum of Nikola Tesla* was founded in 1952, following a decision of the Yugoslav government. It is located in a residential villa built in 1927, the work of renowned Serbian architect Dragiša Brašovan, whose building is also known to Belgraders Genčić's villa. The museum was opened to the public on October 20, 1955 and holds very valuable collections: over 160,000 original documents, nearly 2,000 books and magazines, around 1,200 historical and technical exhibits and 1,500 photographs and photo plates of original technical items, instruments and devices as well as over 1,000 plans and drawings left behind by Tesla. This institution is considered to be "not only unique in our country, but in the world as well". As an institution preserving the largest collection of documents on the life and work of Nikola Tesla, the museum plays an important role in providing information in

the fields of history, inventions and patent rights as well as for environmental protection projects and studies of so-called pollution-free energy sources.

BOULEVARD

Positioned side by side with the flow of the Danube River and the Danube quay, Nikola Tesla Boulevard connects New Belgrade and Zemun. Apart from being an important traffic artery of the city, many business offices and institutions are located there.

MONUMENT

The monument of Nikola Tesla, the work of sculptor Fran Kršinić, stands in front of the building of technical faculties – the Faculty of Architecture, the Faculty of Civil Engineering and the Faculty of Electrical Engineering. It was erected in 1957 for Tesla's 100th birth anniversary, and Tesla received an identical monument in 1976 in the United States – at the Niagara national park in New York State.



Interesting elements from the Nikola Tesla Museum

DAVID BOWIE AS TESLA

World music stars White Stripes and Kraftwerk dedicated one song to Nikola Tesla in the end of 2005 and early this year they held concerts in Serbia, when they also visited the Nikola Tesla museum in Belgrade. Tesla's jubilee will be marked on film as well. The director of the cult movie Memento, Christopher Nolan, is working on a movie titled The Prestige, with Tesla being played by David Bowie.

At the initiative of the Croatian Ministry of Culture, the Belgrade monument was "copied" and will be placed in Gospić in July this year, where Tesla's monument was demolished during the 1991 war in Croatia. Apart from Gospić, Tesla should receive a monument in his birthplace Smiljan, in a different model to the one in Belgrade. To mark the jubilee, a monument to Tesla was recently erected in Zagreb as well, and according to the press, the Zagreb City Council apologised to the scientist posthumously for failing to recognise his genius. Zagreb's city officials met on May 24 this year in a special session, exactly 114 years after Nikola Tesla suggested to the then Zagreb mayor to introduce electric power lighting of city streets. The mayor turned down the proposal then, and the city only got electricity 15 years later.

■ JELENA TASIĆ

photographs: BRANKO JOVANOVIĆ