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## DIGITALIZED DIARY OF LAZAR JOVANČIĆ ITALIAN CAPTIVITY

**Abstract.** The Pedagogical Museum in Belgrade has been working on the digitization of its funds for many years. Bearing in mind the importance of digital copies, this year, a workplace called Operator of digital technology was established. In the coming period we will be able to procure equipment and adequate programs which will be provided the merging of all digitized funds, archival materials, photographs and books to date. Last year, 2018, the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia passed the *Rulebook on closer conditions for the digitization of cultural heritage* which defines closer conditions, tasks, duty, standards and processes of digitization of movable and immovable and movable cultural heritage and property which had previous protection. To achieve this goal, the Pedagogical Museum decided to digitize, among other documents, the Diary of Lazar Jovancic, who led him in the Italian captivity during the Second World War. We believe the digitized materials obtained from writings old more than 75 years, will be useful for historical research and clarification of some events happened in the Second World War.

Lazar Jovancic led the diary from June 1941 to November 1943. In fact, his diary consists of his letters addressed to his wife Bosiljka Bosa Valic-Jovancic who spent the Second World War in Belgrade. Lazar was captured around Debra and sent to a camp for officers located in the north of Italy, in Corto Maggiore in the province of Piacenza, the province of Lombardy. Life in the camp was not easy. Prisoners were scarce in food, during the winter they did not have heating, they were often ill, and communication with Serbia was hampered. For Lazar the most difficult was his constant concern for the survival of his wife.

### 1. Introduction

In the past decade, the global electronic environment, in line with contemporary trends, has imposed the need to digitize everything, including the archival materials. Within information technologies, digitization includes the preparation, the technical process of digitization of materials themselves, the availability and the use through various applications, as well as the protection of cultural heritage. Last year, in 2018, the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia adopted the *Rulebook on Closer Conditions for the Digitization of Cultural Heritage*, which defines closer conditions, tasks, jobs, standards and processes for the digitization of movable and immovable goods, intangible cultural heritage and goods which enjoying prior protection.

The Rulebook specifies the terms related to the digitization of cultural heritage. In addition to the digital record, there is also the metadata which identifies and describes it and an information system, or a centralized software solution for managing digital objects. Especially they emphasize the importance of the aggregators of cultural heritage, or, a unique software solution for searching all available information from information systems in cultural institutions. Within this, it will be used a unique museum information system - IMUS managed by the Museum of History of Serbia as well as an

archival information system managed by the Archives of Serbia. In addition, there are information systems used by institutes, libraries and cinemas [3].

The goal of digitalization includes several important factors: the availability of cultural heritage information, the sharing of information, the promotion and presentation of cultural heritage, and the creation of new content and services.

Beside that the process of digitization includes setting priorities developing a plan, forming a digital record, and entering metadata into the information system, managing and preserving the digitized cultural heritage.

In the process of digitalization, special attention should be paid to entering metadata into the information system, to forming a digital record, as well as to storing data in accordance with the regulations governing information security. Access to the digitized cultural heritage data is provided by the aggregator, and the Ministry of Culture is determined to monitor the implementation of the digitization process which carried out in the institutions for protection [3].

In another important document which related to digitization in *Guidelines for the Digitization of Cultural Heritage in the Republic of Serbia* is stated that digitization means a comprehensive process which related to the development of tools, long-term preservation, linking of program and physical networks, ensuring permanent and reliable access and multimedia presentation of digital cultural heritage.[4]

The purpose of metadata is the identification and long-term protection of digital objects, so different types of metadata are distinguished in the process: descriptive, structural, technical and administrative. In this document, the digitization of the cultural heritage is rather widely viewed. Among other things, it should enable the scientific research and application in science, process of education and the economic development of the country. It should also contribute to the preservation of national identity and the cultural diversity of national communities.

In the *Guidelines* there are the tables with the required fields. Based on this, the note of digitized document should contain the following information: name, author, location of the digital document (master copy), location of the digital document (operational copy), associated cultural property, note, date of creation of the master copy, format of the digital document, size, MIME format, device, thumbnail, copyright, access rights, digital document owner, record creation date, record author and record owner.[4]

In addition, in this document there are the recommended technical specifications of the digital document as well as quality checks of digital document.

The final goal of the whole digitalization process, or the creation of a digital copy, is the long-term and continuous retention of the copy, as well as access and management of the digital content. Due to the occurrence of new standards and physical media this process involves providing the information system. The admission to the digital collection can be within the institution as well as in the virtual space, which certainly depends on the internal files of the institution.

Bearing in mind the importance of metadata in a digitized document and their contribution to the preservation of national identity and the cultural diversity of national communities we decided to digitize and show the Diary of Lazar Jovancic, which was guided during the Second World War in Italian captivity.

The Document Collection at the Pedagogical Museum holds a large number of archives relating to the history of education in Serbia, as well as in other countries where Serbs lived, primarily in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the Turkish Empire. In the rich collection of legacies of educational workers or personalities who have linked their life to the development of education and culture is also the Fund of Dr. Lazar Jovancic, professor and writer of professional publications in the field of

biological sciences. The archive material of this fund, received as a gift in the 1970s, consists the documents on his education and movement in the service, personal and official correspondence, as well as photographs from the time of service. In addition to other written legacies, there are also his diaries written during the First and Second World War. We think that these archives can serve as a source of new knowledge and insight of a complex historical process.

Biographical diaries written in the 19 and middle 20 century are significant historical sources and represent, among other things, a special literary group. The authors of the diary wanted to preserve their feelings and thoughts about the various events, those in which they participated or those that were important to the whole society. So the authors informatively and sentimentally present people and events, observe them and record their thoughts. The diaries recorded the subjective experience of the participants in particular events, as well as their subjective knowledge of certain phenomena and the understanding and interpretation of those phenomena.

Among these are the records and diaries - five notebooks - in which the memories of Lazar Jovancic's captivity in Italy in the period from June 1941 to November 1943 are preserved. This diary, our generation, gives the opportunity to once again to examine the facts and circumstances in lives of Serbian prisoners, and to bring the personal and scientific views on these times and personalities.

This diary consists of four small format notebooks with soft cover and one bound notebook. It is written in Latin and Cyrillic script, ink and pencil.

In recent years, the Pedagogical Museum, among others, has been digitized the Fund Yugoslav Children's Homes in Bulgaria, the Fund Draga Mrak, professor of French from Ljubljana, as well as the Fund Srdan Novakovic, a teacher from Belgrade. During the coming year, documents and photographs relating to the work of the schools in the first years after the Second World War will be extracted and digitized.

## **2. The life and work of Lazar Jovancic**

Lazar Jovancic was born in Izbiste on October 19, 1893, in a poor farming family. He completed his elementary school in his hometown, and then attended the Serbian Grand High School in Novi Sad, where he passed the maturity exam on June 15, 1912. In the same year he enrolled at the Faculty of Medicine in Budapest, and the following year, in the school year 1913/1914, went to study philosophy in Vienna.<sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of World War I, on August 1, 1914, after returning from Izbiste, because of Greater Serbian propaganda, he was arrested and taken to Arad city, to the prison. After six months he was transferred to the Timisoara prison. At the beginning of September 1915 he was released, but as on October 10 of the same year he was recruited into the Seventh Home Infantry Regiment in Vrsac. At the time, he was a Hungarian citizen and fought as a schoolboy, and later as a sergeant on the Eastern Front, in Galicia. After surrendering to the Russians in the spring of 1916, he was held in a prison camp in Kiev, and from June 16, 1916 to May 14, 1919, he fought as a volunteer in the First Serbian Volunteer Division, formed in Odessa. In the fighting at

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<sup>1</sup>The dates are listed on the Julian calendar.

Dobrudza and Kokardza on September 6, 1916, he was wounded in the hand. After the October Revolution, through Manchuria and Siberia, as a Serbian officer, he came to Corfu, where he met his brother, Milan Jovancic .

After his liberation, Lazar Jovancic went to France, at the expense of the Serbian government, to study chemistry, botany and zoology. He received his professor's degree from the College of Natural Sciences in Grenoble in 1922.

After his return to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1922, he was set up as a substitute at the Ohrid High School and later as a professor. In addition to his professorships, he was also involved in exploring Lake Ohrid, and was active in the Fisheries Cooperative. In Ohrid, in 1923, he founded the *Biljana* Civic Singing Society, for which he composed musical works. In 1928, he got reward from the school principal.



Figure 1. L. Jovancic, 1936

He passed the professor's exam in the natural group of subjects in 1928, and a year later he was appointed as professor at the Men's Teacher Training School in Belgrade. As a professor of natural sciences, he taught zoology, botany, mineralogy, geology and chemistry; he advocated the application of the principle of teaching obviousness, because of that he often took students on excursions. For some time, he was the keeper of the collection for natural sciences and chemistry and served as an educator at a boarding school at the Men's Teacher Training School in Belgrade. He remained at the school until the January 21, 1946.

At the beginning of World War II, he was mobilized on April 3, 1941 in Bitola, and on April 13, on the way to command in Debar, he fell into Italian captivity. He

spent his time in Italy and arrived in Belgrade on June 11, 1945, in reception center for prisoners of war. From the saved documentations, we find out that he, in captivity, also pursued his vocation - he conducted experiments in botany.

He was appointed like a professor in the Fourth Men's High School on January 22, 1946, and at the end of that year, December 26, he began working at the Institute of Physiology at the Faculty of Science in Belgrade. At the Faculty of Biology, University of Ljubljana on May 26, 1959, L. Jovancic defended his doctoral thesis entitled *The mode of formation of skin pigments and their physiological role in praying mantis and other animal species*; this work was also published in French. After obtaining the Ph.D. in 1960 Jovancic was appointed part-time associate professor in the subject of general biology at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, at the Seminar on Psychology.

He retired like a professor of the University in 1960.

He died in Belgrade in 1977.

He married Bosiljka, the daughter of Jela and Ljubisa Valic, who lived in Geneva after the First World War. Bosiljka Jovancic worked as a professor of fine writing and drawing at the high school in Ohrid. During one visit of King Alexander and Queen Mary to the National University of Ohrid, her painting work was noted, and on that basis, she was awarded a scholarship for fine arts in Paris. Bosiljka and Lazar Jovancic had no children. Except to Ohrid, Jovancic also lived in Belgrade and moved several times - he lived in Kumanovska 13, Alekse Nenadovic 4, etc.

The medals indicate the importance of the individual, to his influence and to his experiences which he acquired during his lifetime. Lazar Jovancic was awarded the Silver Medal for Courage and Romanian Cross for his participation in the First World War. As a high school professor, he received the medal of St. Sava of the fifth degree on August 15, 1929.

He was a member of the Association of Liberation War Fighters 1912–1920, Academic Singing Society *Obilic* from Belgrade and the Fishermen's Cooperative from Ohrid.

Dr. Lazar Jovancic has published a number of professional papers, popular works and scripts for Belgrade students. He dealt with the anthropology, human evolution and characteristics of Lake Ohrid. He has published papers in professional journals and was a weekly contributor of *Yugoslavia a new journal*. Since he lived near the Romanian border, he knew Romanian, he studied in Hungarian, German and French, while he volunteered to master Russian, and he also used English.

### 3. What makes this record specific?

Lazar Jovancic kept a diary and talked through it with his wife, Bosa, from June 1941 to November 1943. The diary presents the concepts of his letters addressed to his wife who spent the war in Belgrade. Lazar was captured around Debra and sent to a camp for officers which was located on the north of Italy, in the Corto Mađore (Corto Maggiore) in the province of Piacenza, the province of Lombardy.<sup>2</sup> In his notes we find out that the

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<sup>2</sup>Stevan Jakovljevic was also in the same camp and in his book *Characters in the Shadow* he recorded the look of the camp. *Across the side street, we broke into a short meadow in the direction of a large*

camp is located on the deserted catholic monastery where 150 officers and 60 soldiers were. They themselves organized the life and received particular financial compensation. Life in the camp was not easy. A guard was stationed around the camp, the beds were with straw, and anti-Semitic films were released twice a week in the cinema. They prepared their own meals, but the food was not enough, during the winter they did not have a heating, they were often ill, and communication with Serbia was difficult. For Lazara the hardest things were his constant care for the survival of his wife.

Analyzing his notes, we turn our attention to three key points - himself, his wife and the mass - the Serb people who were in the camp at that moment.



Figure 2. L. Jovancic, 1942

**Lazar.** Obviously, Lazar Jovancic was an organized, capable, intelligent, emotional and knowledgeable person. Upon his arrival at the camp on Italian territory, he began to learn Italian, which he soon mastered, translating articles from the Italian press with friends, and later translating a book from the Italian language. In addition, after the capitulation of Italy, with the victories of the Americans, he began to learn English. During his captivity, he completed, in a 200-page manuscript, his doctorate and continued his experiments in botany - he observed color changes in rose petals.

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*cathedral: then the car turned left and stopped in front of the church door. A guard stood in front of the closed gate. From the gate there is a prosthesis wall, above which is barbed wire, and on the opposite corner again a guard. We picked up things and went down. This nightly image of the camps with crosses on all sides was reminiscent of the approach of a rude or hermitage monastery. S. Jakovljevic, Characters in the Shadow, Belgrade, 1963, 224.*

Aware of the importance of his original observations he asked her wife Bosa, that in the event of his death, to publish a doctorate and to send it to the professor at the Sorbonne. Because of poor living conditions he was ill; he fought with himself, he was afraid not to fall into depression and he tried, through interaction with others and with nature, to maintain the spirit and Serbian tradition. Together with the others he celebrated his St. John's celebrity, Easter, his birthday, he gave a speech for St. Sava, and Christmas was followed by Christmas Eve and a chicken food. He gave a patriotic lecture and, hoping for the victory of the Allies, he raised the morale things among the prisoners. Among his lectures there was one about the negative traits of our national character, as well as about died King Alexander. Every day he thought about Bosa and her difficult life in Belgrade, and about how to send money which he bought from prisoners. He constantly had a sense of guilty. When the camp, in the autumn of 1943, was dissolved, he began to retreat through the Italian village and in one of them, with the help of villagers, he got the documents. In the priest house he left his notes and testament, in which he said goodbye to Bose and headed into the unknown. He hoped that he will return in Belgrade like a winner officer.

**Bosa.** Apparently, Bosa was a beloved woman. Lazar had written to her as much as possible - four times a month for three post-cards and a one letter which should be not be longer than 24 lines on thin paper. In the letters he often asked her about health, did she have money for living, what was the situation in Belgrade, and did she receive the money which he was sending. He wrote that he dreamed of her and loved her even she become gray. He said that her body grew old but her heart and spirit remained young. He was cried because they were separated, and because of that he thought of suicide. He dreamed about living together again, about her cheerful eyes, and advised her to sell her coat and ring to make life easier. For a birthday he sent her pressed violet, but her packages had double feelings for him - happiness because she was preparing the cakes and sadness because she was separated from her mouth. She wrote him cards full of optimism, sending money when she sale the painting, encouraging him to endure, hoping what he will return to the country they would continue to deal in art and science. During the war years, through letters, they came to the common conclusion that war brought them to the realization that they could not live without each other.

**Mass.** In the camp there were officers and soldiers, Serbs, Montenegrins and Slovenians. They were not homogenous group - some of them were pro-communist oriented, some against partisans, and some for allies. Although there were often political debates, many of them hoped that the Russians would win the Germans. The Italians did not interfere in their interpersonal relations, even when there were disagreements about celebration of Saint Sava in 1942 when Lazar wanted to give lecture in Italian language. Because of this event Lazar come out from the Cultural Committee which he established. In his letters, Lazar criticized the behavior of Serbs, especially intellectuals, saying that the pre-war intelligence falls behind because of poor schooling. Also, he considered that the Serbs, which he called *impossible nations*, require radical changes of the social system. In September 1943, when the camp was disbanded, Lazar and one group of officers began to withdraw. They slept under clear skies, in rain, in the huts, but sometime in houses of rich villagers. The Italians helped them with food and other

services, and the priest and teacher provided them with the necessary documents. Most of them fled in fear of the Germans, while some Serbs made ginger in the village and were arrested. After a few weeks, the group broke up, so each went his own way - Lazar was left alone.

#### 4. Summery

The process of digitizing, which includes processing, the technically process of digitization's materials, availability, through the use of various applications and protection of cultural heritage has become a necessity in the work of cultural and scientific institutions. In order to facilitate the manipulation of archives, in this case, archives related to the history of education, the Pedagogical Museum has been digitizing its holdings for many years. This year it was the Fond Lazar Jovancic who spent World War II in Italian captivity. His notes testify to the difficult and ambivalent life in the officer camp, as well as to his great love and loyalty to his wife, Bosa.

#### Appendix

Published works of Lazar Jovancic:

1. Our old people didn't know about potatoes, in: *Yugoslav National Gazette*, Belgrade, May 1, 1931
2. Extinct animals, their importance and value, in: *Yugoslav National Gazette*, Belgrade, August 1, 1931
3. Stone coal (its importance and origin) in: *Yugoslav National Gazette*, Belgrade, November 1, 1931.
4. From stone tiles to the finest paper, in: *Yugoslav National Gazette*, Belgrade, June 1, 1932.
5. Our Invisible Enemies, in: *Yugoslav National Gazette*, Belgrade, October 1932.
6. *Traces of First People*, Cooperative of the Professor's Society, Belgrade 1933.
7. *About the water temperature of Ohrid Lake*, State Printing Office of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Belgrade 1933.
8. *With Science through the Wonders of Nature*, Cooperative of the Professor Society, Belgrade 1940.
9. *Oxidation during the embryonic life of chickens*, Belgrade 1949.
10. *Curiosities from Living Nature*, New Generation, Belgrade 1951.
11. *Anthropological Population Research in Debar*, 1959.
12. *General Biology*, Authorized Script for Psychology Students, Belgrade 1961.
13. What is progressive evolution and what is regressive, in: *Biological Journal for Primary, Secondary and Vocational School*, Sarajevo, October 1963.
14. *New Views on the Evolution of Man*, Proteus, Ljubljana 1964/1965.
15. *The method of formation of skin pigments and their physiological role in the mantis* (doctoral dissertation), Natural Museum, Belgrade 1960.

16. *Genèse des pigments tégumentaires et leur rôle physiologique chez la mante religieuse et chez d'autres espèces animales* (doctoral thesis in French), Natural Museum, Belgrade 1960.

17. *General Biology - Script for Students of Psychological Group*, Belgrade 1964.

18. *General Biology*, Authorized Script for Psychology Students (Second Revised and Supplemented Edition), Belgrade 1964.

19. *What do we know today about the first people*, Institute for Textbooks of the Socialist Republic of Serbia, Belgrade 1969.

### Literature

1. Education Museum – Fund Lazar Jovancic
2. Jakovljevic Stevan, *Characters in the Shadow*, Education, Belgrade, 1963.
3. *Rulebook on Closer Requirements for the Digitization of Cultural Heritage*, RS Official Gazette – 76(2018), 12 October 2018
4. *Guidelines for the Digitization of Cultural Heritage in the Republic of Serbia*, Belgrade, 2017.

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