

*Zorica Civric*

## **Nikola Tesla Legacy**

On the basis of data from the Nikola Tesla's Museum archives (NTMA), the activity of Sava Kosanovic as Administrator of the Inheritance of Nikola Tesla, along with the collection of material to supplement the fund, and promoting Nikola Tesla's work, can be followed in the period 1943 to 1956.

The archives and registry material collected in the course of the work of the Museum therefore provide data concerning the period from 1951 to 1956, when the complete legacy was brought from USA to Belgrade and handed over to the Museum to preserve, open, check and classify it.

### **I. Sava Kosanovic, Donor of the Nikola Tesla Legacy**

Sava Kosanovic (May 29, 1894 – November 14, 1956) journalist, publicist and politician, was born in Plaski (Austro-Hungary, today Republic of Croatia). He graduated from High School in Rijeka, and graduated from Law School in Budapest. From 1926 he was General Secretary of the Democratic Party.

*Illustration: Stojan Aralica, Portrait of Sava Kosanovic*

Nikola Tesla and Sava Kosanovic met for the first time on October 2, 1926<sup>12</sup> during Kosanovic's visit to the USA, when he transferred to Tesla best wishes for his seventieth birthday from the Ministry for Social Affairs of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, National Defense and from the editorial staffs of most prominent newspapers. He stayed in the USA until the end of the same year, visiting emigrants' communities. Sava Kosanovic's mother, Tesla's sister Marica Kosanovic, was very close to Nikola Tesla and she had regularly corresponded with him.

Kosanovic was elected people's representative from the Free Democratic Party in 1927. After he had been on trial according to the Law of State Protection, he continued with political activity within the Peasant-democratic Coalition. On the opposition list he was elected people's representative in 1935 and 1937. In General Simovic's Government of March 27, 1941 he was appointed Minister of Supply and after April 6, 1941 found himself in exile with the Royal Government.

After September 1941, when he had visited the USA, he was very often in touch with Nikola Tesla.

#### **I.1. Administration of the Nikola Tesla Legacy in the Period 1943 - 1951**

After Tesla's death, his property was handed over to the Alien Property Custodian. Evidence of this is found on his trunks kept in the Museum as part of his legacy. One of them has a label with the inscription: "Office of Alien Property Custodian, Sealed by: John E. Newnigta, Alien Property Custodian Representative, Date: Jan 11, 1943"

---

<sup>12</sup> Sava N. Kosanovic, *Visiting Nikola Tesla*, Belgrade, 1927 (Library of Nikola Tesla Museum).

Illustration: Label of the trunk from Nikola Tesla's legacy with the inscription: "Office of Alien Property Custodian, Sealed by: John E. Newnigta, Alien Property Custodian Representative, Date: Jan 11, 1943"

The Alien Property Custodian Office chose the storage of Manhattan Storage & Warehouse Co. in New York as the space where the legacy of Nikola Tesla would be placed. It is known that Tesla had used this storage to store his belongings from 1934 onwards, and that he had paid all the expenses in 1942.<sup>13</sup> According to the correspondence of Sava Kosanovic and this institution, it is obvious that Kosanovic continued to pay the expenses in 1943. This correspondence is part of Kosanovic's legacy and it is kept as a special collection in the Archives of Nikola Tesla Museum (NTMA).

Lawyer's Office Wittenberg, Carrington & Farnsworth informed Kosanovic on February 2, 1943 that the Surrogate Court from New York had issued on January 21, 1943 the Certificate of Administration of the Estate whereby Kosanovic became legal administrator of the estate of Nikola Tesla.<sup>14</sup>

Following this written information, Kosanovic was not able to get an official certificate concerning the administration of the estate for a long time. For that reason why, on June 12<sup>th</sup> 1943, he wrote to the Lawyer's Office requesting them to send him a copy,<sup>15</sup> and as he didn't get it even after four months had passed, he addressed himself to the State Tax Department<sup>16</sup>:

On January 21<sup>th</sup> 1943 the Surrogate Court appointed the writer the Administrator of the Estate of Nikola Tesla. I find it is necessary for me to obtain release from your department. Would you be so kind as to advise me what steps are necessary in the procedure of securing such release?

Illustration: Letter of Sava Kosanovic to the State Tax Department, New York, N.Y, October 11, 1943

The reply of the State Tax Department has not been preserved, but it is evident that the next step in the procedure requested possession of the inventory list of Tesla's property. Kosanovic directed the letter on October 20, 1943 to the Office of Alien Property Custodian requesting:<sup>17</sup>

As administrator of the Nikola Tesla Estate I was notified by the Manhattan Storage & Warehouse Company some time ago that your office has gone over the property of Nikola Tesla in their warehouse on January 26<sup>th</sup>, and notified them that you have no further interest in same. In order that I may receive a waiver on this property it is necessary for me to submit to the State Tax Department the inventory taken by you at this time. Would it be possible for

---

<sup>13</sup> Correspondence between Nikola Tesla and Manhattan Storage & Warehouse Co. in the period from 1922 to 1942. Most of the trunks from Tesla's legacy that are kept in the Museum have labels with the name and the address of the warehouse, numeric identification, i.e. record data.

<sup>14</sup> Letter: Wittenberg, Carrington & Farnsworth (70 West 40<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, N.Y.) – Sava Kosanovic (112 Central Park South, New York City), February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1943 (Archives of Nikola Tesla Museum, Personal fund of Sava Kosanovic, further NTMA).

<sup>15</sup> Letter: [Sava Kosanovic] (Hotel Navaro, 112 Central Park South, New York 19, N.Y.) – Wittenberg, Carrington & Farnsworth (70 West 40<sup>th</sup>, Street, New York, N.Y.), June 12, 1943 (NTMA).

<sup>16</sup> Letter: [Sava Kosanovic] (112 Central Park South, New York 19, N.Y.) – State of New York, State Tax Department ( 80 Central Street, New York, N.Y.), October 11, 1943 (NTMA)

<sup>17</sup> Letter: [Sava Kosanovic] (112 Central Park South, New York, N.Y.) – Alien Property Custodian (120 Broadway, New York, N.Y.) October 20, 1943 (NTMA)

me to receive a copy of this inventory for this purpose? Your courtesy in this matter would be very much appreciated.

### Illustration: Letter of Sava Kosanovic to the Alien Property Custodian Office, New York, October 20, 1943

From the reply that followed on October 22, 1943, we learned that this office had not made the inventory of the estate of Nikola Tesla<sup>18</sup>. In Kosanovic's legacy there is no further data regarding possible contacts with this office.

Besides solving administrative and financial problems concerning administration of the estate of Nikola Tesla, Kosanovic was, in the course of the years 1943 and 1944, when public attention was occupied with war events, trying to preserve the memory of Nikola Tesla's name and his contribution to humanity. Charlotte Muzar was of great help to Kosanovic in performing necessary organizational and administrative matter. She had been his secretary since 1942.<sup>19</sup> On September 25th 1943, in the Bethlehem –Fairfield shipyard in Baltimore, the ship Nikola Tesla, named after the inventor, was launched. From the correspondence that Sava Kosanovic had during 1943 with the United States Maritime Commission in Washington, we learned that it was Sava Kosanovic who had suggested that one of the boats symbolically called "American Liberty Ship"<sup>20</sup> should receive the name of the "greatest American Yugoslav", as a sign of American – Yugoslav solidarity during the Second World War. In the letter addressed to Admiral Emory Land, Kosanovic wrote<sup>21</sup>:

You may remember our conversation on the occasion of the visit of his Majesty King Peter to Washington. I was so glad to notice your interest in the work of my uncle, the Yugoslav born Inventor, Nikola Tesla.

Recently I was informed that one of the American Liberty Ships was to receive the name of a known Yugoslav as a courtesy extended to the Yugoslav ally.

If such should be the case may I suggest the name of Nikola Tesla, who to our people is the greatest American Yugoslav. To America he has contributed enormously, his work having deeply conditioned industrial development of the American nation. The name of Nikola Tesla, who is dead for several months now, is symbolic of the two allied nations and it means to this country as much as it means to his native Yugoslavia.

### Illustration: Letter of Sava Kosanovic to Admiral Amory Land, New York, July 12, 1943

The proposal was accepted<sup>22</sup> and the photos received from G.M. Willis, Vice President and Director of Bethlehem – Fairfield Shipyard, presenting the ceremony of launching the ship, are preserved in Kosanovic's legacy.

---

<sup>18</sup> Letter: Alien Property Custodian (120 Broadway, New York City) – Sava N. Kosanovic (112 Central Park South, New York, N.Y.), October 22, 1943 (NTMA).

<sup>19</sup> Charlotte Muzar was born on October 31, 1913. She worked as Sava Kosanovic's secretary from 1942-1943 and later became an employee of the FNRY Embassy in Washington. Charlotte Muzar's father, George, came to USA in 1910 from Vivodin, Croatia. Mother Ann (maiden name Humnjan) originated from Zumberk, Croatia, joined her husband in 1912. Charlotta lives today in the Mount Clemens, state of Michigan, USA. Testimony of Charlotte Muzar is published in this book.

<sup>20</sup> The Liberty ship, a type of merchandise ship, was built in USA by mass production in period 1939 -1945 (translator's note)

<sup>21</sup> Letter [Sava Kosanovic] – Admiral Emory S. Land, Maritime Commission, Washington, D.C., July 12, 1943 (NTMA).

<sup>22</sup> Letter: Emory S. Land, Chairman, United States Maritime Commission, Washington – His Excellency the Right Honorable Sava N. Kosanovic, Yugoslav Minister, Washington, D.C, July 24, 1943 (NTMA).

According to the information for the press of Yugoslav Information Center in New York, the following were present at the ceremony: Donald R. Perri, Chief of Alien Registration, United States Department of Justice; Dr. Ivan Subasic, Civil governor of regional Unit of Croatia; writer Luj Adamic, President of the United Committee of the South Slavic Americans; Zarko Buncic, President of Serbian Congress; Zlatko Balokovic, President of Croatian Congress; President of Slav Congress and labor leader Edvin Kristan; ship-owner Frano Petrinovic, representative of South American Yugoslavs; representatives of Yugoslav seamen, captain Antunovic and Thomas Babin; Dr Stojan Gavrilovic, son of Bogdan Gavrilovic, President of the Council of Nikola Tesla Institute in Belgrade, Director of Yugoslav Information Center; Chief of the Press Bureau Bogdan Radica; Charlotte Muzar and Tesla's nephews, Sava Kosanovic and Nikola Trbojevic, son of Tesla's sister Angelina Trbojevic.

The traditional custom of christening the ship was done by Ivan Subasic's wife, who said: "I baptize you and give you the name Nikola Tesla. Bring happiness and liberty!"

[Illustration: Ship "Nikola Tesla", launched on September 25, 1943 in the Shipyard Bethlehem – Fairfield, Baltimore, USA](#)

In order to preserve the memory of his uncle and his lifestyle, Kosanovic wrote to the Manager of the New Yorker Hotel, Mr. Leo Molony, on February 5, 1943 requesting him to provide photos of Tesla's apartment ( no. 3.327 ), where he had lived for the last ten years, as well as the view of New York City from his apartment.<sup>23</sup> The Manager of the hotel complied with the request.<sup>24</sup> But among the photographs that are in the Museum as part of Sava Kosanovic's collection, there are no photos of Nikola Tesla's apartment or those of New York City.

Kosanovic collaborated with the scientists and researchers who published articles about Nikola Tesla, he provided them with necessary data and photographs to illustrate their articles and he collected those articles. In the magazine *Radio Craft*, on February 1943, opinions of leading American radio experts on Tesla's contribution to the invention of the radio were published: David Sarnoff, Lee de Forest, Arthur van Dyck, Dawson Olmstead, Edwin H. Armstrong, E.F.W. Alexanderson, Wm. Lyon Phelps, J.O. Mauborgne, and Harvey C. Rentschler. In the same magazine the article "Nikola Tesla Father of Wireless" was published, written by Hugo Gersback.

In the scientific magazine *Electrical Engineering* from the American Institute of Electrical Engineers, AIEE, articles by Charles F. Scott, (Charles F. Scott, 1864-1944) on "Tesla's Contribution to Electric Power" (Vol. 62, No.8) and L.P. Wheeler on "Tesla's Contribution to High Frequency" were published in August 1943. Kosanovic lent Scott a photograph - Tesla's portrait from 1894 - to illustrate the article.

From 1888 to 1911, Charles Scott was a member of the team of engineers in the Westinghouse Companies, and after that he became Professor of electrical sciences at Yale University. From 1902 to 1903 he was president of AIEE. He met Nikola Tesla in Pittsburg in 1888, when Westinghouse Company started production of polyphase alternating current motors, based on Tesla's patents. As a young expert, Scott was Tesla's assistant. He participated in the planning and preparation of models for the World Fair in Chicago in 1893 and was one of the chief engineers for building generating units at the Niagara Falls. Upon

---

<sup>23</sup> Letter: [Sava Kosanovic], (112 Central Park South, New York, N.Y.) – Leo Molony, Resident Manager, Hotel New Yorker (New York, N.Y.) February 5, 1943 (NTMA).

<sup>24</sup> Letter: Leo A. Molony, Manager, Hotel New Yorker – Sava N. Kosanovic, Yugoslav Minister of State (112 Central Park So., New York, N.Y.), February 11, 1943 (NTMA).

Tesla's death, Scott, besides Kosanovic, was receiving cables of sympathy and was included in the organization of the funeral formalities.

On November 25<sup>th</sup> 1943, at the proposal of the Yugoslav Government in Exile, a commemorative meeting dedicated to Nikola Tesla was held at the Institute of Electrical Engineers of Great Britain, (IEE). The commemorative lecture, "The Life and Work of Nikola Tesla", was given by Arthur Fleming (Sir Arthur P.M. Fleming, 1881 – 1960). The meeting was attended by Bogoljub Jevtic, Yugoslav Representative in London, on behalf of the Government<sup>25</sup>. For this occasion Kosanovic sent some detailed data about Tesla's life and work<sup>26</sup>.

Kosanovic had been receiving requests from the libraries to return books that had remained with Tesla (American Library Service, Engineering Societies Library) as well requests to settle remaining Tesla's debts (New Yorker Hotel, Hotel Mc Alpine, American Library Service). Kosanovic managed to settle the debts, but he was not able to check whether the books borrowed had been preserved, since they had been stored in the storage as part of the legacy. The Handbook *Handbook of Natural Gas* by Henry P. Westcott, requested by the Engineering Society Library<sup>27</sup>, was preserved and is part of Nikola Tesla's Personal Library kept in Nikola Tesla Museum<sup>28</sup>.

In 1944, the first biography of Tesla, the book *Prodigal Genius*<sup>29</sup>, by the author John O'Neill, appeared in the USA. John O'Neill had started his work on the book during Tesla's lifetime. When he met Tesla he was working in the New York Public Library, and later on he became scientific editor in *New York Herald Tribune*. Kosanovic took part in the creation of this book, and with his suggestions he helped the author to complete it. When it was published, wishing to preserve the memory of Tesla and remind people of the significance of his work, during the month of December 1944, Kosanovic forwarded the book to 120 individuals, representatives of various institutions and organizations.

Taking into consideration their significance, as well as the great effort they made so that Tesla's work would not be forgotten, it is worth mentioning them.

Among others, this book was received by: Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of the USA President, White House, departments of State Government (State Department, Department of the Interior, Division of Current Information, Navy Department, Office of War Information, Office of Strategic Services, United States Maritime Commission, Federal Security Agency), Senator Scott W. Lucas, Fiorello H. La Guardia, Mayor of the City of New York, WM T. Manning, bishop who served the funeral service in the Church of St John the Divine at Tesla's funeral, Embassies of Great Britain, Canada, and the USSR, certain universities ( Harvard University, New York University, University of California, Antioch College, Polish Institute of Arts & Science, Jofstra College), radio stations and newspaper publishers (*New York Times*, *New York Post*, *Washington Post*, *WABC*, *WJC*, *WMCA*, *Detroit News*, *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, *Chicago Sun*, *Readers Scope*, *Toronto Star*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *International News Service*, *National Broadcasting Company*, *Allied Labor News*, *Pathe News*, *Free World*, *Howard Newspaper Alliance*), representatives of UN, UNRRA and other organizations (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service, War Finance Committee, American Friend Service Committee).

---

<sup>25</sup> The Journal of the Institution of Electrical Engineers, Vo. 91, Part I, No. 38, London, February 1944.

<sup>26</sup> Letter: C.G. Ramsay Associated Electrical Industries, Ltd., Office of American Representative, 1 River Road, Schenectady, N.Y. – S.N. Kosanovic, 112 Central Park, South New York, April 23, 1943 (NTMA).

<sup>27</sup> Letter: Harrison W. Craver, Director and Secretary, Engineering Societies Library of the United Engineering Trustees, Inc., 29 West Thirty-Ninth Street, New York – Sava N. Kosanovic, Hotel Navarro, 112 Central Park South, New York, February 11, 1942 (NTMA)

<sup>28</sup> Nikola Tesla Museum Library, Personal Fond of Nikola Tesla, Monograph publications, NT 154.

<sup>29</sup> The book was translated into Serbian and published, Belgrade 1951.

On the basis of documentation from Kosanovic's collection, it is obvious that his intention was to collect not only Tesla's property held in Manhattan Storage, but also material that dealt with Tesla, probably the property of individuals or institutions in the USA.

George Scherff, Tesla's friend and his secretary for a number of years, wrote a letter to Kosanovic on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1943.<sup>30</sup> George Scherff had begun to work for Nikola Tesla in 1896, and till 1906 he was employed in Tesla's companies as secretary. From 1906 he got a job in the Union Sulphure Company, but continued working for Tesla from time to time. Until the end he remained Tesla's devoted friend. From Scherff's letter we learned that Tesla, when leaving his office opposite the New York Public Library, entrusted 14 framed drawings of the apparatuses and machines he had invented to Scherff. Scherff kept those drawings with care and wanted to give them back to Kosanovic. Replying to Scherff, on April 2, Kosanovic wrote:<sup>31</sup>

It was very kind and thoughtful of you to write me about the drawings which the late Nikola Tesla committed to your care. As present plans are to collect and preserve as much of his records, equipment, etc., as possible, it is very fortunate to have the information you sent me. However, for the time being I would like to ask if you would be so kind as to hold these drawings for a little while longer until definite arrangements are made. I shall contact you again as soon as these arrangements are completed, which I hope will be very soon.

#### Illustration: Letter of Sava Kosanovic to George Scherff, New York, April 2, 1943

In Kosanovic's legacy there is no further trace of what happened to Tesla's technical drawings. In Tesla's legacy kept in the Museum, 1623 technical drawings have been registered to this day. Regarding the level of processed archival documentation recorded to date, there is no data regarding the drawings entrusted to Scherff.

The manager of the Governor Clinton Hotel in New York, where Tesla had lived for some time, informed Kosanovic by a letter dated January 27, 1944 about a machine that belonged to Tesla and was still in the hotel:<sup>32</sup>

As a follow-up on our phone conversation of January 20<sup>th</sup>, I wish to advise that we have a machine belonging to the late Nikola Tesla. I believe that you will find in his possessions this key and the number should be 103. We would appreciate you opening this box so that we may remove this apparatus to a more safe location as well as making use of the space which it now occupies.

#### Illustration: Letter of Manager of the Hotel Governor Clinton to Sava Kosanovic, New York, January 27, 1944

Kosanovic replied on May 23:<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Letter: George Scherff (219 Grant Terrace, Mamaroneck, N.Y.) – Sava Kosanovic (Hotel Navarre, New York City), March 23, 1943 (NTMA). – Tesla's biographer Margaret Cheney, in the best way explained Scherff's role as: [Scherff] financial and legal advisor, bookkeeper, office manager, stockholder, factotum, friend, and during acute financial squeezes, a nearly-always/reliable source of small loans. Devoted through good times and lean, he was to become Tesla's most loyal and least dispensable employee. If ever these were a faithful friend standing behind a great man, it was George Scherff behind Nikola Tesla..." (*Tesla Man Out of Time* pp.105, Dorset Press, New York)

<sup>31</sup> Letter: [Sava Kosanovic] – George Scherff (219 Grant Terrace, Mamaroneck, N.Y.), April 2, 1943 (NTMA)

<sup>32</sup> Letter: E.D. Fitzgerald, Credit Manager (Hotel Governor Clinton, 7<sup>th</sup>, Avenue at 31<sup>st</sup> Street, New York)-Sava Kosanovic (c/o Hotel Navarre, 112 Central Park South, New York City), January 27, 1944 (NTMA)

I have not been successful in locating the key No. 103 which should open this box. If you wish to remove the machine and are able to do so, I shall be glad to assist you in any matter I can.

In Kosanovic's legacy there is no data indicating whether the key was found or the machine taken care of. In Tesla's legacy in the Museum, in archival documentation, there is a prospectus, "Instructions for operating No.103 Combination Lock", as well as a metal key in an envelope, on which there are some indications that the key was used in the Governor Clinton Hotel.<sup>34</sup> In the Museum Collection of technical objects from Nikola Tesla's legacy, except for a prototype of turbine, there are no other machines.

Lloyd Espenschied<sup>35</sup>, scientist and collector of old and rare books, was interested in the books from Tesla's legacy. He addressed Kosanovic on August 10, 1943, expressing his interest in old books referring to the science of electricity, and possibly buying them, if there were any of the kind in the legacy. Kosanovic replied on August 11,<sup>36</sup>:

At the present time his estate is being held intact and in storage. However, when the time comes to sort and dispose of it none of it will be sold as it is considered that it all has a very great scientific value and all of it will be preserved.

#### [Illustration: Letter of Sava Kosanovic to Lloyd Espenschied, August 11, 1943](#)

During his stay in America, from 1941 to 1944, Kosanovic "spent a great deal of time working on actions among Americans of Yugoslav origin and contributed to their unique organization and correct orientation"<sup>37</sup>. He left the Royal Government in exile in January 1943 and until 1944, when he left for London as a Minister in Ivan Subasic's Government, he was engaged with the United Committee of South Slavic Americans. In July 1944 he became Minister in Ivan Subasic's<sup>38</sup> Government, and from March 7, 1945 Minister of Information in the Government of Josip Broz.

---

<sup>33</sup> Letter: [Sava Kosanovic] (c/o Hotel Navarro, 112 Central Park South, New York City) – E.D. Fitzgerald (Hotel Governor Clinton, 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue at 31<sup>st</sup> Street, New Your), May 23, 1944 (NTMA).

<sup>34</sup> Instructions for operating No.103 Combination Lock, Personal fund of Nikola Tesla, group Miscellaneous. Metal key (Collection Memorabilia), found in the envelope with the inscription: Key for Safe Hotel Governor Clinton" ( Tesla's handwriting in pencil).

<sup>35</sup> Letter: Lloyd Espenschied (99 82<sup>nd</sup> Road, Newbold Place, Kew Gardens, New York, N.Y.) – Sava N. Kosanovic (Hotel Navarre, 112 Central Park South, New York, N.Y.) August 10, 1943 (NTMA). Lloyd Espenschied (1889-1986), became an amateur radio operator, as a young man, in 1904. He graduated from Pratt University, 1909. From 1910 he worked for Engineering Department of AT&T, and much later, until 1954 when he retired, for Bell Company. He greatly contributed to the development of the radio distribution and telecommunication systems. He had 130 registered patents. In time he became collector of old and rare books dealing with the science of electricity. Those books, printed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, today are part of Niels Bohr Library of the American Institute of Physics.

<sup>36</sup> Letter: Sava N. Kosanovic (Hotel Navarre, 112, Central Park South, New York, N.Y. – Lloyd Espenschied (99 82<sup>nd</sup> Road, Newbold Place, Kew Gardens, New York, N.Y.) August 11, 1943 (NTMA).

<sup>37</sup> He was elected Honorable President of Vidovdan Congress of Progressive Serbs and Honorable Member of the United Committee of South Slavic Americans. Biographical data of Kosanovic are taken from the biographic texts found in the Fund of Sava Kosanovic in NTMA.

<sup>38</sup> By Royal Decree of June 1, 1944, Ivan Subasic, who was in exile as Governor of the Ban's Regional unit of Croatia, was appointed President of the Ministry Board of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. By a Decree of July 10, 1944 the Government was formed under his presidency. The members of the Government were Sava Kosanovic, Izidor Cankar, Drago Marusic and Sreten Vukosavljevic (Archive of Yugoslavia, f.1 a.j.10)

Veljko Korac, who became director of the Nikola Tesla Museum eight years after that, had taken part in negotiations regarding the formation of Ivan Subasic's Government. During negotiations he accompanied Sreten Vukosavljevic, the future Government Minister<sup>39</sup>. After his stay in London, Kosanovic returned to the USA in June 1946 as FNRJ Ambassador to the USA and Mexico.

## **I.2. Transfer of Legacy to Belgrade in 1951**

In 1936, a society to form a “Nikola Tesla” Institute was created in Belgrade, gathering together the engineers’ and professors’ establishments to promote Tesla’s scientific work, with the aim of founding an Institute that would bear Tesla’s name. Bogdan Gavrilovic, President of Serbian Royal Academy, was elected President of the Society.

[Illustration: Bogdan Gavrilovic, President of the Society for foundation of “Nikola Tesla” Institute \(source: Photograph library of Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts\)](#)

Bogdan Gavrilovic (Novi Sad, 1864-Belgrade, 1947), was a mathematician, Professor at the Faculty of Technical Engineering in Belgrade, academician, and President of Serbian Academy of Science 1931-1937. His field of interest was algebra, analytic geometry and theory of functions. On January 26 1936, at the Foundation Meeting of the Society to establish the “Nikola Tesla” Institute, he was elected President. Until the end of his life he was President of the Council of “Nikola Tesla” Institute.

The members of the Society organized a celebration of Nikola Tesla’s 80th birthday in Belgrade, in 1936. At this celebration, Tesla was represented by his sister Marica Kosanovic, mother of Sava Kosanovic.

[Illustration: Participants at the celebration of 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Nikola Tesla, visiting Oplenac, July 1936.](#)

The members of the Society cooperated with Tesla from the very beginning and worked on substantiating the priority of Tesla’s inventions and on promotion of his discoveries. In the course of 1937, a delegation from the Society was present at formal promotions of Tesla to Honorary Doctorates in Science at the Universities of Paris and Poatie, Polytechnic School of Graz and High Technical School in Brno.

The Society fulfilled its mission on May 27, 1939 when, thanks to great efforts on the part of its members, the "Nikola Tesla” Institute was founded with the aim of “giving Nikola Tesla national credit for his merits” and providing scientific research and practical application of scientific results from the field of electricity.

Dr. Bogdan Gavrilovic was elected first President of the Council, and the first Director of the Institute was engineer Slavko Boksan. Upon its foundation, the Society defined its new activities and changed its name into “Nikola Tesla” Society. Today this Society exists under the name “The Nikola Tesla Society for spreading scientific learning”.

[Illustration: Slavko Boksan](#)

Slavko Boksan (Djudjevo, 1889 – Beograd, 1953) started his studies at the Faculty of Technical Engineering in Belgrade and graduated in Scharlotenburg as electrical – mechanical engineer. After the First World War, he worked in the Siemens &

---

<sup>39</sup> Vasilije Perendija witnessed this since he was on duty in London as chief of the Cabinet of Sava Kosanovic. He lives in Belgrade today.



Halske factory in Berlin. After he had returned to Belgrade in 1922, he founded his own company, the "Engineer Slavko Boksan, Mechanical and Electrical Company". From 1925 he started publishing his articles dealing with Tesla's scientific work in domestic magazines. The same year he started his correspondence with Tesla, as well as with some friends and experts on his work, Kenneth Swizey and Paja Radosavljevic. In 1927, together with his colleagues, he founded Radio A.D., Belgrade. The first broadcast of this radio was dedicated to Nikola Tesla. A study dedicated to the complete work of Nikola Tesla was published by Boksan in 1932 under the title *Nikola Tesla und Sein Werk* (Deutscher Verla fur Jugend und Volk, Vienna). He persistently promoted Tesla's work through lectures. From 1936 onwards, he delivered a series of lectures on Tesla in European cities: Vienna, Budapest, Sofia, Berlin, and Paris. In Germany, in the Technical Museum in Munich, he delivered a lecture on Tesla on November 26, 1937 and also in Prague, Berlin and Skopje in 1938. He participated in the organization of the celebration of Tesla's 70<sup>th</sup> and 80<sup>th</sup> birthdays in Belgrade. It was his initiative to form the society to establish the "Nikola Tesla" Institute, and he was the Chief Editor of the 80th Anniversary Memorandum Book *Nikola Tesla on His Eightieth Anniversary*. Until 1939 he was secretary of the Council of the "Nikola Tesla" Institute and its director from 1939 to 1947. The legacy of Slavko Boksan is kept as a separate collection in NTMA.

Sava Kosanovic was elected a member of the Managing Board of the Institute<sup>40</sup> in 1946 while at the same time he was an honorary member of the Society. The minutes of the first meeting of the Institute, held after the war on March 31, 1945, record that Tesla's nephew, Minister Sava Kosanovic, who was present during Nikola Tesla's last days and at his funeral, announced that the complete scientific papers, library and models from the legacy<sup>41</sup> would probably be given to the Institute.

After 1945, the Institute was reorganized and the Government of FНРY in 1950 defined a new role of the Institute, primarily connected with the planned contribution to the electric power industry of FНРY.<sup>42</sup>

Nikola Tesla's legacy was transferred from USA to Belgrade by the ship "Srbija", which arrived at the port of Rijeka on September 30, 1951. According to the testimony of Charlotte Muzar, in 1950 Kosanovic, after leaving his diplomatic post in the USA, engaged a lawyer to settle all matters concerning the legacy.

A document from the archival material of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of SFRY points out that the legal aspect of transferring Tesla's legacy from USA to Belgrade was settled by a Contract made between two countries. Nikola Tesla's dossier (lists of personal belongings from his legacy, and the bills concerning storage charges paid to the agency where the objects had been stored) and another copy of the Contract between Serbia and the USA were in the Embassy of FНРY, in Washington, until 1983, when they were brought to this country.<sup>43</sup>

While the legacy was being transferred to Belgrade, some professors who, in 1936, had participated in the foundation and development of the "Nikola Tesla" Institute were still working at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering in Belgrade. Among them were Professors Pavle Miljanic and Aleksandar Damjanovic, who were also engaged in the work of the

---

<sup>40</sup> Letter: Bogdan Gavrilovic – Sava Kosanovic, April 9, 1946 (NTMA).

<sup>41</sup> *Fifty Years of the Electro Technical Institute 'Nikola Tesla' book 1: Activity*, Belgrade, 1989, pp. 35.

<sup>42</sup> In 1948 the institute changes its name and purpose and it becomes the Institute for Electrical Industry. The Government of FНРY was in charge for the Institute in 1950. Later on in the same year, by decision of the Presidency of Serbian Academy of Sciences (SAS), the FНРY Government decided that the Institute should be under the management of SAS. Simultaneously, it was fused with the Central Radio Institute, Electro technical Institute of SAS and the Institute of SAS for telecommunications. The new institution got the name the "Nikola Tesla Institute of Serbian Academy of Science for testing electrical phenomena".

<sup>43</sup> Embassy of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Washington, July 26, 1983 no. 431/83, Photostat of the document; statement of Svetlana Kojic, Washington D.C., June 25, 1984. From the mentioned statement it is not clear whether the month of June or July is in question, since it is typed "Juny".

Institute. Since the basic aim of the Institute was no longer the promotion of Tesla's work, Nikola Tesla's legacy was stored in the premises of the Faculty of Electrical Engineering.

Illustration: Pavle Miljanic

Source: Mihailo Miljanic, Podgorica

Pavle Miljanic (Cetinje, 1889 – Podgorica, 1975) finished High School in Switzerland and graduated from Ecole Supérieure d'Electricité, in Paris, in 1914. He continued his studies in France. In 1926 he was elected assistant professor at the Faculty of Technical Engineering in Belgrade, in the Department of Mechanical – Electrical Engineering, for those students who had chosen to acquire a diploma in electrical engineering. He lectured on basic electronics, the theory of theoretical electronics, and electromagnetism. Chronologically he was the third professor of electrical engineering at the Belgrade University. From 1935, he participated in the foundation and work of the Society for the foundation of the "Nikola Tesla" Institute and was Member of the first Managing Board. He was elected full professor at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering in 1946. From 1948 he was Principal of the Department of Electrical engineering physics. He lectured on electromagnetic and theoretical principles of electrical engineering. Together with Professor Aleksandar Damjanovic, he supported the idea of accepting the *tesla* as the unit of magnetic flux and cooperated with the technical board of International Electro Technical Commission, IEC. He was one of the founders of the Electrotechnical Institute of Serbian Academy of Sciences (SAS) in 1947 and its first President.

Illustration: Aleksandar Damjanovic at the Celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Tesla's birth 1956 in Belgrade (Hall of Yugoslav Drama Theater)

Aleksandar Damjanovic (Kragujevac, 1900 – Belgrade, 1978), graduated from High School in Belgrade 1919, and from the Faculty of Electrical Engineering in Liege 1923. Upon obtaining a diploma, he graduated from Ecole Supérieure d'Electricité, Department of Radio Engineering in Paris. He obtained advanced training in France, Germany and Sweden. He participated in the foundation and work of the Society for developing the "Nikola Tesla" Institute and was a member of its First Managing Board. From 1936 he was assistant professor at the Faculty of Technical Science at the Department of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering for students choosing a topic from the field of electrical engineering for their diploma examination paper. He taught telegraphy, telephony and radio engineering. From 1948 he was Chief of the Department of Basics of Telecommunications at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering in Belgrade and in 1951 he was elected full professor. He became University Dean in 1951-1952 and in 1954-1955. He taught theoretical basics of telecommunication, acoustics and encyclopedia of telecommunication science. He was the founder and first Director of the Institute for Telecommunications of the Serbian Academy of Sciences (SAS); in 1947 he was elected General Secretary of the State Board for the Celebration of 100th Anniversary of Nikola Tesla's Birth and 10th Anniversary of his Death. He was the founder and the first President of the Yugoslav Electrical Engineering Committee (YEEC) as a national committee member of the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC). The legacy of Aleksandar Damjanovic is kept as a separate collection in NTMA.

In the middle of 1952, Nikola Tesla's legacy was moved from the faculty into the building that is today the Nikola Tesla Museum. The greatest force in arranging Tesla's legacy was provided by the Council for Science and Culture of FNRY Government and the State Board for Celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Nikola Tesla's Birth and the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of his Death. Sava Kosanovic was elected one of the Members of the State

Board, and later on was elected Member of the Commission for Opening Nikola Tesla's Legacy.

### **I.3. Work on Complementation of the Collection in the Period between 1952 - 1956**

Upon foundation of the Museum, Kosanovic continued his work on complementing Tesla's legacy with documents referring to Tesla in the possession of other institutions or individuals in the USA. For this purpose, Charlotte Muzar visited Smithsonian Museum in Washington and informed Kosanovic about her visit on March 22, 1954<sup>44</sup>:

I telephoned the Smithsonian Institution and talked to the fellow in charge of things electrical and the poor man almost broke down and cried over the fact that they did not have so much as a piece of paper on Tesla in spite of his more than 15 – years search for something on him. His name is Kenneth M. Perry and is great admirer of Tesla's. He feels that Tesla is one of the greatest geniuses of the ages and it is very embarrassing for the Institute not to have anything of his, particularly in view of the fact that they have so much on Edison, who, in his mind, doesn't come to 1-2-3 to Tesla. He finally ended up by asking whether it would be possible to get something from Belgrade for the Smithsonian – even a photograph, some specimen of his handwritings, etc.

Concerning material that might possibly have been with Westinghouse, Kosanovic informed B. Lazic of this in his letter dated September 12, 1953<sup>45</sup>:

I have visited Mr. Hutchinson in Westinghouse Company – but he thinks that he does not have any model – since during the war they have cleaned up the laboratory and all metal objects they melted and used. I will get some Photostats of Contracts and correspondence that I have found in the historic library. It is possible that you already have them, but I will send it to Mr. Damjanovic as soon as I get them.

There are no further data of whether B. Lazic received or forwarded the material to the Museum. Sava Kosanovic corresponded and cooperated with Tesla's friends and admirers, Kenneth Sweezey, Agnes Holden as well as with the researcher Leland Anderson.

Kenneth Sweezey (1905 -1972) was a journalist and writer, who started writing for *New York Sun* as a young man of twenty. That's how he met Nikola Tesla and they soon became friends. From 1921 he collected articles about Tesla and spent a great deal of time promoting his achievements. For Tesla's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday he organized a celebration and collected letters that Tesla received from his contemporaries, scientists, either individuals or representatives of scientific institutions. After receiving news of Tesla's death on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1943. Sweezey came to the apartment of the Hotel New Yorker and met Kosanovic for the first time. He initiated the celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Tesla's birth in 1956. He was engaged in introducing the *tesla* unit for measuring magnetic induction and issuing the postage stamp with Tesla's image in the USA.

The Legacy of Kenneth Sweezey is kept in the Smithsonian Museums and archives of the Museum of National History of America in Washington. Sweezey visited Nikola Tesla Museum in 1957 and 1968. A smaller portion of his legacy is kept in a separated collection of ANTM.

---

<sup>44</sup> Letter: Charlotte Muzar, Washington, D.C. – Sava Kosanovic, March 22, 1954 (NTMA).

<sup>45</sup> Letter: B. Lazich (2363 Hollywood Dr. Pittsburgh 35, Pa) - Sava Kosanovic, September 12, 1953 (NTMA).

Illustration: Kenneth Sweezy and Charlotte Muzar (centre) visiting the Museum in 1957

“With gratitude to Sava Kosanovic, who first collected and saved Tesla’s earthly belongings and established the Tesla Museum in which to house them, and to Veljko Korac, Director, and all other faithful workers of the Museum who have organized and cared for these belongings so well. May the Museum prosper, and so be able to expand its work in perpetuating the inspiring story of a good and dear friend and one of very greatest inventors of all time, not only in Yugoslavia and the United States – the lands, of his birth and of his adoption – but throughout the whole world”.  
Kenneth Sweezy, October 27, 1968  
(from the Nikola Tesla Museum Guest Book)

Agnes Johnson Holden, daughter of Tesla’s friends Catherine and Robert Underwood Johnson, visited the Museum before its opening on September 24, 1955. Nikola Tesla corresponded with the Johnson family in the period 1890 to 1937, and that correspondence is preserved in the legacy. Kosanovic contacted Agnes Holden in order to complement the correspondence collection. On the basis of what is known so far, it is not possible to certify whether among the letters preserved in the Museum, there are the letters from Agnes Holden.

“It is with surprise and great satisfaction that I have visited the Nikola Tesla Museum where are housed letters, papers, photographs, books and electrical equipment, and where students and savants can study the life and work of this great scientist. The Museum has an enormous amount of material efficiently arranged.  
As a life long friend of Mr. Tesla I congratulate Mr. Korac the Director and those that worked with him to make a working memorial of a great discoverer”.  
Agnes Johnson Holden, September 24, 1955  
(from the Nikola Tesla Museum Guest Book)

It is obvious that a number of letters from this collection, in the form of Photostats and typed copies<sup>46</sup>, were received thanks to Leland Anderson, Tesla’s biographer and researcher of his works. Anderson is the founder of the first Tesla’s Society in America, which ceased to exist in 1966. Together with John Ratzlaff, he is the author of a detailed bibliography of Tesla’s works and works about Tesla.<sup>47</sup> For years he has been researching and publishing works referring to Tesla’s contribution to the discovery of radio, Tesla’s system of wireless transmission and Tesla’s turbine. Today he lives in Denver, State of Colorado, USA.

Sava Kosanovic died on November 14, 1956 in Belgrade. In 1957 Charlotte Muzar, his assistant for a long time, brought the Urn with Tesla’s ashes to Belgrade from the USA, where she had taken it over in the FNRJ Embassy in Washington. On board the trade ship “Triglav”, she arrived at Rijeka on July 13, 1957 and reached Belgrade on July 17<sup>th</sup>. Sava Kosanovic’s heir was Milica Trbojevic, daughter of Tesla’s sister Angelina Trbojevic. According to Milica Trbojevic’s wish and agreement with Professor Veljko Korac, the Museum director, Charlotte Muzar handed over the urn to the Museum to keep it there permanently.

---

<sup>46</sup> On the basis of the analysis made by Milica Kesler, part time employee in the Museum in 2003, Anderson sent 34 copies of letters from the correspondence between Tesla and the Johnsons.

<sup>47</sup> John Ratzlaff, Leland Anderson, *Dr. Nikola Tesla Bibliography*, Palo Alto, California, 1979.

[Illustration: Charlotte Muzar and Kenneth Sweezy \(in the middle\) visiting the Museum in 1957.](#)

“On the occasion of my first complete, full visit to the Tesla Museum I am almost overcome with memories and remembrances of the past 44 years of my life, much of which were interspersed with contacts and duties (most pleasant) with Tesla and his family”.

Charlotte Muzar, October 13, 1986  
(from the Nikola Tesla Museum Guest Book)

## **II. Work of the Commission for Opening Tesla Legacy in the Course of 1952**

By Decision of the Council for Science and Culture of FNRJ Government<sup>48</sup> signed by Rodoljub Colakovic, Minister and President of the Council, a Commission for Opening the Legacy of Nikola Tesla was formed on July 9, 1952. The members of the Commission were: Sava Kosanovic, Dr Aleksandar Damjanovic and Dr Ilija Obradovic as members of the State Board for Celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Tesla’s Birth and the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of his Death, Nikola Rot, Head of the Academician Board and Jovan Petrovic, Advisor for Higher Education and Scientific Institutions within the Council for Science and Culture of FNRJ Government.

The complete legacy was already situated in the Museum building.

When this Commission was founded, Aleksandar Damjanovic was full professor at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering in Belgrade; Ilija Obradovic was employed at the “Nikola Tesla” Institute of the Serbian Academy of Science for testing electrical phenomena, while Nikola Rot was engaged as part time lecturer at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade.

Ilija Obradovic was born in 1911 in Belgrade, where he graduated from the Faculty of Technical Engineering.<sup>49</sup> He received a doctorate in technical science at Darmstadt in Germany. From 31 October 1953 to 1959, he was director of the “Nikola Tesla” Institute of the Serbian Academy of Science for testing electric phenomena. From 1953 to 1955 in the Department of Power Engineering and Department of Radio Engineering of this Institute, eleven operating models were made; they are still today on permanent display in the Museum. He was a member of the team that outlined and realized part of the display dealing with experiments. He is a member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, and today lives in Paris.

Nikola Rot worked from 1950 as part time lecturer at the Faculty of Philosophy at Belgrade University, giving lectures in philosophy of personality to the students of philosophy, and teaching general psychology to the students of psychology and pedagogy. He was elected associated professor in 1960 after acquiring a doctor’s degree, and in 1965 became full professor and Chief of the Department of Social Psychology, staying there until his retirement in 1979.

The members of the Commission had been checking the legacy from July 12 to July 31, 1952 when they made an inventory of crates that the legacy was in. The Commission made the following list: "safe, 1 piece; metal coffin, 30 pieces; leather suitcase, 2 pieces, trunk, 16 pieces; barrel, 4 pieces; steel locker, 1 piece, steel register, 2 pieces, sack, 1 piece; wooden frame, 1 piece, metal shelves, 1 piece". It is stated in the report that all crates were opened and all objects checked, roughly arranged and listed according to the enclosed list indicating the contents of each crate.

[Illustration: The Report of the Commission for Opening the Legacy](#)

<sup>48</sup> Council for Science and Culture of FNRJ Government, VIII, no. 5137, July 9, 1952, Belgrade MJ/SR.

<sup>49</sup> Speech of Ilija Obradovic on celebration of 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Tesla’s death is published in this book.

## Illustration: Part of accompanying documentation of the Report of the Commission for Opening the Legacy of Nikola Tesla, 1952

Since in the registry material of the Museum no mentioned listing was found, nothing was known about it until 1996, when Milojka Damjanovic, the widow of late professor Aleksandar Damjanovic, donated to the Museum the legacy of her late husband. The document under the title *Inventory of the Roughly Checked Nikola Tesla's Legacy* was found among other papers from Damjanovic's legacy.<sup>50</sup>

Minister Rodoljub Colakovic on October 29, 1952 made the decision to put in order and classify the archive material according to its nature, i.e. its contents.<sup>51</sup> The Commission that once was appointed to open the legacy was now assigned the task to arrange and classify it.

The members of the Commission suggested "establishing the management of the Museum as soon as possible, someone who will find suitable cupboards and shelves to dispose the legacy and perform detailed classification".<sup>52</sup>

The classification anticipated dividing the legacy into ten groups:

- A. Tesla's Original Works
- B. Correspondence
- C. Private Items for the Museum
- D. Pictures and Photographs
- E. Books
- F. Newspaper Clippings
- G. Magazines
- H. Newspapers
- I. Material Concerning Financial Operations
- J. Other material

In the period 1952 to 1955, the basic activities of the Museum were the classification of the archival and library documentation, selection of documents to be displayed at the permanent exhibition, the preparation of project documentation for the execution of operating models on permanent display, the selection of archival material to be published on the occasion of the celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Nikola Tesla's birth, and preparations for the celebration.

This complex and responsible work was realized thanks to the great knowledge and professional help of Professor Veljko Korac's assistants. Museum documentation does not have data about all assistants working in the Museum in that time. Electrical engineer, Jovan Surutka was entrusted part of the design of the conception for the permanent display dedicated to Tesla's inventions and researches of the archive material from the legacy in order to prepare design documentation necessary for manufacturing of the working models. Most of the working models were manufactured in "Nikola Tesla" Serbian Academy of Sciences Institute for testing electrical phenomena with Ilija Obradovic as director of Power Supply Division. Various assistants took part in researching patent documents and manufacturing of the working models, among them were Petar Miljanic, Mihajlo Masirevic, Miodrag Masarevic.

---

<sup>50</sup> Receipt of the gift, no. 307, August 5, 1999.

<sup>51</sup> Council for Science and Culture, II, no. 7839, October 29, 1952.

<sup>52</sup> Proposal of the Commission for Opening the Legacy of Nikola Tesla, without date.

Vojin Popovic and Radoslav Horvat worked on preparing archive material for publication. Classification of library material was done by Husnija Kurtovic , Dejan Bajic and Ilija Volckov.

The Legacy of Nikola Tesla comprises archive material, museum items and books that are preserved, processed and researched in three departments of the Museum: Archives, Department of Collections and the Library.