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The first national hygiene exposition in Belgrade in 1933

Прва земаљска хигијенска изложба у Београду 1933. године

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SUMMARY

The paper is about the First National Hygiene Exposition in Belgrade in 1933. It was one of the most significant events and an important part of the cultural policy in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia at that time. It was also the last one in a series of great events under the high patronage of King Alexander I Karađorđević. In order to make research in the novelties the exposition introduced, the thus far unpublished archival material has been studied along with the situation drawings of the complex and the restaurant, photo documentation and the exposition presentation in the newspapers of the time, as well as the published material.

The aim of the paper is to emphasize the significance of the exposition, its dominant health and education concept with regard to social improvements for the benefit of the general public, all in the context of the period and under conditions it was organized. The paper also aims at presenting a comprehensive view of the exposition impact on the history of the Serbian and Yugoslav medicine, as well as the modernization of the society on the whole.

The paper also includes the hitherto unpublished archival material, plans, photographs, brochures' front pages and so on.

Keywords: history of medicine; Serbia; Kingdom of Yugoslavia; health and cultural policy; popular events; temporary architecture

САЖЕТАК

Кроз рад је приказана Прва земаљска хигијенска изложба у Београду 1933. године, један од најзначајнијих здравствених догађаја и важан део културне политике тадашње Краљевине Југославије, али и последња у низу великих манифестација под високим покровитељством краља Александра I Карађорђевића. Како би се истражиле новине које је она донела, анализирана је до сада необјављена архивска грађа, ситуациона скица комплекса и пројекат ресторана, фотодокументација, као и прикази изложбе у дневној штампи и објављеним публикацијама.

Циљ рада је да укаже на изузетну важност изложбе, доминантно здравствено-просветитељске концепције, са слухом за социјална унапређења у интересу народа, посматрано у контексту времена и условима у којима је настала. Тежило се што свеобухватнијем сагледавању њеног утицаја на историју српске и југословенске медицине и модернизацију друштва у целини.

У прилогу рада су дати до сада необјављена архивска грађа, планови, фотографије, насловне стране пратећих брошура итд.

Кључне речи: историја медицине; Србија; Краљевина Југославија; здравствена и културна политика; популарне манифестације; ефемерна архитектура

INTRODUCTION

When the Great War had ended, an aspiration dating from the 19th century was realized – a unity of the south Slavic nations into one state, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Kingdom of SHS, i.e., Yugoslavia). So now, one state gathered the peoples who had hitherto lived in various cultural environments. The political act of uniting those nations could not just erase the differences between them, which ranged from economic ones to various national experiences, religions and confessions, cultural traits, mentalities, as well as differences in the level of literacy and education as the most important measure of social advancement.

There are two prominent figures featuring in the foundations of the public health of Serbia, who had always maintained that the population should be actively involved in all the subjects regarding country healthcare and society prosperity. Dr Vladan Đorđević (1844–1930), was a figure whose visionary activities were reflected in making two reforming acts: the Public Sanitary Fund Act (1880) and the Sanitary Profession Management and Preserving Public Health Act (1881). Those acts held provisions on preventive measures of great importance not only for advancement of health in the Kingdom of Serbia, but also for the newly formed Kingdom of SHS [1, 2]. The other was Dr Milan Jovanović Batut (1847–1940), at that moment appointed chief physician and chief of staff of the Kingdom of Montenegro Sanitary Department. His task was to improve the healthcare system in Montenegro and he examined all the school children in order to educate the population about the significance of general health. On behalf of the Serbian government, Dr Djordjević invited him to return to Serbia and he was sent to abroad for further specialization [3]. Having completed all the additional studies in Berlin, Munich, Paris and London (1882–1885), Dr Jovanović Batut returned to Serbia, starting the healthcare service while working on setting up the medical service, opening hospitals, pharmacies, summer resorts, sanatoriums. He was resolute in striving to realize his visionary ideas, and among other things, he pushed for the Great School of Belgrade to become a university (working on a University Act, 1902–1905) and for founding a School of Medicine [4].

Since the social policy of the Kingdom of Serbia was not properly regulated on the state level, physicians and philanthropists, encouraged setting up numerous civic associations aiming at public health improvement [5]. So, at that time, two, for us particularly important societies were established: the Society for the Preservation of Public Health (hereinafter the Society) and the Maternity Society which would mostly contribute to opening the First National Hygiene Exhibition three decades later (hereinafter the 1st NHE) in Belgrade.

The Society was established in Belgrade in 1902 at the initiative of Dr Radivoj Vukadinović, Dr Vladimir Popović and Dr Slobodan Ribnikar, and wholeheartedly supported by the Serbian Medical Society (hereinafter the SMS), modelled after the similar societies in England for purposes of comprehensive work on the preservation of public health and education in the field. The Society's work was regulated by a Society Rule Book set up by Dr Jovanović Batut [4, 6]. The health of mothers and children was the priority of the Society. Consequently, at the initiative of Dr Radivoje Vukadinović, a Summer Resort for Sickly Children was opened in Košutnjak (1904) and two more in Šabac and Kragujevac [7]. From 1906, the Society published a magazine *Zdravlje* (*The Health*, a journal of doctors educating the population), in Sombor, with Dr Jovanović Batut as the editor-in-chief. Also, in 1905, he suggested a Medical Museum to be established, providing a list of exhibits that should be collected for an exhibition. And that was the material that the Society would present at the *Balkan Exposition* in London (1907), where they would win the Grand Prix and be presented in an English medical magazine, *The Lancet*. Supported by the Serbian Red Cross Society, the Medical Museum was opened in 1912, at the Palace Russia (today the Moscow Hotel) in Terazije. Organizing numerous activities such as opening the first School for Rural Housewives (modelled after similar ones in Germany, 1906), the Society contributed greatly to educating women, including an aspect of struggle for emancipation [7, 8, 9].

And it was the women's societies and magazines, besides the school system, that greatly helped advance the women's status in Serbia in the 19th and 20th centuries. The women's societies had a humanitarian and educational character, spreading literacy and culture, thus supporting the overall social development [10]. One of those societies, with which the Society collaborated closely and whose activities were part of setting up the 1st NHE, was the Maternity Society, established in 1904 in Belgrade. The activities of the Maternity Society introduced numerous novelties in the domain of health and social care and fostering orphans and children

without parental care. In addition, schools for midwives and midwife service was set up. The work of the Society was regulated in the Maternity Society Rule Book, stating concrete tasks such as establishing a collective home for infants and children under seven years of age, taking care of the children without parental care [5, 11]. And while the Society struggled to build its own home, the Military Hospital complex (1904–1909) and the General State Hospital complex (1901–1907) were built in Vračar [12]. Soon, in 1911, the Society for Supporting Orphans and Destitute Children donated a parcel of land to the Society, on the corner of Vojvode Milenka Street (today Tiršova) and King Milutin Street in Belgrade so that they could erect their own Children's Home. Unfortunately, it was not to be due to the upcoming war.

Just before the WWI, Dr Jovanović Batut witnessed how his principles were being accepted with enthusiasm even outside the Kingdom of Serbia. One of his true followers in Croatia was Dr Andrija Štampar (1888–1958). The two doctors of modern visions and broad knowledge and interests (with an age difference of 41 years) started collaborating from 1913 when Dr Jovanović Batut vehemently supported Dr Štampar's initiative to establish the Croatian society for the preservation of public health in Zagreb, similar to that of Serbia (1902) [4, 7, 13, 14]. Like Dr Đorđević used to have a good ear to recognize the talent of his younger colleague, Dr Jovanović Batut in the late 19th century, encouraging him strongly in his work. Immediately after the WWI when the new state was formed, Dr Jovanović Batut also recognized a young, agile and broadly educated Croatian physician Dr Štampar, as the one who would bring in new ideas and reform the health policy.

HEALTH CIRCUMSTANCES, LAWS AND SOCIETIES IN THE KINGDOM OF SHS/YUGOSLAVIA

The newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1918–1929) started its life on the WWI aftermath, with the destroyed demographic and economic foundations and huge

losses in the population topped with various epidemics. Based on the pre-war experiences and the extraordinary war circumstances that required special health care arrangements, a struggle for improving overall public health and healthcare institutions in the Kingdom of SHS started. Under such circumstances, when fighting and curbing epidemics was underway, and when the housing issues needed to be resolved, a new healthcare organization was emerging, the one that started with preventions and treatments. It was also active in the field of health propaganda, education about health and raising public awareness about health in general. Social policy that was aligned with the European tendencies was becoming a significant political segment in the life of the new kingdom. It was believed that great social reforms would lead to a better and more just life of its subjects. The social policy was equaled to the communal one, and the only difference between them was just in the level and scope of work [15]. To that end, the government established a separate Ministry of Public Health (hereinafter the MPH), which thus far had been a part of other ministries – it was established in 1918 and was fully functional from 1920. At a suggestion of Dr Jovanović Batut, Dr Štampar was appointed head of the Department of Racial, Public and Social Hygiene, Department of Hygiene for short [16]. His priority tasks were implementing the already drafted social-medical plan, work on developing and advancing laws on healthcare, and trying to merge separate ministries of public health and social policy into one [1]. Right after the MPH was established, the Chief Medical Council was formed and the Permanent Epidemics Commission, chair by Dr Jovanović Batut. At the initiative and under organization of the Commission, bacteriological labs were being opened all over the country, then institutes and clinics for studying and curbing malaria, clinics for treating STDs, those for treating tuberculosis, public health centers and rural health centers. Regarding systematic healthcare for children, school clinics were opened and a first Institute for Mother and Child Healthcare in Ljubljana and then a school for medical nurses in Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana. In addition, there were a great number of health resorts and recovery

centers, as well as medical museums in Belgrade, Zagreb, Sarajevo, Ljubljana, Novi Sad and Tuzla.

In the 1919–1929 period, the healthcare policy and medical services, managed by the Hygiene Section (from 1929 called the Hygiene Section of the Medical Department), were reorganized by new regulations only to continue to develop according to the needs and technical circumstances in the country. All the facilities were making a "network of workshops", as Dr Konstantinović called them, of social and medical activities and their organization [17]. Then higher education in the medical field was introduced in the new country – the Faculty of Medicine in Belgrade which was founded in 1920 [18, 19]. Then two new important acts were passed: *Labourers' Insurance Act* and *Health Co-ops Act*, which was highly encouraging in regulating and improving workers' and farmers' healthcare. At Dr Gavriilo Kojić's (1889–1927) initiative, healthcare co-ops were established (1922), healthcare organizations that were quite unique in the world at that time, and which would serve as a model for similar co-ops in Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, and all the way to America, India and China [1, 20].

There were also private initiatives. Numerous pre-war voluntary associations of social and health aid developed and were based mostly on the principles established by the Society. The latter continued their work under a new name, the Yugoslav Society for the National Health Preservation (1922–1938), and in 1938 it was transformed into the Main Education Co-op [10]. The Maternity Society with their Orphanage (1922–1925) also continued with their activities within the Yugoslav Women's Association [5, 11]. There were also international institutions very active in the same field, which expressed their interest in supporting the healthcare policy reforms in the Kingdom of SHS. The most significant support came from the Rockefeller Foundation (establishing and erecting the School of Public Health in Zagreb in 1927; renovation of the Central Hygiene Institute in Belgrade in 1925–1926) and the League of

Nations Health Organization. The support was most prominent in the field of eradicating infectious and endemic diseases, as well as enhancement of healthcare, sciences and education [1, 21].

State social mechanisms were being developed gradually also in the domain of urban planning and building the housing stock for the social-health centers and institutions as part of the Kingdom's overall building policy. In 1921–1922, the state called for an international competition for master plan for the capital, as a basis for making the 1923 Belgrade Master Plan (adopted in 1924). When a Building Act and all its regulations became effective (1931–1934), municipalities started making construction and levelling plans [22].

The Hygiene Department's scope of activities included various remedial works which would improve the overall healthcare circumstances. With that regard, there was a key link between improving conditions in cities and the housing issues, along with enhancing the housing stock for the social-medical institutions.

With the 6 January Dictatorship (6th January 1929 – 3rd September 1931), the Kingdom of Yugoslavia emerged (3rd October 1929), consisting of nine counties and a special tenth region included Belgrade with Zemun and Pančevo. Hoping that the national conflicts and differences would be resolved soon enough by creating a unified nation, there were activities in all the fields, pushing a new ideology of a Yugoslav nation. New societies, associations and organizations, then magazines and daily papers were being established, while the old societies were invited to continue with their activities in the spirit of a new national and ideological concept [23].

SETTING UP THE FIRST NATIONAL HYGIENE EXPOSITION IN BELGRADE IN 1933

As previously pointed out, that was the political and social environment where the First National Hygiene Exposition was opened in the capital city of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia – from 19 August to 20 September, prolonged until 25 September 1933. It was an extraordinary medical and cultural event and an important part of an overall cultural policy in the country [24]. Organization and realization of such a substantial multidisciplinary function with public health at its core required the entire country to be engaged in the activities, continual work on advertising, as well as serious funding. Under the patronage of King Alexander I Karađorđević, the exposition was set up by the Yugoslav Society chaired by the General Board President and the first director of the Central Medical Institution (hereinafter the CMI), Dr Stevan Z. Ivanić (1884–1948). The Honorable Board consisted of all the ministers, all faculties' deans, county leaders and other county representatives and those of other societies and associations. (Figure 1)

The exposition General Board president was a university professor and one of the founders of the Faculty of Medicine in Belgrade, Dr Aleksandar Kostić (1893–1983), the vice-president was Dr Bogoljub Konstantinović (1896–1944), the head of the CMI Social-Medical Department and the secretary was Dr Bojan Pirc (1901–1991). Also, the School of Public Health, Zagreb took part in the exposition preparations. Overall support was bestowed by the county boards of Ljubljana, Zagreb, Banja Luka, Split, Cetinje, Sarajevo, Novi Sad, Niš and Skopje, then by all the medical centers in the country, as well as the health co-ops associations, Maternity Society, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia Red Cross, sober associations and sports societies [24].

As stated in the brochure published in 1934, the aim of the exposition as a "health festival of the entire country" was "to spread education on health as a prerequisite for the national health

betterment, and to show the nation new industrial and craft products that support healthy life" [24]. (Figure 2) Significant incentive for the exposition was the participation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia at the Second International Hygiene Exposition in Dresden in late June 1920, as well as the Grand Gymnast Show held in Belgrade on 7–29 June 1930. The sport event promoted the Yugoslav nations' strength through sports, which helped to proclaim the ideology of integrated *Yugoslavism* in the national health narrative contained in the 1st NHE under a slogan *For Better Health and Better Future Generations* [24, 25].

In a newly erected imposing building of the Faculty of Engineering of Belgrade (1925–1931), in an area of over 3,000m², the most representative popular and professional section of the exposition was set up. The undeveloped land, the so-called *Running Course*, located between Boulevard of King Alexander, Grobljanska St. (today Ruzveltova St.) and Kraljice Marije St., the area of 40,000m² was used for exposition.

The works on setting up the exposition and the exhibits in the faculty building started on 5 August 1933, assisted by the curator at the Medical Museum and a secretary of the county board of Zagreb, Mladen Širola. The exposition had 18 sections housed in 17 faculty rooms and antechambers, halls and corridors which as separate units from the ground floor to the second floor led the visitors to educational rounds of clear and comprehensive knowledge on the ways of preserving health. (Figure 3) The ground floor covered occupational medicine, food and diet, sports, demography, personal hygiene, healthcare service organization, hospitals and first aid. The first-floor covered health education, medical manikins, tourism, spas and climatic health resorts, healthcare services, medical science, mother and child hygiene, schoolchildren health and protection, fighting alcoholism, tuberculosis and STDs. The second floor covered dwelling place hygiene, settlement hygiene – remedial work (with over 50 miniature models of apartments, houses and entire settlements), infectious diseases, malaria, hygiene and veterinary medicine. Unable to present all the collected exhibits, the exposition

board created an exposition card system, covering the entire medical educational material delivered for the exposition [26] Approach to the exposition organization was quite innovative and modern – one of the event feature was a real nursery for the children from the Belgrade Danube Nursery 2; the visitors had an opportunity to have a guide; free brochures on STDs were being handed out under a title *The Two Great Evils* by Dr Bojan Pirc; There were also short popular talks on hygiene, then film projections and ultimately a postal room with its own stamp that read The First National Hygiene Exposition. (Figures 4, 5, and 6).

Having obtained all the necessary permits from the City of Belgrade administration, the Exposition Board started the works on preparing the land and erecting structures for the exterior section of the exposition, all according to a design by Svetozar S. Miletić [27]. The ground works, sewage system and water lines were constructed by engineer Mirko Bradilović, and a contractor engineer Aleksa Turbina was in charge of building the structures. Engineer Petar Čepurnjak was a supervisor over all the engineering works [28].

The exposition external section was divided into a commercial part and an entertainment part. (Figure 7) The entire construction site area was equipped with sewage and water piping, and landscaping in English style. The construction started with erecting a wooden restaurant building with terrace, just behind the faculty building. (Figure 8) Then, on a lower level three main rectangular exposition pavilions with a porch were erected. They were made of wooden structure on a concrete foundation. The pavilions held 67 exhibitors, displaying mostly pharmaceutical and medical products, equipment for apartments, then various household sanitary and cosmetic products. (Figures 9 and 10) Another 9 exhibitors were housed in 15 smaller pavilions grouped in the central section of the area, around a big potable water tap, where all the pedestrian paths converged [28].

In order to provide direct communication between the various exposition sections in the faculty building and the restaurant behind it, two wooden bridges connected the interior

exhibition with the restaurant roof terrace. From terrace opened up a view over the exposition pavilions on a lower level and all the way towards the Danube and the Banat plains. (Figure 11) Linger on the restaurant terrace was made additionally pleasant with available telephone service and a radio station playing music and announcing various information [28].

The entertainment section was a sort of fair organized in collaboration with the Maternity Society and supported by the Belgrade Danube Nursery 2 and the Society for the Protection of Blind Girls. The fairground had swings and carousels, a theatre, park areas, an area for scouts, car rides and a jungle gym for kids. Its central spot was a water fountain. There were also two smaller tap water faucets and toilets. (Figure 12)

Although the pavilions had been erected for the exposition, thus of temporary character, they remained in place even after the exposition closed, and were used as science and lectures workshops as per need of the Faculty of Engineering. The pavilions stayed there until a mechanical engineering laboratory was erected in Grobljanska St (1940). On the other hand, the commercial and entertainment section, the small fairground not only proved as useful but they actually provided a spark for the Society of Organizing Fairs and Exhibitions (1923) and their initiative to found the Belgrade Fairground in 1937 [29].

The entire work on promoting the 1st NHE was taken quite seriously. The entire visual material was done according to the drawings of a renowned artist M. Markovic. Finally, the endeavors and efforts put in that medical and educational event were crowned when a Memorial Book was published, whose editors were Dr Kostić, Dr Konstantinović and Dr Pirc. The exposition setup and its entire concept as a purposeful medium for enhancing knowledge on the importance of preserving national health proved as highly successful both from the aspect of turnout of over 100,000 visitors and the aspect of its mobility. At an initiative of the Exposition Board and according to the King's wishes, the exposition was to continue its mission

as a touring exhibition [30] but those plans fell through when King Alexander was assassinated in Marseille on 9 October 1934.

CONCLUSION

As a "country's health parade", the 1st NHE was truly an ode to an original and effective healthcare system based on ideas of the relatively new science at the time – social medicine, which required changes to be made in how the society relates to health and diseases, on the one hand, and in the domain of educational and industrial circumstances, on the other. And how important the exposition event really was could be witnessed in the printed autograph facsimile of the King Alexander's introductory word on the Memorial Book first pages, below a monogram with a crown and his photograph highlighting his patronage: *Providing health education, we have to create a new awareness of hygiene in the population – it can be achieved only by clear examples and active work with people – the hygiene exposition has shown us the right way to accomplish this* [24].

Besides huge success this medical and educational event had on the national level, along with its both professional and entertaining character, its significance is also reflected in strong encouragement in realizing the idea of building the Belgrade Fairground as a new international commercial center of the Balkans and a major link between the developed European countries and the developing ones of southeast Europe and Asia.

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Figure 1. The King and Queen strolling through the exhibition at the Faculty of Engineering building, accompanied by Dr A. Kostić, interpreting the exhibits (right) and Dr S. Ivanić (in the background) (Belgrade City Museum, SGI2/1 2231)



Figure 2. Memorial Book cover (Museum of Science and Technology – the Serbian Medical Society Museum department)



Figure 3. The King and Queen at the entrance to the Faculty of Engineering with Dr A. Kostić, and a minister I. Pucelj, Dr S. Ivanić and Dr B. Pirc (left to right) (Belgrade City Museum, SGI2/1 2234)



Figure 4. Exposition catalogue cover (private archive)



Figure 5. Front page of a brochure that was handed out at the exposition (private archive)



Figure 6. Exhibits (Belgrade City Museum, SGI2/1 2106)

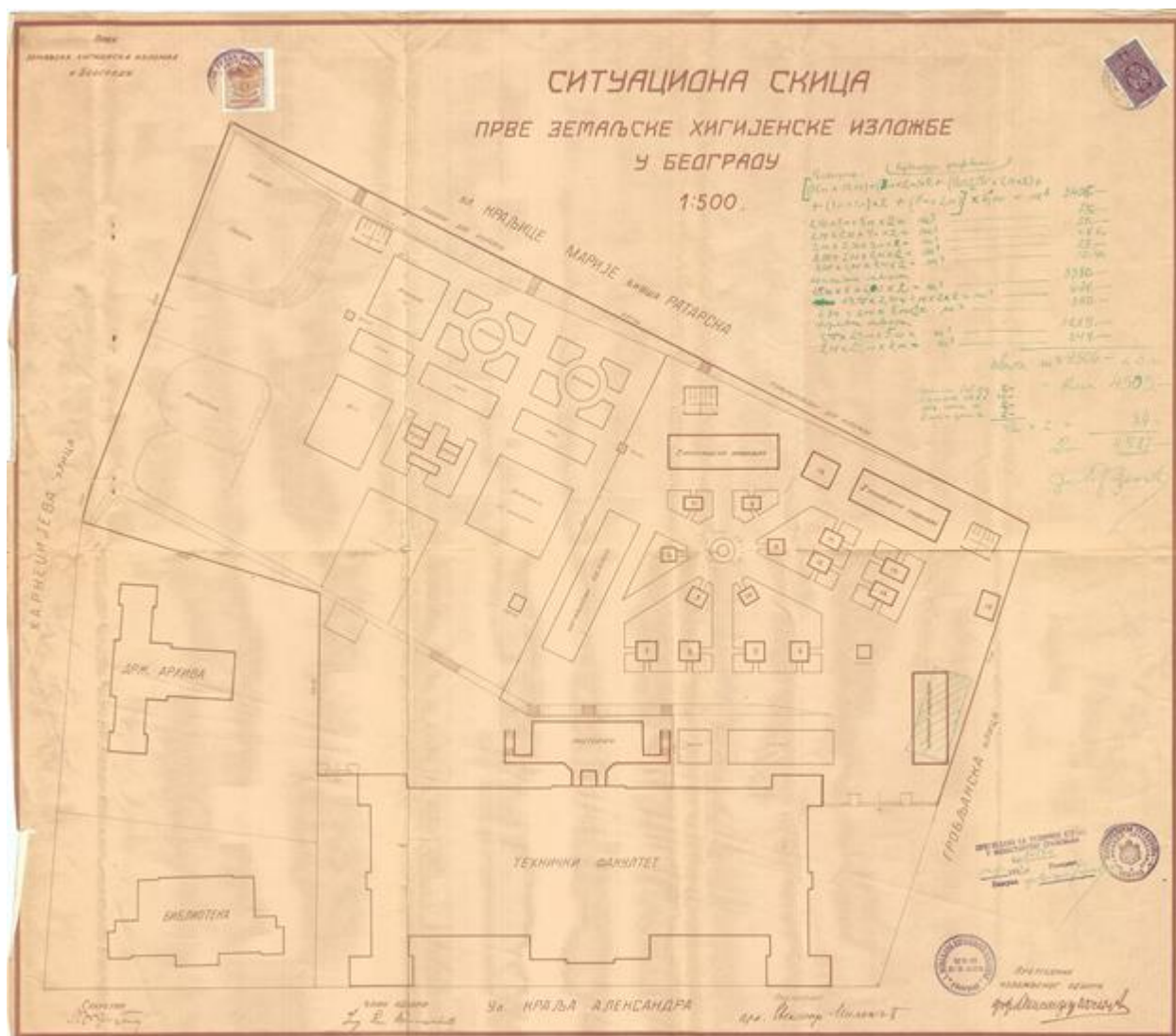


Figure 7. Exposition complex situation drawing (Historical Archive of Belgrade, OGB-TD, F11-15-1933)

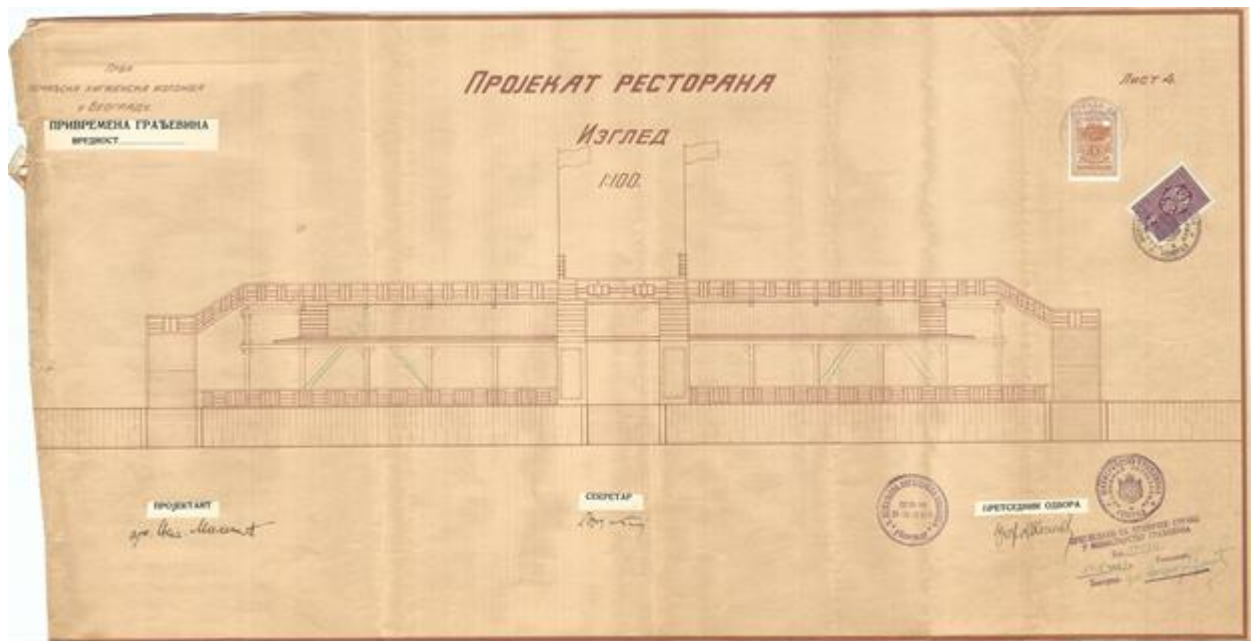


Figure 8. Restaurant design (Historical Archive of Belgrade, OGB-TD, F11-15-1933)



Figure 9. Construction of the pavilion (collection of Miloš Jurisić)



Figure 10. Visitors outside the pavilions (collection of Miloš Jurisić)



Figure 11. View of the restaurant and the exposition commercial section (collection of Miloš Jurisić)



Figure 12. View of the exposition entertainment section (collection of Miloš Jurisić).