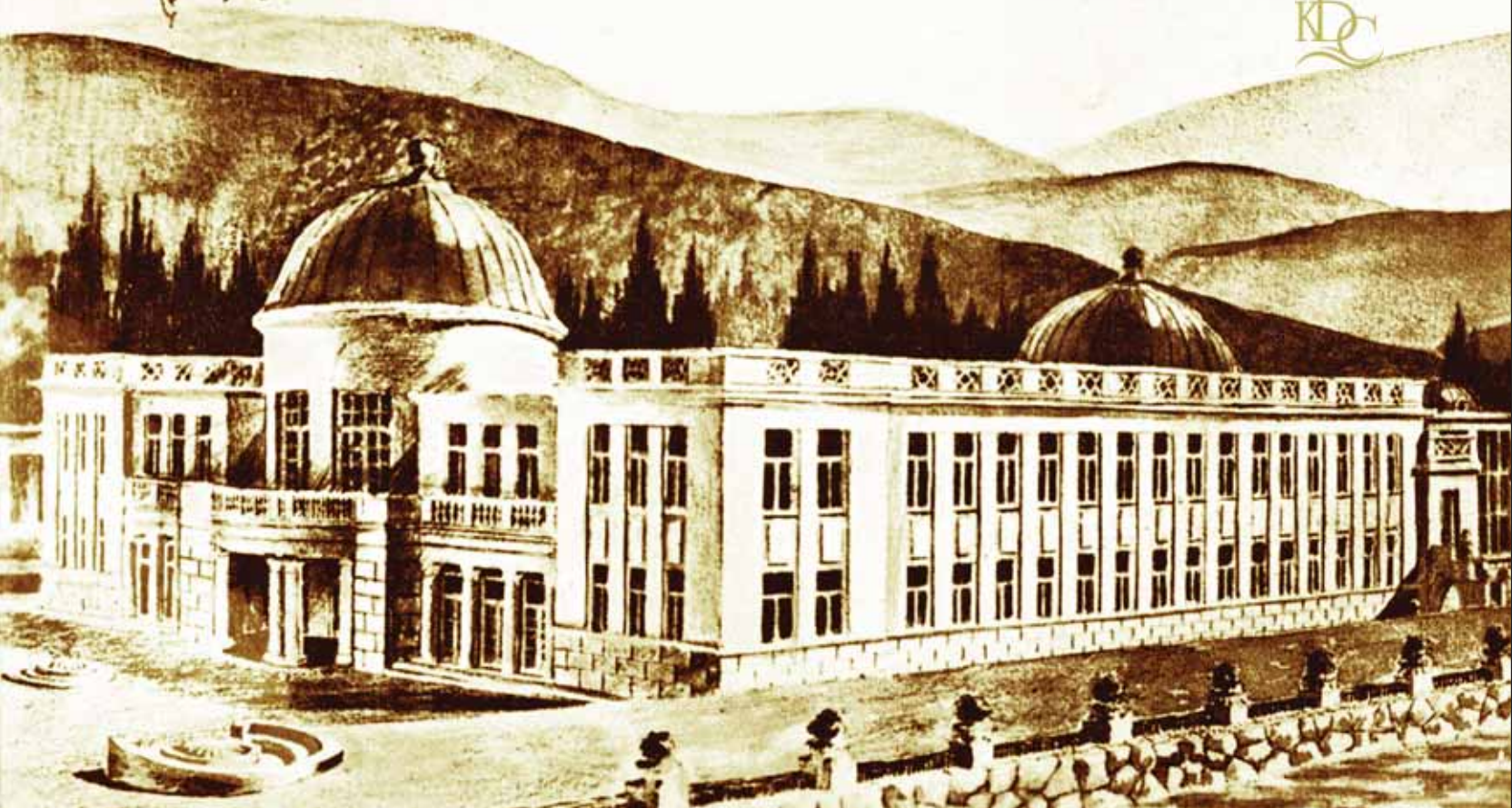


Vrnjacka



Spa





The Elite Spa OF THE ROYAL SERBIA

The Kings of the two Serbian Dynasties could not resist the charms of the Vrnjacka Spa and its curative waters, either. It was drunk by Aleksandar Obrenovic and the Karadjordjevićs – Petar I, Aleksandar I and Petar II. In return, the Kings made it a 'Royal' one and, first of all, the elite spa of Serbia.

The beginning of a visible progress of the spa in Vrnjci is related to the middle of the 1880's, with its turn into the state competence.

Energetic people from the nearby towns build the first villas and mansions in the

Spa, often using the designs of magnificent buildings from European capitals. The first among them was the villa of the General Jovan Belimarkovic, the Regent during the under age of the King Aleksandar Obrenovic. By its building style and beauty, it remained up to date one of the recognizable symbols of the Vrnjacka Spa. The highest ranking guest visiting Belimarkovic in his villa is certainly King Aleksandar Obrenovic, which is certified by a photo from that period, as well as a note of Felix Philipp Kanitz, an Austrian archaeologist and author writing about his travels, who left valuable records

of the events and people from the Balkans region in the second half of the 19th century. He points out that Vrnjacka Spa developed considerably owing to the Queen Natalija Obrenovic, whose son Aleksandar visited the Spa in 1889.

TO THE KING'S HONOR

In spite of the modest testimonies, it is known for sure that in 1904, King Petar I Karadjordjević visited Vrnjacka Spa twice, on June 29 and July 30, as stated by Jelena Borovic – Dimic, an archaeologist from the Spa, in her project 'Kings in Vrnjacka Spa'. During his first visit, the King stayed in the Villa Katarina, owned by Miss



Vrntzi les Bains S. M. le Roi Aleksandar devant l'eau de la source froide „Snežnik“
 Врњачка Бања Њ. В. Краљ Александар при пијењу хладне киселе воде „Снежник“

Jankovic, otherwise living in Belgrade. The Villa is situated at the edge of the Spa park, above the hot water spring. A festive lunch was organized to the King's honor, to which all famous villagers from Vrnjci were invited. The King went to the church and school, had a bath in the old bathroom, on the hot spring. People were following him all the time, greeting him and shouting 'Long live the King!'. The King waved back, approached children, caressing them and the villagers kissed his hands, to show their respect. Everyone was watching him with great love, while he, although old, was easily crossing from one part of the Spa to another one. After the supper, including about fifty persons, a dancing party was organized there. The King and Lieutenant Colonel Misic pulled the kolo. The celebration lasted till late night hours and Vrnjci was unusually illuminated by many lamps.

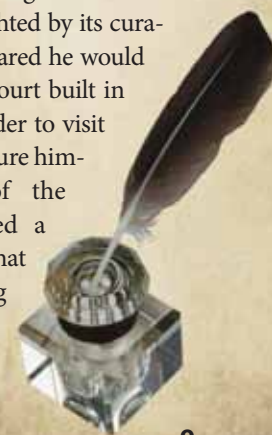
After the World War I, Vrnjacka Spa was developing fast and reached its peak in the

1930's. According to the register in 1933, there were 133 handicraft workshops and shops in the Spa! Following the famous European spas, cultural life in the Spa was developing intensively, as well, kermises and classical music concerts are organized, theaters have got their guest performances there. In 1935, the Spa had 257 mansions and villas and a phantastic visit was recorded just that year – 28,080 guests! It was a unique record in Yugoslavia of that time. In 1936, a swimming pool was constructed in the Spa, the first one in Serbia. In those years, ladies in long dresses played cricket, a military orchestra entertained the guests in the park, whereas chases were organized on the nearby Goc for hunters. Falconers were patiently demonstrating their capabilities and skills at the reviews, as well. The Spa had already had its first polyclinic and railway and tennis was played very much. A beautiful park dominated the central Spa zone, having the edges deco-

rated by villas with flower gardens. The Spa was gradually getting the image of a prestigious chic sanatorium. In such an ambient, the inhabitants of the Spa welcomed their King Aleksandar I Karadjordjevic.

THE ROYAL COURT – AN UNFULFILLED DESIRE

Unfortunately, there are not many written notices of the King Aleksandar I visits to Vrnjacka Spa. The Vice President of the Vrnjacka Spa Fans Association, Dr. Djoka Jovanovic, a university professor, wrote: „King Aleksandar I visited Vrnjacka Spa twice, in 1927 and 1931. He spent three weeks in the Spa, drinking mineral water and he was most delighted by its curativeness. Thus, he declared he would like to have a Royal Court built in the Spa for him, in order to visit the Spa regularly and cure himself! This desire of the deceased King caused a pleasant reaction at that time and the beginning





Vrntzi les Bains
Врњачка Бања

„Source romaine“ l'eau thermale
„Римски извор“ вруке воде



ВРЊЦИ - ПАРК

of the Court construction was awaited with great joy. The Spa Management made sure immediately, in order to meet the desire of the Great King, that a separate section is constructed for His Majesty the King and His Home during

construction of the new Spa bath. But, very much unfortunately for all of us, the King's desire was not fulfilled“.

The Royal Court was not constructed, but, in 1938, the Circle of Serbian Sisters of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and

the Vrnjacka Spa Funs Association built a monument as a sign of their gratitude to the King the Unificator for his assistance in the arrangement and improvement of Vrnjacka Spa. Unfortunately, in 1946, the monument was removed

for ideological reasons and there is no trace of it anymore. However, owing to the skills of the Academic Sculptor Dragisa Obradovic and the preserved photos and picture postcards, a fully identical monument was resurrected in its full shine, almost at the same place, in the central park of Vrnjacka Spa, on July 28, 2006.

ZORAIDA FOR PETAR II

After the reconstruction of the Vrnjacka Church of the Nativity of the Holy Mother of God had been completed, in 1938, Petar II Karadjordjevic presented as a gift to this Church the icon Andrej the First Called, a work of Uros Predic. The young King visited Vrnjacka Spa on September 25, 1939. Escorted by General Simovic and a part of the Court escorts, the young King stayed in the villa 'Zoraida', which belonged to the family of Belgrade's salesmen Kuzman Nikolic. The villa is situated near the Church, on a hill, which was transformed into a Memorial Park, by planting a thousand oak plantlings, in the spring 1936, dedicated to the King Aleksandar I. The luxury of the Villa Zoraida is witnessed by the data of 25 modern rooms, two apartments, a swimming pool with showers, car parking lots and wonderfully arranged garden of roses. As a memory to this visit of the King Petar II Karadjordjevic, Vrnjci built a Memorial Fountain, near the Church, in 1940. The opposite sides of the



Fountain were decorated by applied, trapeze shaped, black marble plates. In their upper part, in the medallion, a portrait of the King Petar was sculptured and a text was engraved under it. The marble plates were removed by force, some time after the end of the World War II and smashed. The text reconstruction discovers for us the verses of Vojislav Jovan Ilic Junior:

*„Many hurry up the path;
With the Holy Song
From the Holy Church
To Heaven to go.
This is a hot hymn
And gratitude to God
For the Vrnjacksa glorious
Rescue water.“*

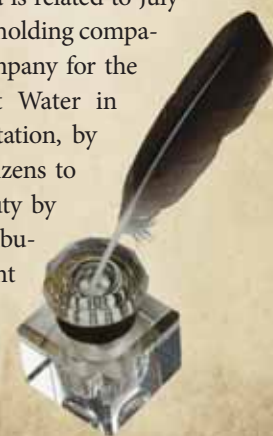
On the other marble plate, there was an engraved sanctification: “As a memory to the first visit of the King Petar II to Vrnjacksa Spa, on September 25, 1939. This Memorial Fountain is built by the Sokol Association of Vrnjacksa Spa, the Orthodox Church, President of the Spa Management and the Vrnjacksa Spa Fans Association. September 21, 1940“.

THE VRNJACKA TIME MACHINE

Based upon the found archaeological materials, since there are no written historical sources on the founding of Vrnjacksa Spa, it was found out that the Vrnjacksa curative mineral waters were used in the ancient time. The Romans, famous for keeping the beauty and physical health cult, used the hot mineral water

for the recovery of their legionnaires. As regarding the first written data, Baron Siegmund Herder made a report with the first official data on the performed chemical analysis of the Vrnjacksa mineral waters, by order of Prince Milos Obrenovic, in 1835.

The beginning of the organized tourism dealing in Vrnjacksa Spa is related to July 1, 1868, when the shareholding company "The Founding Company for the Curative Mineral Hot Water in Vrnjci" issued the invitation, by which it invites the citizens to fulfill their patriotic duty by giving a financial contribution for the settlement and use of the Vrnjacksa



mineral waters. The initiator of gathering the Vrnjacka visionaries, the citizens from Trstenik, Krusevac and Kraljevo, was Pavle Mutavdzic, at that time the Regional Chief in Krusevac. At the beginning of creating a modern spa, a recognized curing center, the Company bought the land around the springs by their own funds, the curative spring sealing was carried out, the river bed was arranged, a swimming pool and dressing rooms were built. Officially, in 1869, Vrnjacka Spa had 538 visitors. In 1864, the Krusevac' regional physician Holec mentioned in his report he submitted to the Minister of Interior, among others, that the hot water in Vrnjci is especially useful for health. By order of Jovan Belimarkovic, Dr. Feman, the county physician from Trstenik, sent his report on the mineral water action and the number of visitors, in 1869. He mentioned the Spa was visited by about 800 persons and "almost none of these per-

sons traveled away without a considerable relief". In the Spa season 1870, Dr. Franjo Ribnikar practiced as the Spa physician, the father of Slobodan, Vladislav and Darko Ribnikar, founders of the newspaper Politika.

The news of the Vrnjacka water curativeness became famous fast. Its bottling was started by the Belgrade's pharmacist Dilber, who was carrying the water in bottles from Vrnjacka Spa and selling it in Belgrade. The one liter bottles were closed by pressed cork and resin was added over the cork.

AT RAKICA'S INN

The first catering facility, opened in 1885, was 'The National Inn' of Kosta Petrovic – Rakica. After ten years, the first electric bulb will light up on the balcony of this first Vrnjacka innkeeper. At the beginning of the year 1900, 'Suca's Pavillion' was built – a shop with the necessary goods, spe-

cialized in the needs of the Spa guests, while the first Spa reading room was in a smaller room there. The daily newspapers, brochures with medical advices and other literature were read there. The first cafe and milk restaurant was opened in 1925. Milan Vukovic is meritorious for this catering modernizing.

Just at the end of the 19th century, the Spa had about 15 mansions, with about 250 rooms. However, most of these buildings were destroyed soon, due to the lack of meeting the basic requirements, and modern facilities were started instead. Thus, the first modern hotel Sotirovic was built in 1908.

The Spa milieu was almost completed by finding the Sneznik (Snow) Spring, in 1916, (owing to the Austro-Hungarian officers) and sealing of the Slatina Spring, in 1935. The thermal bathroom building was constructed that year, as well.





Payment of the Spa tax was going on right along when the Spa tourism pioneer, Boza Miljkovic, opened the first travel agency Cicerone. Already in 1938, the Spa disposed over more than 300 villas and hotels, as well as two modern sanatoriums, 'St. Djordje' and 'Dr. Zivadinovic'. In the following season, the Spa exceeded far the best known tourist places in the country with its 34, 796 registered guests.

In the meantime, the Vrnjacka Park got its final form. The Czech Josip Paris, the owner of famous flower shops in Vienna and Maribor, came to live in the Spa, in 1928, and took over the just started park construction. This skilled flower grower included the high European level of the park greenery into the bases of the Vrnjacka Park, building circular flower beds in the French Baroque style. Gradually, the bases of the

Vrnjacka great flora were created under his skilled hand.

To Look WORLDWIDE

The local authorities' efforts to change the habits of the local inhabitants with the introduction of high tourist standards looked sometimes like a minor behavior codex in various situations. In the book 'Vrnjacka Spa', in 1939, edited by the Spa physician Dr. Rista Gostuski, Colonel Berislav Todorovic wrote about the Spa order and cleanliness:

„The Spa Management and the relevant authorities in the Ministry of Social Policy and People's Health did a lot to make Vrnjci modernized. Thus, it is now duty also of all private entrepreneurs in all branches to contribute to the Spa arrangement, as well, in order to let the visitors have the real impression they are in a worldwide arranged spa. In order to accomplish this, they have to do this:

They must not take various goods in front of their shops, like they are doing now. In front of the shops in the Spa one can see cases with pastry and other various flour products, cases with prunes, etc. One can see the whole piles of pots and empty cases. The taking out in front of the shops shall be strictly forbidden, these are the small town/country fair manners. There are shop windows for this job.

The tables of inns, cafes and other shops selling food have to be covered by white table cloths only, rather than the colorful ones – in various colors. All tghis is required by the Spa hygiene and the taste of the visitors themselves.

Food, various pastry sellers may be seen walking around the Spa dressed very untidy. They sell their products on the wooden trays and all this uncovered. They should be brought to their senses that

they are not at a country fair, but in a state arranged spa.

The newspaper sellers around the Spa shall have tidy suits, rather than looking like village scarecrows in the corn field.”

Lining farther the instructions on the behavior of waiters and cooks, Colonel Todorovic ended by a message to the waiters and other staff „that their fast service and very polite – careful contacts to the guests also contribute much to the high reputation of the Spa itself.“

Colonel Todorovic's efforts were not in vain, the Kings of the two Serbian Dynasties could not resist the charms of the Vrnjacka Spa and its curative waters, either. Owing to its inhabitants, the Spa gradually turned itself into an elite European spa sanatorium and the right place for rest and relaxing.

