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## ACADEMICIAN PETAR S. JOVANOVIĆ – FOUNDER AND THE FIRST DIRECTOR OF GEOGRAPHICAL INSTITUTE OF THE SASA

*Mirčeta Vemić*<sup>\*1</sup>

\* Geographical Institute “Jovan Cvijic,” SASA

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**Abstract:** Academician Petar S. Jovanović (born in 1893) was a founder (31 May 1947) and the first director of the Institute of Geography SAS (up to 15 November 1957), which he led (10 years) until his death. During that period, he organized the scientific research with a larger number of high-quality researchers that he brought to the Institute and achieved very significant scientific results with them. The establishment and successful management of the Institute of Geography of SAS is a remarkable contribution of Jovanović to the creation of conditions for scientific work, that is, faster development of geographical science in the country. This is the most important part of his personal success, since due to premature death - despite the large number of published papers – he did not have time to show all of his intellectual potentials and wealth of experience of scholars. Jovanović based Geographical Institute SAS on the settings of Cvijić’s geographical school, whose traditions with certain extensions have been preserved until today. This suggests that the geography of Serbia has independently been studied 120 years, that is, from the birth of Petar S. Jovanović (in 1893), when Cvijić founded Geographical Institute at the Belgrade University.

**Key words:** Petar S. Jovanović, Jovan Cvijić, Geographical Institute SAS, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts

### Introduction

Academician Petar S. Jovanović - as pointed out by all his biographers and assessors - as part of his wide-ranging scientific and educational activity established (31 May 1947) Geographical institute SAS and was its successful manager until the end of life. Jovanović was 54 when he founded the Institute, and it has past 56 years since he left it. This year we celebrate 120 years<sup>2</sup> since the birth of Petar S. Jovanović, so with sufficient time distance we can perceive the time up to the founding of the Institute, as well as the period of Jovanović’s managing the Geographical Institute SAS, that is, to perceive the organizational foundations of the Institute in which Jovanović incorporated all his previous

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<sup>1</sup> [m.vemic@gi.sanu.ac.rs](mailto:m.vemic@gi.sanu.ac.rs)

<sup>2</sup> The paper was written on the occasion of 120 years since the birth of academician Petar S. Jovanović.

scientific, pedagogical, social, cultural, diplomatic and patriotic work and great working and life experience.

The conceptual theses of academician Petar S. Jovanović for the future work of one of the Institutes of the Academy have been alive even today, and only slightly enlarged, and that was possible because he, as Zeremski pointed out, “was one of the most eminent representatives of Cvijić’s geographical school, which gained a great reputation not only here in the country but also abroad” (Zeremski, 1957). Academician Petar S. Jovanović was a direct disciple and successor of Cvijić’s scientific work, and in some geographic scientific disciplines such as geomorphology, he even outdid his predecessor, but did not change the spirit of Cvijić’s school or start from the beginning, denying what had been reached. He established the scientific activity of the Geographical Institute of the SAS on the Cvijić’s bases, leading and directing it towards it. It was continued after his death, so that the Institute was named after our great geographer Jovan Cvijić in 1961.

### **The Establishment of the Institute of Geography SAS**

All who have spoken and written about academician Petar S. Jovanović, including Miloš Zeremski most, considered the establishment of the Institute of Geography SAS the peak or the crown of his scientific work and social contributions. Pavle Vujević emphasized that among the first ones at the commemorative meeting of the Academy in memory of the late academician, held on 21 November in 1957, who among other things said: “Jovanović, finally, was the manager of the Geographic Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences since its foundation ... He ran it conscientiously, with great sacrifice and love, and he had much success in that capacity. The most important thing was that he managed to receive several completely ready graduates of geography for the proper development of the scientific staff at the Geographic Institute, who quickly proved to be successfully developed scientists; three of them received the degree of doctor of geographical sciences...” (Vujević and Stefanović, 1959)

Establishment of Geographic Institute and other institutes of the Academy came in a period immediately after the Second World War, when the science attached great importance, because of awareness that “research at University was not sufficient in intensity given the needs that had been posed the science. A small number of teaching and research staff, whose primary task was to build college-educated professionals, was unable, except for exceptions, to wholeheartedly engage in scientific research ... Certainly it was one of the reasons to allocate

research work in the Institutes that will exclusively deal with this activity” (Zeremski, 1988). At that time, all research institutes, including the Institute of Geography, ambitiously set the general task to do research work, necessary and useful for the reconstruction and development of the country, and with the necessary breadth and enough depth of scientific procedure.

The establishment of the Institute of Geography proceeded step by step, in accordance with the former procedure. The first proposal was submitted by Petar Jovanović on 18 November 1946, which was considered by the Institute's Commission Presidency of the SAS at its 5th meeting of 11 March 1947, which then made the decision on its establishment. The decision was written about in the Yearbook (SAN, 1947): “As the correspondent P. Jovanović presented the general program of the future Institute of Geography in details, as it was conceived at a meeting of experts in geography - the Commission adopted a decision to establish the Institute of Geography and to undertake these works: investigation of Banatska pescara, studying and mapping karst of Suva mountain, studying extensive scree slopes from Belgrade to Grocka and possibly karst in Sremcica, as well as that correspondent Jovanović make the overall budget, and also the specific needs of the Institute of Geography for this year” (SAN, 1947).

Two days later, on the 7th meeting of the Academy of Natural Sciences of 13 March 1947, the Statute of the Geographic Institute was adopted, and only “when a director was appointed by the decision of the Committee for Scientific Institutions, University and Colleges of the Government of the National Republic of Serbia, no. 563, 31 May 1947, and the first personnel by the decision no. 592 of 4 June 1947 – the work began in it” (SAN, 1947). It is the date when Petar S. Jovanović was appointed the first director of the Institute that is officially taken as the day of its establishment, and up to 1960 the name of the Institute was inscribed in all publications of the Academy. In order of establishment of the Academy's Institutes, thanks to the initiative of P. Jovanović, Geographical Institute was established in the first group of institutes

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<sup>3</sup> The first proposal expressed the need for the establishment of a unique Geographic and Geological Institute for the following reasons: “The Geographical and Geological Institute would deal with scientific problems of geography and geology and related sciences that are also dealing with the country and its people. Such science includes meteorology, climatology, hydrography, limnology, soil science, mineralogy, petrography, etc.. This institute would consist of two main sections: the geographical and geological, among which there is full cooperation, because the scientific problems that will be treated in them complement each other and partly overlap.” (Archive of the SAS, 1946)

(31 May 1947), and in the second one by the importance - just behind the Mathematical Institute<sup>4</sup>. At the same time, as noted in the first report on its work, "The Institute has received in the Academy's house<sup>5</sup> at 35 Knez Mihailova Street three rooms in which it now works" (SAN, 1947), that is, where it worked at that time.

Although the establishment of institutions is very complex intellectual and practical work, it seems that Academician Petar S. Jovanović almost routinely founded the Institute of Geography SAS and started his work "shoulder to shoulder" with Milutin Milanković, who was one of the most responsible academicians for establishing the institutes of the Academy, and who beyond undisputed intellectual abilities had also experience in the work of senior academic institutions abroad. Petar Jovanović was also extremely talented and capable man and had a great experience in the scientific and organizational work, but he gained the experience in the country. As a young man, after the completion of his studies interfered with wars (1920), he passed the doctoral examination for the next two years, which was then and is now almost unparalleled example. Then he was spotted by Jovan Cvijić and sent "in the newly liberated area, Macedonia, Skopje, and he was committed a task to establish a Department and Geographic Institute at the Faculty of Philosophy" (Zeremski, 2000). There he also organized a team researching of the Skopje valley, founded the Section of Geographic Society in Skopje<sup>6</sup> and operated its work, participated in the establishment of the National University in Skopje, edited four volumes of the Gazette of Skopje Scientific Society - Natural Department, etc. In broader social terms he worked after World War II the same as Cvijić did after World War I. Namely, Jovanović after World War II worked on the preparation of materials for a peace treaty and as an expert of the FNRJ

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<sup>4</sup> In the Yearbook SAN (1947) with the same date of establishment, after the Geographic Institute, there are: Geological Institute, Institute of Ecology, Institute of Physiology of Development, Genetics and Selection, Institute of Parasitology, Institute for the Study of Feeding the People and the Archaeological Institute. The very next (1948) year, their order is set according to the systematic principles of science, so that the Geographical Institute was found behind the Mathematical, Physical and Geological Institutes of the SAS.

<sup>5</sup> Institute worked until 6 December 1996 at the mentioned address, when it was moved to one of the neighbouring buildings at 9 Djura Jakšić Street.

<sup>6</sup> According to Ž. Jovičić (1957), academician P. S. Jovanović became a member of the Serbian Geographical Society immediately upon its establishment in 1910, even as a high school student in Kragujevac, and from 1928 until his death he was almost continuously elected to its administration.

delegation participated in the meeting of foreign ministers in London in 1945, as well as the Peace Conference in Paris in 1946.

Apparently, the academician Jovanović with previous work and experience could expertly set up Geographical Institute SAS, set up an organization of its scientific work, train personnel, provide it financially (of course within the limits of the former economic and technical possibilities of the country) and launch significant field and section research. However, he was so burdened, as in the establishment of the Institute he did not have any administrative officer, and he was doing himself the administration, carried out procurement and led the entire accounting, which took him much time away, and in the following year, on 22 March 1948 until the end of his life, he in parallel with the management of the Institute performed the duty of the Secretary General of the Academy.

### **Jovanović's Setting of the Scientific Work of the Institute**

At the beginning, as can be seen from the annual reports of the Institute (SAN, 1947, 1948), it was set that associates according to the plan of the Institute get their tasks and material resources for the work, which mainly took place in the field, and “upon completion of the work announce their results to the plenum of the collective of the Institute, who will discuss these results.” However, such labour organization did not prove quite good for various reasons; mainly due to the long process of field materials, poor sorting of material or presented results, unclear methodologically, which is why it was necessary to correct the completed works. Therefore, during 1948 it was discussed several times on this subject, especially at the end of the year, when on 2 December, on the proposal of the director Jovanović after the completion of broader discussion the following was “adopted:

- 1) to form three departments in the Institute of Geography: physical geography, economic geography and the regional geography, and a department of cartography;
- 2) that each section or department has one manager, who will hold conferences with members of the department. At these conferences, the department members will receive their tasks according to the plan of the Institute, at which they will give commitments with respect to fulfilling the task, and at each following conference they will impart what they have done, show the results of the work and discuss those results;
- 3) to hold plenary meetings of the Institute at least monthly, at which a section or department will give a report about their work, some of the Institute's



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Three sections of the Institute and one department were good and stable framework of the organisation of the scientific work of the Institute of Geography for a long time, arising out of Jovanović's knowledge of the very substance of geographical science, which is current today. Today's Geographic Institute still has all previously set departments and a newly established one, which are the following: an original Department of Physical Geography, Department of Economic Geography, which is extended to the Department of Social Geography, Regional Geography Department, the Section of Cartography was extended to the Department of Cartography and (a new one was only formed) Department of Spatial Planning.

### **Jovanović's Selection of Scientific Personnel of the Institute**

According to the Yearbook (SAN 1947), the total personnel of the newly established Institute of Geography SAS had a total of 11 people, including: 1) Director: PhD Petar S. Jovanović, corresponding member of the SAS and University Professor, 2) permanent researcher: PhD Djordje Paunković, who worked as the secretary, 3) members: PhD Vojislav Radovanović, corresponding member of the SAS and University Professor, Stevan Bošković, corresponding member of the SAS and retired geodetic general, PhD Pavle Vujević, University Professor, PhD Borivoje Z. Milojević, corresponding member of the SAS and University Professor, PhD Sima Milojević, University Professor, Stevan Vujadinović, curator of the Ethnographic Museum, Antonije Lazić, University cartographer, 4) an associate: PhD Branislav Bukurov, Professor of Higher Pedagogical School in Novi Sad and 5) trainee Branislav Jovanović, a student of geography.

Academician Jovanović succeeded in strengthening the Institute's personnel during his mandate by introducing part-time members, external associates, young apprentices, assistants and fellowship holders, promoting them gradually into permanent members. In this sense, he said: "For scientific work there are never a lot of people. We need a whole brigade of young and talented people, who will study our own, not yet well-studied country. We still do not have the basic register of geographical phenomena and facts on the basis of which we could be able to elaborate scientific and theoretical problems, which has long been achieved in other developed countries (USSR, France, Germany)" (Zeremski, 1957).

Regarding the selection of candidates for the Institute, he had a special talent and approach. He was extremely fair and impartial. He wanted to keep every talented student to the Geographic Institute or the Department. He usually said: "One can

never have enough good and capable people,” but he had particular attitude about their scientific building, instead of continuing leadership, he used to let them to develop independently, with his well-known saying “let him swim, so if he goes down ...” (Zeremski, 2000). Such selection of candidates allowed for each individual to choose his area of interest and his own way of research, which also bore visible risks that they could fail.

So the very next year (1948), the Institute had 16, the next 20, and in 1950 it had 26 persons, of which 5 members of SAS, 6 permanent members of the Institute, 3 part-time members, 3 external associates, 5 fellowship holders and 4 administrative workers. In the period 1950-1957, the staff composition of the Institute gradually stabilized at 25, plus or minus 2 members (Table 1). Although concern for staff was one of the main preoccupations of academician Jovanović, assessors of his work criticized him “because none of the young fellows was not able to complete specialization abroad in the most favourable period of his life (between 25 and 35 years),” although those were undoubtedly the years immediately after the war. But “from the subject of geomorphology he left behind most authors (10 of them), who in the past took the highest scientific positions at the Institute, the Department and other institutions” (Zeremski, 2000). Among them, he sent his son Branislav on geomorphology. Family scientific, geographical tradition of Jovanović was extended to the third generation. Branislav’s son and Petar’s grandson Radmilo dealt with the regional geography at the Institute for 22 years.

What was the power of authority which an outstanding academician Jovanović enjoyed as the organizer and director has been the fact that after his death staffing of the Institute noticeably deteriorated. “For the first 5 years, 11 permanent associates left the Institute. Most of them took the classes at colleges and smaller number went to other Institutes” (Zeremski, 1988). In addition, the vacancies were not brought to the young and talented researchers as academician Jovanović did so, and for the next 40 years the Institute had only 10-12 researchers. According to Zeremski (1988), that caused “not only the stagnation but regression in comparison with related scientific disciplines, both in the group of natural and social sciences.” After 2000, returning to the original practice of Jovanović, the Institute has slowly begun to strengthen in terms of personnel, so that now it counts 36 permanent researchers, 12 external associates on projects, 3 clerks and 3 persons for technical support (co-workers). According to the state in April 2013, of the mentioned number of permanent members the Institute has 1 academician, 12 doctors of science (1 Principal Research Fellow, 3 Senior Research Associates, 1 Associate Professor, 5 Research Associates and 2 PhD’s



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in the process of obtaining the title of Research Associate), 13 master's degrees, 7 masters, 3 graduate geographers and two fellowship holders.

Table 1 Personnel of the Institute of Geography of the SAS in the period 1947-1057

Year	Members SAS	Permanent members	Part-time members	External associates	Fellowship holders.	Administration	Total
1947	4	6	–	1	–	–	11
1948	4	3	2	3	2	2	16
1949	4	4	4	3	2	3	20
1950	5	6	3	3	5	4	26
1951	5	10	3	3	–	6	27
1952	5	11	3	3	–	5	27
1953	4	11	2	4	–	4	25
1954	4	11	2	1	–	4	22
1955	4	11	2	1	–	4	22
1956	4	11	2	1	–	4	22
1957	4	13	–	1	–	5	23

Source of data: Yearbook of the SAS (1947-1958)

### Set Goals and Achievements

For the subject of scientific research of the Institute of Geography SAS, as noted by Zeremski (1988), academician Jovanović primarily determined the study of the territory of the SR of Serbia, followed by the other territories beyond it for the specific issues and problems that have general geographic significance. Related to this subject, the first task of the Institute was to organize research in the field<sup>7</sup> as soon as possible, which was in a hurry, so that in 1947 the activities were further accelerated to take advantage and summer holiday of students. For the next and subsequent years it was approached to the research systematically, by departments, either in the field or in the cabinet conditions, so that the plans were fully met, and several not planned jobs were done, also of exploring nature.

In the methodological orientation of the Institute's research, Jovanović put in the foreground fundamental scientific research of theoretical-problem or regional character, and also applied research to the limits of possibilities. He insisted on heuristics and simplicity, saying “that a paper can have value only if a problem is properly set and methods of solving it are found out,” and “at the same time he took care of the interplay of all factors to build some forms... then looked which

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<sup>7</sup> According to recollections of his students (Zeremski, 1978), academician P. S. Jovanović showed remarkable power of observation in the fieldwork, in keeping with the motto of the famous American geomorphologist V. M. Davis “When you go out into the field, the main thing is to observe and think.”

of these factors played a major role ... and put it in the forefront” (Zeremski, 1957).

When it comes to the content of research at the Institute, research in physical geography excelled with its disciplines: geomorphology, hydrology, climatology, biogeography and paleogeography, then human geography with the disciplines: anthropogeography, demography, geography of the settlements and population, medical geography, economic and agrarian geography, transport geography and tourism geography. He encouraged the study of regional geography, in which he took part, as well as cartography, where he started the geomorphologic mapping and made the first survey geomorphologic map in former Yugoslavia.

Jovanović connected the scientific research of the Institute of Geography SAS with long scientific research, in particular geological, where he looked for and collected the geological material, which, in speech at the commemorative meeting of the Academy in 1957, was presented by academician Petar Stevanović, a geologist: “As a geomorphologist and physical geographer Jovanović has always stressed the need for cooperation between geographers and geologists ... Thus he wanted to correct two things: a) to prevent segregation of geographers and geologists in Belgrade and b) to set the works in physical geography on the basis on which they were set for the life of J. Cvijić, who was as much as a geographer and a geologist” (Vujević and Stevanović, 1959).

Scientific results of the research which were large-scale members of the Institute published in the form of monographs in the edition of “Special Issues”, which was launched by academician Jovanović, and from the beginning of 1949 he was the editor of 13 such books. Other results the researchers generally published in the “Journal of the Institute of Geography SAS”, which was also launched by an academician Jovanović, and in the period 1951-1957 he also edited the first 13 volumes. These two editions held the continuity to the present days. The total of 83 books were published as “Special Issues” and 62 volumes of the “Journal of the SAS”, with one volume per year until 2008, then with two volumes up to 2010 and since 2011, with three volumes a year. In addition to these editions the Institute has published 17 survey maps and atlases and a number of other scientific publications, either independently or in co-publishing with other institutions.

### **Conclusion**

Geographical Institute SAS was founded by Petar S. Jovanović, a great scholar, erudite with exceptional intellectual capacities and creator with extensive

experience in research, pedagogical, organizational and social aspects. As said by a geologist Petar Stevanović, “He was a fighter for scientific truth, even though the people who were not closely familiar with him sometimes tended to see reservations in his speeches. ... Dignified, poised, ready to the best of his skills and knowledge to answer criticism, academician Jovanović carried the one great feature of a man from the village in Sumadija, which he so strongly emphasized, and that is dignity, interspersed with superstructure made by the school education. Taking it into consideration he could not be a 'petty soul'. He liked to listen to even one with whom he basically did not agree, but he believed that his opinion also had to be heard and respected. When he did something to others, he did not ask for thanks or recognition, but scorn as a phenomenon in human relations offended him” (Vujević and Stevanović, 1959).

According to Radenko Lazarević (1978), one of his three student assistants from the first field trip from 1947, Jovanović as a skilled intellectual was graced by “crystal clarity and the mathematical precision of expression”, “extraordinary mastery of dialectical logic, out of which all his analyses and results are derived”, “the use of mathematical methods”, “scientific strictness, objectivity and humility”, “depth of scientific research”, and similar values.

His virtues, merits and scientific contributions Miloš Zeremski (2000) also emphasized, including (related to the Institute) the following:

- “Geographical Institute SAS was established by his merit, where many graduate students were trained for working in science, teaching at universities or other important institutions.
- As head of the Institute of Geography SAS, he equally attached great importance and supported the development of all disciplines of geography.
- He was fully committed to creating a solid scientific staff at the Geographical Institute, who would take responsible tasks in the study of their national territory.
- He was spending lavishly his work energy in education, science and administration - as head of the Institute of Geography, Head of the Department of Geography and the Secretary of the Serbian Academy of Sciences, whose duty was for 9 years.
- He fully realized the thought of his teacher Jovan Cvijić: ‘Life is there to be used rationally’.”

However, his life, work and contribution to science were briefly summarized by Radenko Lazarević (1978) with these words: “Academician P. S. Jovanović was short lived and worked, but in that time he managed to leave the scientific works

of lasting value. However, it can be said for certain that he left less than what he took with him, because he was at the height of intellectual power, and to some extent relieved from the excessive burden of obligations and duties, which he successfully carried up to the death. His life's scientific work had yet to come." If the establishment of the Institute of Geography was the highlight of his scientific work and social contribution, the work has been more and more renewing, expanding and evolving on his settings.

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