

# SNF Strengthens Ties with Diaspora in UK

by Milos Rastovic

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY, UK - The British Association for Slavonic and Eastern European Studies sponsored an annual conference on Eastern Europe, Russia, and the former Soviet Union at the University of Cambridge, United Kingdom April 13 – 15. This year the conference coincided with the 50th anniversary of the Prague Spring and the events of 1968. The conference gathered more than 400 participants from the United Kingdom, Europe, and North America.

I participated on the panel about the Balkans, and we answered questions from the public, giving me an opportunity to meet other panelists from different countries and share similar subjects and interests. During the conference, there were many interesting lectures at which one could learn more about Eastern European culture, art, economy, and politics.

During my visit to the United Kingdom, I also visited the Embassy of the Republic of Serbia and the Serbian-British organizations and societies based in London. The Embassy of the Republic of Serbia is located in the diplomatic area near Buckingham Palace. Mrs. Natasa Maric, Chargé d'Affaires, wished me a warm welcome. We discussed the activities of the Embassy and Serbian Diaspora in the UK. In the conversation, she expressed a great interest in the Serb National Federation and Serbian Diaspora in the United States. After the conversation, on behalf of the SNF, I presented a copy of the book *Serb National Federation – First 100 Years* and *Serbian Americans* by Dr. Krinka Vidakovic Petrov as well issues of the *American Srbobran*.

The St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church and Serbian Community Center “Bishop Nikolai” are located

Milos Rastovic, SNF Cultural Outreach Coordinator, in the front of the Embassy of Republic of Serbia in London, United Kingdom with his *American Srbobran*

Milos Rastovic with Mrs. Natasa Maric, Chargé d'Affaires a.i. at the Embassy of the Republic of Serbia

From left are Marko Govorusa, Secretary of Ravna Gora Movement, Marko Gasic, President of the Church Council of the St. Sava SOC, Dragana Tomasevic with the book *Serb National Federation – First 100 Years*, President of the Jasenovac and Holocaust Memorial Foundation, Vanessa Rastovic, Lawyer and Policy Manager, Milos Rastovic, Cultural Outreach Coordinator of the SNF, and Dr. Srbojub Zivanovic, Professor and Anthropologist, in St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church



in Notting Hill, a charming London neighborhood. Mr. Marko Gasic, President of the Church Council at St. Sava, gave us a tour of the church and explained the history and mission of this important Serbian institution. St. Sava was originally built as an Anglican church in 1903. After World War II this church was bought through the generous support of Queen Maria Karadjordjevic, Lady Paget—a friend of the Serbian people in both World Wars, and parishioners. His Grace Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic consecrated the church in 1952. The church was adorned with frescoes of Serbian saints and monasteries. Among many, the famous parishioners were novelist and poet Milos Crnjanski, lawyer and professor

Slobodan Jovanovic, as well as the Serbian Royal Family Karadjordjevic.

Ms. Dragana Tomasevic, President of the Jasenovac and Holocaust Memorial Foundation, was a generous hostess. She set up meetings with representatives of Serbian organizations and introduced us to individuals. The Jasenovac and Holocaust Memorial Foundation preserve the memory of the genocide and holocaust during World War II. On behalf of the SNF, I presented the book *Serb National Federation – First 100 Years* and *Serbian Americans* by Dr. Krinka Vidakovic Petrov. I had the privilege of meeting Dr. Srbojub Zivanovic, MD,

DSc, Professor, Anthropologist, and Director of the European Institute of Early Slavonic Studies, and speaking with him about his research on genocide and holocaust during World War II.

Ms. Maja Milankovic-Atkinson introduced me to the work of the Serbian Council of Great Britain, one of the prominent Serbian organizations in the UK. The Serbian Council of Great Britain sponsors “Serbian Month in Great Britain,” the biggest festival of Serbian culture in the UK. Many Serbian organizations, societies, and

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individuals participate in this event and promote a positive image of Serbia including singers, musicians, actors, movie directors, theatres, folklore ensembles, singing societies, choirs, novelists, poets, scientists, artists, painters, and journalists. The event began as Serbian week, and later became Serbian month in Great Britain. The festival marked its 10th anniversary this year. Today, "Serbian Month in Great Britain" is one of the biggest Serbian cultural events in the world. This is a great achievement of the Serbian Diaspora in the UK and shows how all participants can work together for the benefit of the whole community.

Within walking distance from the Church is the hotel Ravna Gora in Notting Hill, one of the most attractive areas in London. In this area, you can find world-renown Portobello Market Road with a lot of antiques, theatres, restaurants, and the Notting Hill Carnival with colorful Caribbean themes in August. Mr. Marko Govorusa, secretary of the Ravna Gora Movement, presented the organization, the history of the hotel, and its famous guests. Everybody who comes to London can enjoy this convenient hotel. For more information about the hotel, visit the website at [www.londonravnagorahotel.co.uk/](http://www.londonravnagorahotel.co.uk/) or [www.booking.com](http://www.booking.com).

Among the countries listed where the Royal Artillery fought and died is the engraved name of Yugoslavia on the Royal Artillery Memorial

Serbian Community Center "Bishop Nikolai" in London

St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church in London



In conversation with the representatives of the Serbian societies, organizations, and individuals we exchanged our experience of working in our communities, and learned something new for future cooperation.

Many Serbian immigrants came to London during or after World War II including the Serbian Royal Family. In order to preserve their ethnic and religious identity, they built Serbian churches and societies. One of the oldest Serbian societies is the Association of Serbian Writers and Artists Abroad (ASWA) established by Slobodan Jovanovic in 1951. The first President of this association was Milos Crnjanski, one of the most distinguished Serbian poets and novelists. During the 1990s, the second biggest wave of Serbian immigrants came to the UK. The great number of them are educated people who held high positions in academia, research institutions, government and non-government organizations, and corporations throughout the UK.

At Hyde Park Corner in London is the monument Royal Artillery Memorial dedicated to Great Britain's sacrifices in World War I. Later a panel dedicated to casualties in World War II was added. The Memorial was designed by Charles Jagger and Lionel Pearson in 1925. Among many countries where the Royal Artillery fought and died, the name of Yugoslavia is engraved on the monument.

If the Serbian Diaspora can strengthen its ties throughout the world, they can help each other and their homeland. Building our relationships may help to preserve our ethnic and religious identity and also contribute to countries in which we live today. Only if we are good Serbs can we be good Americans, British, or members of any other nation.

*"Let us be good, always and everywhere.  
On all occasions and all circumstances.  
That the Lord Jesus Christ may recognize us as His own."  
Serbian Patriarch PAVLE (1914 – 2009)*



A view of the Hotel Ravna Gora in Notting Hill, London

Milos Rastovic in front of the British Parliament, Palace of Westminster

(From left to right): Marko Govorusa, Secretary of the Ravna Gora Movement, Vanesa Rastovic, Lawyer and Policy Manager, Milos Rastovic, Cultural Outreach Coordinator of the SNF, Marko Gasic, President of the Church Council of the St. Sava SOC, Dragana Tomasevic, President of the Jasenovac and Holocaust Memorial Foundation, and Dr. Srboljub Zivanovic, Professor and Anthropologist, in the Hotel Ravna Gora