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50 Years of The Ethnographic Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts

Fifty years have passed since July 5th, 1947, when the foundation of The Ethnographic Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts act was passed. The given task was to "organise systematic planning of the research of settlements and the origin of the inhabitants, folk life, customs and beliefs, as well as folk tradition in our country and among our peoples". Time spent on various projects concerning systematic and complex research of folk life and tradition is behind us. A half of the century of existing and continuous work of an important scientific and research institution in the field of culture and history presents a significant period and a good reason for celebrating this anniversary. Summarising the results, looking back at the done work, studying programmes and scientific projects, simply said critical approach to everything which has been done in this period, should be taken into account now. All the people who have done their best, whose intellectual power and work have contributed a lot to the development of the Institute should be honoured. The Ethnographic Institute celebrated it's 25th, 35th and 45th anniversaries. After celebrating the first jubilee, it was estimated that twenty-five years is a long period and adequate enough for looking back at the work and programme. Estimating the results at that period, was an opportunity for scientific public to be informed about the work done by the researchers of the Institute as well as presentation of projects, topics and problems. Fiftieth anniversary is another opportunity to look back at the entire work of the Institute and at the validity of current long-term project *Ethnology of the Serbian People and Serbia* which has been researched since 1991. The Project is consisted of several sub projects and thematic units. Some new topics, issues and problems can be added if they are of a special interest for the ethnology of Serbia. These topics can be particular challenge and task, which are just in front of us in the end of the 20th century. At the same time, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Institute, we have an opportunity to face again two points. It is going to be considered whether the issues we are researching are well chosen and what will be main tasks at the beginning of the new millennium.

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Before general review, we shall remember what had preceded contemporary ethnological scientific research, what had been the basis and made paths, in fact what had made conditions for establishing and organising the Institute of the SASA. Previous ethnographic and ethnological work is immense. It is necessary for everyone who deals with ethnological work. Established by Dositej Obradović and Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, the work was continued by their successors. 150 years ago, in 1847, *Društvo srpske slovesnosti* had its "table list of issues", in the programme article of its official institution *Glasnik Društva Srpske Slovesnosti* (*Herald of the Društvo Srpske Slovesnosti*) had some other papers. These papers were about studying Serbian nationalities, about folk life, about old Serbian customs in different situations, old songs and folk tradition and descriptions of Serbian areas, travellers' tales with historic background and tales about Serbian nationality. In the conclusion of the programmes of the Herald is said that articles suit mostly the moment and spirit of time, and that is necessary to pay attention at the questions concerning the state of Serbian people and its future. All the Slav peoples are also concerned, and the

issues concerning language, history, ethnography, art, geography and nature are particularly meant¹. *Srpsko učeno društvo* as a successor of *Društvo srpske slovesnosti* has been continuing since 1865 maintaining programme beliefs and has been publishing in its *Glasnik* different materials about folk life and descriptions of Serbian areas. The establishing Serbian Academy of Sciences law from 1886, in the article 5, it is stated that it works on "ethnographic research... of the Serbs and Serbian neighbours". Initiated by Stojan Novaković in 1892, in 1894 *Srpski etnografski zbornik (Serbian Ethnographic Annals)* started to be published. It was one of the most important scientific, serial editions, famous and acknowledged both in our country and abroad, which was divided in four parts: *Settlements and the Origin of the Inhabitants, Folk life and customs, Folk tales and Discussion and Material. Serbian Ethnographic Annals*, consisting of 98 volumes, include main scientific issues and research of folk life and culture. Many areas, settlements, the origin of inhabitants, traditional economy, some aspects of living and building, and various topics concerning material culture, have been anthro-geographically researched. In a number of volumes, monographic research and synthesis about folk life and customs, folk tradition and finally some studies and debates about thematic units, have been published. Today, Serbian Ethnographic Annals present a global corpus of resources, synthesis and debates for ethnology of Serbian people, and the very or comparative material and studies for neighbouring people and national minorities. J. Cvijić, T. R. Đorđević and J. Erdeljanović were given credit for their work before The Second World War, and their predecessors, colleagues and successors, as well. Shortly after the end of The Second World War, in October 1945, on good basis and initiated by Aleksandar Belić, and according to the paper of a corresponding member of SAS Vojislav Radovanović, the decision about founding The Ethnographic Institute of the SASA was made². It was continued with the preparations after that and in 1947, after adopting the Statute, the first managing director was Vojislav Radovanović, and many free lance best scientists were employed, as well as first full time researchers. Early autumn of the same year was the beginning of the official work of the Institute. "As an institution belonging to the Academy of Sciences, the Institute has got the role of central scientific institution for ethnology in Serbia"³. In the last five decades, this role has been confirmed many times, although there were many difficulties, problems, and periods without development. Constituting, gathering stuff and training for basic tasks were in the focus in those first years. It was written in the first Statute that the Institute should organise anthro-geographical, ethnographic and folk research in our country and abroad⁴.

The first decade of the Institute was marked by continued research of area units in Serbia and some neighbouring regions and some complex ethnographic problems. Thorough study of development of the settlements, culture and ethnogeny of Serbian people and national minorities was done in this way. Previously, to a certain extent, it was the task of The Ethnographic board SAS, who was in charge of publishing the papers in Serbian Ethnographic Annals from its beginning. The first managing director of the Institute, Vojislav Radovanović (1947-1957), gave the direction to this orientation. His close co-operators were Aleksandar Belić, Borivoje Drobnjaković, Dušan Nedeljković,

¹ *Гласник Друштва Српске Словесности, свезка I*, Београд 1847

П. Ш. В л а х о в и ћ, Уз тридесет пету годишњицу рада Етнографског института САНУ, *ГЛЕИ*, књ. XXXI, Београд 1982, 11-12

² А. У р о ш е в и ћ, Развој и рад Етнографског института Српске академије наука и уметности (1947-1972), *Гл. Етнографског института САНУ(ГЛЕИ)*, књ. XXI, Београд 1973, 5

³ *Ibid*, 7

⁴ Н. П а н т е л и ћ, Уводна реч на отварању научног скупа "Етнологија пред новим изазовима", *ГЛЕИ*, књ. XLI, Београд 1992, 12

Aleksandar Deroko, Petar S. Jovanović, Milenko S. Filipović, Petar Ž. Petrović, Branislav Kojić, and many others, well known researchers, mostly ethnologists, anthropogeographers, folklorists, linguists and architects. Since the very beginning, young researchers started to be prepared. During the first year the Institute had four scholarship holders – two at the Ethnology Department, and two at the Geographical Department of the Philosophical Faculty in Belgrade. At the same time while organising and developing scientific research, there were preparations for publishing work. Two questionnaires for researching, published as temporary editions in 1949, confirm this. The first volume of Special editions of The Ethnographic Institute, mostly with monographic papers, was published in 1950. The first Annals of the Ethnographic Institute appeared in the same year. The first Annals of the work done in the Institute were published in 1950, too. The first book of the Herald of the Ethnographic Institute, consisting of many articles, debates, studies and many other materials on about 700 pages, was published in 1952⁵. Immediately, scientific library was formed, and it had over 3600 volumes, books and magazines in 1950. Since 1949, there have been scientific lectures, exchanging of materials with various institutions, and many researchers went to scientific meetings both in the country and abroad. Scientists also visited and there was an exchange with eminent scientific and research institutions from many countries.

Borivoje Drobnjaković (1957-1961) was the managing director and all the activities and functions in this period were successfully done. The subject of research, tasks and programme of work started to enlarge and define themselves more strictly in 1958. The work was directed to "ethnological, anthropo-geographical and economy-social research of the folk life, folk tradition in the past and present, and particularly the influence of fast industrialisation and urbanisation which change the habits of our people"⁶. Certain stagnation in organisation and work and publishing of the Herald, which did not appear for eight years (1961-1969), occurred partly because of difficult financial situation of the Institute and partly because of the subjective weakness during the period when Mirko Barjaktarević was the managing director. In those years, a lot of work was done about metamorphosis of folk life and preparations for the book about nationalities in Yugoslavia of that time were made. Research about undeveloped settlements in the Djerdap gorge and some other big building sites, research about some national minorities in Vojvodina (the Rusins, the Ukrainians, the Slovaks and the Gypsies) etc⁷. When Branislav Kojić (1969-1971) became the managing director some mishandled matters were redone, particularly where they obviously occurred. Issues of the Herald, which had not been published before, were published in that time as two issues and several issue editions. Very soon, The Herald started to be published regularly. Rehabilitation and intensifying of work started during the period in which Tanasije Urošević (1971-1973) was the managing director. The tasks were widely set, the researchers were of different professions, and there were many free lance researchers as well. The institute made a solid basis for its work. The results were great, but it does not mean that they could not have been larger in their size, content and importance. A number of studies, articles, debates, and monographs about research in Serbia and Yugoslavia not only in the Institute's edition, were published in that period. Research about national minorities in Vojvodina and Serbs in Romania, particularly in the village Svinjica

⁵ Е. В. Ц е р о в и ћ, Библиографија издања Етнографског института и радова објављених у њима, *ГЛЕИ*, књ. XXI, Београд 1972, 25

⁶ А. У р о ш е в и ћ, *Оп. cit.*, 7-8; П. Ш. В л а х о в и ћ, Уз тридесет пету годишњицу рада Етнографског института САНУ, *ГЛЕИ*, књ. XXXI, Београд 1982, 11-12

⁷ А. У р о ш е в и ћ, *Оп. cit.*, 11

in the Djerdap gorge.⁸ During the whole decade, started from 1971, in the period when the managing directors were Tanasije Urošević, Milorad Vasović (1973-1978) and Petar Vlahović (1978-1982), the work of the Institute was focused on several projects. They were: *Continuous Observing of the Changes in Folk Culture; Observing of the Settlements Endangered by Huge Public Works* and the topics *Monographic anthropo-geographical-ethnological researches*.⁹ Within the first two topic units, researchers did their work in 26 chosen settlements on the Serbian territory. They also worked in several settlements which were supposed to or were totally / partly moved and put on different locations. Researches were done on the settlements where new railway Beograd – Bar was put, and in the area where power plants Djerdap 1 and Djerdap 2 were raised. Suburban settlements of five industrial towns (Beograd, Kruševac, Leskovac, Pirot and Novi Pazar) were subjects of researches focused on changes of traditional culture and the influence of the industry of the town on folk life. The range of outside work was enlarged in this period; editorial work was balanced and enlarged in those several years in late seventies and early eighties. In the period between 1980 and 1990, after Petar Vlahović had left, the substitutes of the managing director were Milka Jovanović, twice, and Desanka Nikolić once. Dušan Bandić was the managing director of the Institute between 1984 and 1989. After that period Nikola Pantelić was posted as a substitute, and soon after the managing director of the Institute, being on this position still in this year of the jubilee.

In this ninth decade of the 20th century, researchers of the Institute have been working on the project *Ethnic and Ethnological Characteristics of the Inhabitants of Serbia*. The sub topic *Ethnological Research of the Serbian Immigrants* has been paid more attention to, and the topic started during the research *Ethnological Research in Urban Areas* has been closely determined. Certain efforts on preparing synthetic work *Serbian Ethnological Dictionary* have been made in this period, as well as earlier.

Since 1991, the new project *Ethnology of Serbian People and Serbia* (for the period 1991 – 1995) continues started long-term research works, widened and innovated by contents. They are, in a way, more determined in approach to problems, which are studied, and tendency to start new methodological works and new contents, and the analysis is done in a modern way. At the same time, the Institute as main scientific – research institution, was given co-ordination and encircling of the work in Serbia in the field of ethnology on the mentioned project.

The main aim of the project *Ethnology of the Serbian People and Serbia* is systematic research of life, customs, ethnic and ethnological appearances and processes on the Serbian ground and the moving Serbs. Some points, interweaving and global relations between the cultures of the Serbs and other ethnos both in time and space were also some of the aims. There were five topic units or sub projects:

a) *Ethnic and Ethnological Characteristics of Serbian Population;*

b) *Ethnological Research of Urban Areas in Serbia;*

c) *The Serbs Outside Serbia and National Minorities in Serbia*, (these three topics were the tasks of the Institute's researchers);

d) *Folk Life of the Serbs and Serbia – Ethnological Encyclopaedia;*

e) *Family and Culture* (done by the Ethnological Department, Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade and the Centre for Ethnological Research of the Ethnological Department, Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade). *Ethnological Monograph of Vojvodina* was added later, which was worked on by the researchers of the Museum of Vojvodina in Novi Sad.

⁸ Н. П а н т е л и ć, Уводна реч на отварању научног скупа "Етнологија пред новим изазовима", ГЛЕИ, књ. XLI, Београд 1992, 12 и даље

⁹ П. Ш. В л а х о в и ć, *Он. цит.*, 12

Given tasks in a global long-term project are:

- Raising the level of general and specific knowledge about the ethnology of the Serbs and Serbia, concerning both fundamental issues and applied results;
- Multiplying ethnographic and other funds of documentary materials, which are to enable analysis, comparative research and definite conclusions;
- Giving complete answers to issues being discussed within the Project and ethnology. These answers are particularly important if they are connected with dynamic processes and changes in the structure of urban and rural population. These processes can be a result of general current changes and development within the society, particularly because of great migrations from villages into the towns. Many social and other changes happened in the last few decades, and are happening nowadays. These results are going to be obtained by studying separate topics, regional units and regional topics. Contemporary ethnology is asked to describe and interpret interrelating traditional (folk – rural) and contemporary culture, meaning transformation of patterns and / or stereotypes in the culture of rural surroundings. Keeping traditional patterns and manners with urban population, mostly moved from the villages in the past few decades, is one of the tasks.
- Giving answers to the questions about ethnic identity, its characteristics and features, keeping, metamorphosing or even losing. Degrees of ethnic acculturation and cultural duality of the Serbs in foreign ethnic surroundings in moving;
- Mastering and specialisation of the researchers for the tasks set in the project and continuous keeping up with the latest scientific accomplishments both in our country and abroad, particularly those, which are important for ethnology. Degrees of mastering will be expressed through MA and PhD researches, and particularly after that in research studies, which are going to affirm promotion of each researcher and ethnology as a science.

Determined aims and tasks of the long-term programme orientation in this way, are the contents of The Project and plan of work for the period 1996-2000. There are going to be some changes, adjusting and topic adding and determination of given aims. That means that started researches are going to be continued. *Ethnological Research of Urban Areas* is added to the general topic – sub project *Ethnic and Ethnological Characteristics of the Serbian Population*. New topic *Ethnological Research of Symbolic Communication* has been added. Research task of the Institute *Ethnological Monograph of Vojvodina* has been added, as well.

The topic *Ethnic and Ethnological Characteristics of the Serbian Population* is divided into two topic units:

- a) Mono topic and regionally – topic researches;
- b) Complex mono topic researches of some regional units or rural communities.

The aim of mono topic and regionally – topic researches means identification of appearances and processes in life and culture and stating the functions of meaning of studied phenomena in synchronous and diachronic sense. Culture of the contemporary village and town cannot be isolated from the influence of the village on town and vice versa. That is why researching of urban areas is not a separate topic and is included in this sub project. Researches in this part of the sub project are directed to discovering transcultural processes and their consequences. Studying culture of the village and town should give scientific answers to maintaining continuity and discontinuity, as well as transformation of traditional features and characteristics in a village or town. Traditional consciousness and some features that have the sense of ethnic identification among urban population should be focused, too. That is why this part of the project includes a number of topics, which present tasks for the researchers of the Institute.

Complex, monograph research should take into account areas, which have not been researched, or those, which have not been researched in detail. Groups of settlements or

separate settlements with defined task of ethnographic research of many issues and adding new material which is going to define a village in the end of the second millennium and show new aspects of development and possible currents of transforming of traditional culture. Workshop for Ethnological and Cultural Studies – Svrlijig did the research *Spiritual and Material Culture of the People of Eastern Serbia and Neighbouring Regions* and it was the part of the Institute's research. The results are announced on annual international meetings in Svrlijig, and they are published in Ethno-Cultural Annals.

Life and culture of the Serbs – immigrants are discussed in the topic *The Serbs Outside Serbia*. The results of many years' work confirm that ethnic characteristics of the Serbs are important for understanding ethnic and cultural processes and determining theoretically – methodological basis for the attitudes for the Serbs outside Serbia. Their cultural relations and clashes with different cultures of different ethnic groups are extremely important. Following research works and studies are being done at the moment: *The Serbs in Banja Luka in the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century*; *Serbian emigrants in Dulut (USA)*. Researches about the emigrants in England and Australia are continuing. Consequences of prolonged work abroad and adjusting of workers to their native country are being studied. The study about Serbian national minority in Hungary *Serbs in Budapest and around it* is being done at the moment. Researchers are doing work about the Serbs in Batanja (south-eastern Hungary). New researches about the Serbs in the village Svinjica (Romania) on the bank of the Danube are in preparation. Preparations for new researches of national minorities in Serbia in co-operation are going to be done together with home national or minority's scientific and cultural institutions.

The subject of the research of the topic *Ethnological Research of the Symbolic Communication* is the structure and function of traditional and contemporary verbal and non verbal symbolic communication. Several works realised in the projects of the Institute have ethnologically relevant problems of communication. Some questions about Serbian epic tradition are studied, myths, legends, ritual and magical communications, as well as the symbols of art, building, dancing, music and theatre 'language', and their role in the communication which is not verbal. Functions of contemporary mass media, and aspects of social communications such as newspapers, TV, radio, different meetings etc are studied, too. These media are factors of changes and stability and they have influence on the appearances of contemporary traditionalism.

Within the topic *Ethnological monograph of Vojvodina*, study is being done about the customs of the life circle of the Serbs in Vojvodina.

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During the fifty years of work, The Institute intended to maintain wide international co-operation with similar institutions and researchers interested particularly in the problems of ethnogeny, ethnic processes, life and customs of the inhabitants. Some general ethnological topics can be of a great interest for co-operation. This kind of co-operation was very successful in certain periods, and there were times when it stagnated. The worst period was between 1992 and 1995, during the international sanctions, but at that time co-operation was maintained with many countries, particularly with Russia and neighbouring Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. Generally, co-operation was maintained through mutual researches, visits of the researchers, mastering of the researchers, organising of scientific meetings, conferences and seminars. The researchers of the Institute took part in international meetings both in the country and abroad. Books and information were exchanged, too. That is how branched co-operation is set. Nowadays, it is revised and widened at the same time. We have been doing mutual projects and preparing new research project according to signed contracts and achieved agreements with many institutions. Some of them are:

- The Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Science. Mutual task is researches about Russian emigration to Serbia and its influence on our culture. The topic is *Comparative Research of Transformation of Traditional Culture*;

- *Study of Folk Cultures in the Carpathians and in the Balkans*, is being done together with Slovak Academy of Science. The results were checked at researchers' meetings. Preparations for re – starting this co-operation are being done;

- *Yugoslav – Hungarian Relations in Life and Culture of the Inhabitants*, is the project, which is continuously, done with the Ethnographic Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Science. Researches about Serbian national minority in Hungary are organised and done by the researchers from our country. These results are partly announced on regular international meetings about national minorities in Bekešćaba (Hungary), and complete works are published in the Institute's issues and other editions;

- Some projects were done with the Department of Ethnology Adam Mickijević University from Poznan (in Poland). The researched topics were family, rituals of transition and urban ethnology. These matters were the focus of three researchers' meetings. Co-operation with Polish institutions is done by personal contacts and there are strong intentions for wider co-operation between the Institutes.

- There is a plan of research with the Ethnographical Institute of the Bulgarian Academy of Science. Direct, live communication and co-operation are done through Workshop for Ethnological and Cultural Studies – Svrlijig. The particular research is *Spiritual and Material Culture of the Inhabitants of the Eastern Serbia and Neighbouring Regions*. There are regular annual international scientific meetings in Svrlijig and Ethno-Cultural Annals are published.

- There is an agreement with the Institute for social and humanistic researches of the Romanian Academy of Science from Temishvar. The topic is *The Serbs in Svinjica and Romanian Banat* and *The Romanians in Yugoslav Banat*. There are agreements with the Institute of Romanian Academy of Science and some basic researches of Romanian ethnologists have already been done.

These are only a few examples of co-operation on some projects of the Ethnographic Institute and similar institutions abroad. However, co-operation has been going on with many institutions in Europe and America, without any particular listing of works and protocol. Researchers from Great Britain, former USSR, France, USA, China, Poland, Slovakia and many other countries visited our Institute. They gave lectures, did researches, they were studying and mastering. Researchers of the Institute visited most of the mentioned countries, too, and they went to many scientific meetings in the Netherlands, Norway, Greece etc. Among other works, the researchers of the Institute took part at the conferences of the Union of anthropological and ethnological sciences and conferences of the Institution of European Ethnology. They also took part at international conferences about national minorities in Bekešćaba (Hungary), conferences about ethnological films and many other scientific meetings.

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Published scientific and research results illustrate the work of the Institute in the best way. That is why editorial work is immensely important. The editions of the Institute are:

- *Glasnik of the Ethnographical Institute SASA*. There are scientific and specialized works from current research projects and works important for the work of the Institute. Premises and theoretically-methodological approach of future studies are checked in these works. Information and reviews about the Institute, accounts, critics of literature, bibliography, chronicles and other are published, as well. There have been forty-five volumes up to now, and we are preparing new volume for 1997.

- *Annals of the Works of the Ethnographic Institute of SASA* is a publication where research results of several authors can be found. There are researches of some regions or certain topics. There are also some announcements from scientific meetings. There are twenty issues.

- *Special Editions of The Ethnographic Institute of SASA*, become more and more important, because studies, and different monographs of the Institute's researchers are published. There are forty-two books in forty-five volumes

Review of the contents and headlines of *Special Editions* and *The Annals* (see Bibliography of editions of the Institute), obviously shows that the Institute tries to do all the basic tasks from its programme and plans. There are various researches in accordance with functions of scientific researches.

Besides these mentioned editions the Institute published two volumes of *Editions specials*. Those are the chosen articles from the publications of the Institute in foreign languages. Larger numbers of scientists are now allowed to examine the topics and problems researched. There are two volumes of *Periodical editions* of special purposes. They are for example education or help researchers.

In 1992, new edition *Životopis* started. Life stories of the Serbs emigrants are mainly going to be published, and there are going to be some records of unprofessional examiners. This edition should be the source of ethnological research. It should only be interesting for general public reading. At the same time it should be complementary to other editions of the Institute and other publications dealing with tradition and contemporary life of the people in the country and abroad. There have been three published books up to now, and new manuscripts are being prepared.

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In the last five decades, The Institute had big problems in getting financial support and other conditions for researches, and in obtaining contemporary equipment. There were a lot of difficulties because of inability to obtain conditions for mastering of researchers. That all happened not only because of a lack of financial support, but also because of the attitude of the society towards ethnology. Concerning many current difficulties and professional possibilities from the beginning of the Institute's work, researches have been directed to most important topics and problems for ethnology. There have been regional, general anthropo – geographical researches of folk life and culture. Transformations of traditional contents and contemporary ethnic processes of the whole Serbian nation in the both country and abroad are researched. Interaction and co-ordination with surrounding cultures, and generally reviewing synthesis of national and general meaning, are some of the results. Analysis and valuation of the Institute's work determine significance of the achieved results. Time will even better show it. Studies and other works coming from the work of its researchers, present scientific contribution and will remain as eternal treasure of our science.

From the very beginning the Institute has been and remained the main research institution in Serbia. Documents and reality prove this. But it has not been always treated adequately. Some of the organisers of the work and some researchers are partly responsible for this attitude towards the Institute and its status. But the achieved results from the beginning up to now show without any doubt that the existence of such an institution is justified. There is a need for further development and enlarging scientific research and any other work. Continuous professional strengthening, renewing and mastering are very important. Starting from the stated facts the Institute is always trying to check its programmes, to confirm them, and if it is necessary to change them. There have been several scientific meetings recently, devoted to different subjects. Current and future

projects have been checked, as well as research topics. Contemporary aspects, ideas about tradition and its studying in our time and future years have been studied. We have been trying to catch up with contemporary currents in science. The aim of scientific meetings has been to gather skilled researchers from the country and abroad. Listening to live speeches about the problems and questions of ethnic identity, socio – demographic changes and other processes, and social and cultural values – value systems and other topic of researches. That means confirming and redefining of the subjects, tasks and aims of ethnological researches and determining the place of ethnology in the system of anthropological and cultural – historical sciences. Papers are referred to contemporary social and cultural processes on local, national and wider plan. They are also referred to contemporary migrations of the inhabitants and ethnic problems concerning them. Political, economic and other actualisation of the ethnic, national and cultural identity, continuous critic approach to past and traditional culture are referred to. Ways of studying, valuing and exploring inter ethnic and relations between nations from the point of view of ethnology are also taken. At the same time, those are opportunities to face possible widening of the space for ethnological research. Previously marginal and new topics such as issues connected with ethnological researches in urban areas and symbolic communication, maintaining stronger co-operation of ethnology with other sciences about an individual, culture and others. This is all in function of checking and confirming the aims and tasks of ethnology, and its epistemological position. It can be said for sure that in the whole period of fifty years of work, the direction of the work of the Institute has been mostly on actual problems. This is all immense contribution to the range of contemporary Serbian ethnology.